

# EXPLORE!

**BEST SELLER**

**Levada Trails of Madeira**

8 days

Madeira, Portugal - Trip code TM



## Levada Trails of Madeira

Following Madeira's unique network of narrow irrigation channels known as levadas, and ancient footpaths, this tour incorporates some of the best walking trails on this beautiful volcanic island. Discover rocky shorelines, waterfalls and stunning mountain vistas. Hike to Madeira's highest peak Ruivo (1,862m), and spend time absorbing the delights of the laid-back capital, Funchal.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Sao Lourenco Peninsula** - Cliff top walk with stunning coastal views
- ★ **Levada Paths** - Variety of picturesque walks alongside the island's unique irrigation channels
- ★ **The Balcony Walk** - Spectacular mountain views along this famous path between the high peaks of Arieiro and Ruivo
- ★ **Funchal** - Laid-back city with beautiful gardens, parks, historic buildings and a colourful market

### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

#### Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

#### WALKING GRADE:

##### Moderate

For those who are fit and active, these moderate walks are normally on good paths and tracks at low altitude. Days may include some fairly demanding ascents and descents, so previous experience is preferable but not essential.

#### GROUP SIZE:

##### 10 - 15

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

## Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

### DAY 1 - Join tour in Funchal

Arrive Funchal and check-in to hotel. Funchal takes its name from 'funcho', meaning fennel. According to legend, when Zarco landed here in 1419, he named this spot after the abundance of the herb he found here. Visiting sailors used to call the capital of Madeira \ Little Lisbon \ because the grandeur of its cathedral and its harbourside buildings reminded them of Lisbon.



**Accommodation: Hotel do Carmo** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

### DAY 2 - Scenic coastal walk on Sao Lourenco Peninsula

A short drive via a scenic viewpoint brings us to Sao Lourenco, the north eastern peninsula of Madeira. Here we walk along the cliff tops, on an undulating trail with great views on both sides. The rock face displays age old volcanic action, eroded by the fury of the Atlantic Ocean. This area is dry and desert-like and offers a contrast to the rest of the island, which is lush and verdant. We continue with a drive to Santana, through a peaceful agricultural area, where the rich soil helps to yield up to three crops yearly. An idea of how rural Madeira once looked can be gained from the area's many examples of traditional thatched 'A' frame houses known as 'palheiros'. The thatched roofs keep the buildings cool in summer and warm in winter. Due to a high fire risk, meals were often prepared outside. Once lived in, some of these buildings are now used as cowsheds - the terrain in this area is too dangerous for cows to roam freely. You will often see farmers carrying huge piles of hay to feed their cattle. Today's 8km walk is expected to take around 3hrs



**Accommodation: Hotel O Colmo** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 3 - Walk through UNESCO forest to Ilha village

This morning we drive up to Queimadas where our walk to the village of Ilha starts in the lush UNESCO protected laurel forest following a levada along to the waterfall of Caldeira Verde. We go down a forest path to Ilha finishing with expansive views of the North Coast. From here our vehicle takes us right along the north coast to Porto Moniz. The 16km stretch of road from Sao Vicente to Porto Moniz took 16 years to complete and was built entirely by hand! Porto Moniz has unusual rock pools, created by volcanic activity. In summer the sun warms the trapped sea water making them excellent places to swim or simply bask after a day's walking. When the weather is rougher, the waves crash dramatically over the seawall and it is hard to believe that the rock pools really exist! Today's 12.5km walk is expected to take around 5hrs.



**Accommodation: Pensao Residencial Salgueiro** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 4 - Follow Levado do Moinho from Ribeira da Cruz to Junqueira; drive to Paul do Mar

Today we head inland up to the 'Desert Plain' where we follow a levada path overlooking the fertile south coast. A unique feature of Madeira is its network of 'Levadas' - irrigation channels. Fed by natural streams and reservoirs, the network covers over 2000km. Along our route we see caves used by shepherds and may even have goats and cows along with us, as on this terrain they are allowed to roam freely. Our path takes us to Rabacal and then through a long tunnel to join another levada leading down to Florencas. The levada paths are often bright with flowers throughout the year thanks to Madeira's pleasant maritime climate. Hydrangeas and oleanders give the paths a blaze of colour: wild agapanthus and bird of paradise flowers can often be seen. This afternoon we drive to Paul do Mar, a small coastal town in the west of the island, that is our base for the next two nights. Today's 15km walk is expected to take around 5hrs.



**Accommodation: Hotel Paul do Mar** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 5 - Coastal views from Prazeres; descend to Paul do Mar

This morning we start with a drive to Faja da Ovelha. Walking along the new Calheta levada we walk through agricultural land (fruit, trees, herbs and flowers) to Prazeres. Prazeres translates as 'pleasure' and it is arguably one of the most picturesque places on Madeira. On the natural terrace there it is possible to relax and take in the views out along the coast. There is also the opportunity to

take lunch in a local teahouse famous for its jams and garden. Later we descend down an ancient path to the sea - originally used by fishermen and farmers, often laden down with goods. This cobbled path was laid by the villagers and was the only link between the village and the coast. It is now a scenic walk with waterfalls and flora endemic to this area and altitude. On reaching the coast we walk through Paul do Mar back to our hotel, where there is time to take a swim in the sea, relax in a local café or enjoy the hotel pool. Today's 11km walk is expected to take around 4hrs with a descent of -500m.



**Accommodation: Hotel Paul do Mar** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 6 - Walk to Pico de Ruivo, Madeira's highest point

Today's walk starts at Pico Arieiro (1,862m). From here we follow the trail to the summit of Pico Ruivo (1,862m), Madeira's highest point, where on a clear day we are rewarded with stunning views down over the island. This route includes walking part of the famous Balcony Walk. This walk can be more challenging than the previous walks, and there is one short, steep part involving secured ladders. However unlike previous walks there is a small mountain cafe just below the summit where we can take refreshments, which makes a welcome rest stop. From here we descend to Achada de Texeira (1,542m) before returning by minibus to the island's capital. The old part of town has many restaurants where you can try Espada, a long flat fish unique to the waters around Madeira (and some islands in Japan). This fish has very large eyes and can live at depths below 800m. The Madeirans serve it with banana, which is a delicious combination! Perhaps the best way to spend the evening is on the harbour front, sampling a glass of the famous Madeira wine, enjoyed by many throughout the ages, including Sir Winston Churchill. Today's 11km walk is expected to take around 5.5hrs. \*Please note that the walk from Pico Arieiro to Pico Ruivo can be closed in bad weather. In this case your tour leader will offer you the best alternative walk for the weather and the group.



**Accommodation: Hotel do Carmo** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 7 - Free day in Funchal; optional dolphin and whale watching

Today there is a choice of activities from Funchal. You could take a half day cruise and try your luck searching for whales and dolphins. You may simply wish to take some time to stroll through Funchal, perhaps visiting the colourful market to see the displays of flowers and exotic fruit or nosing into the delightfully old-fashioned shops, maybe finishing the afternoon with tea at the venerable and atmospheric Reids Palace Hotel for a touch of turn of the century opulence. You may also wish to take the cable car up to the tropical gardens at Monte.



**Accommodation: Hotel do Carmo** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 8 - Tour ends in Funchal

Tour ends after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

# Walking and Trekking information

## DAILY DISTANCES

Day 2 8km 0.5km

Day 3 12.5km

Day 4 15km

Day 5 11km

Day 6 11km

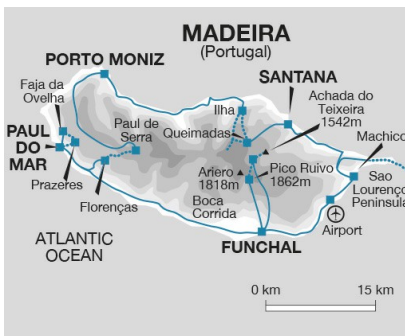
Optional Walks

### Walking grade

Moderate

### Trek details

We walk for 5 days for between 3 to 5.5 hours each day. Parts of the balcony walk are not suitable for vertigo sufferers. This tour has been graded as moderate.



## Why book this trip

Discover the many different sides to the beautiful, volcanic island of Madeira on this journey around the island.

# What's included?



## Included meals

Breakfast: 7



## Transport

Minibus



## Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader  
Driver(s)



## Accommodation

7 nights standard hotel

# Trip information

## Country information

### Madeira Holidays & Tours

### Portugal Holidays & Tours

#### Climate

Overall, spring, early summer and autumn are ideal times for a trip to Portugal - though the weather varies enormously from region to region. The northern high plains has both extremes, stiflingly hot in summer, bitterly cold and swept by freezing winds in winter. The Atlantic coast, in contrast, has a tendency to damp and mist, and a relatively brief, humid summer. The Mediterranean south is warm virtually all year round. The islands have very different weather patterns due to their positioning and can have sudden rain falls throughout the year so waterproofs are recommended even in the summer.

#### Time difference to GMT

0

#### Plugs

2 Pin Round

#### Religion

Roman Catholic

#### Language

Portuguese

## Budgeting and packing

### Optional activities

Funchal - Wine lodge guided tour and tasting €5.50; Botanical gardens €6.00; Tropical gardens €10.00; Whale Watch on a boat €49.50 (summer months only 2.5 hours); Dolphin swimming and boat trip €65.00 (summer months only); Reids Palace Hotel - Afternoon tea €34.50; Cable car €10; Catamaran trip €35.00 half day; Full day Boat trip to Islas Desertas inc. lunch €80.00 Porto Santo - Ferry €57.40 (apr - Sep) €46.95 (Jan - Mar) return ticket Tobogganing - €25.00 (one person), €30.00 (2 people), €35.00 (3 people max)

## Clothing

July and August are the warmest months, though the islands are freshened by cooling sea breezes. Waterproofs are essential at any time of the year, especially in March/April, as are gloves, a warm jacket/jumper/fleece and hat for higher summits and evenings in addition, a daysac cover. A swimsuit is also recommended.

## Footwear

Walking or trail boots are essential and comfortable trainers or sandals for relaxing. Plastic sandals are useful if swimming off lava rocks. Make sure that your boots are worn-in and comfortable before the start of the trip. We suggest that on international flights you either carry your walking boots in your hand luggage or wear them - should your luggage be lost or delayed, your own boots are the one thing that will be irreplaceable.

## Luggage

20kg

## Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. You will need to carry what you need for the day which may include a raincoat, jumper, camera, sun-cream, picnic lunch etc. On hot days you will carry fewer clothes but more drinking water.

## Equipment

We recommend a waterbottle, sunhat, sunscreen, sunglasses, towel for swimming, blister kits, strong torch (for tunnels) and trekking pole(s) for steep descents. A decent daysac is recommended. On this trip we will have several picnic lunches so any equipment to assist in your preparations would be recommended. i.e Lunchbox and cutlery.

## Tipping

### Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

### Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow approximately €15 for tipping. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

## Country Information

### Madeira Holidays & Tours

#### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

#### Foreign Exchange

### Portugal Holidays & Tours

#### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

#### Dinner price

£15

**Beer price**

£2.00 - 3.00 depending on your location, well touristed areas are usually slightly more expensive.

**Water price**

£1.4

## Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Euro.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

Take the majority of your spending money in Euros cash.

**Where To Exchange**

We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports.

**ATM Availability**

Cash-point machines are available in all major towns. Bankcards with the Cirrus logo are accepted.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Visa and Mastercard are generally accepted in larger restaurants and some shops.

**Travellers Cheques**

Travellers cheques can be exchanged in all major towns but are not recommended due to the high rate of commission.

## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Minibus

## Essential information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

**Under 18 immigration guidance**

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

### Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

### Visa Information

Portugal: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

### Booking conditions



Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

## Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

### Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

## Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

### Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## Madeira Holidays & Tours

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## Portugal Holidays & Tours

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory but Tetanus is usually recommended as a precaution. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

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