

EXPLORE!

NEW

Self-Guided Levada Trails of Madeira
14 days

Madeira, Portugal - Trip code WSMPL



Self-Guided Levada Trails of Madeira

Explore the best of Madeira on this two week self-guided walking holiday. Discover the beauties of the island: crest hikes, cross the waterfall plateau of Paul da Serra, walk along the Levadas (irrigation canals), and hike through eucalyptus forests and explore the landscape scattered with typical villages. Discover rocky shorelines, waterfalls and stunning mountain vistas. Hike to Madeira's highest peak Ruivo (1862m), and relax in natural sea pools. This holiday is for experienced walkers only and is not suitable for anyone who suffers from vertigo.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Walking variety** - Crest hikes, Levadas trails, eucalyptus forest and mountain vistas
- ★ **Lapa Valley** - One of the wildest valleys on the island
- ★ **Levada do Norte** - the 'flowered' levada

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.

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Trip starts Funchal airport; taxi transfer to Machico

On arrival at the airport an included taxi transfer takes you to the fishing village of Machico, the first city founded in Madeira on the arrival of Zarco in 1419. After checking in to your hotel you can explore the village, home to the oldest church, the 'Capela dos Milagres', and two forts that still bear witness to the locals' defence against the many pirate attacks of years gone by.



Accommodation: Hotel Amparo (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Dinner

DAY 2 - Hike along the Ponta da Sao Lourenco

The walk today explores the wild Sao Lourenco peninsula at the eastern end of the island, a place where the raging waters of the Atlantic crash up against dark basalt cliffs and screeching gulls wheel overhead in their hundreds. There are excellent views towards both the northern and southern sides of the island and, when the weather conditions allow it, across to Porto Santo Island some 60 kilometres away. At the end of the walk a taxi takes you to your hotel for the next two nights in the charming seaside village of Porto da Cruz where you may like to enjoy a swim in the saltwater 'basaltic swimming pool'. Today's 7km walk is expected to take about 3 to 4 hours.



Accommodation: Hotel Costa Linda (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Dinner

DAY 3 - Walk along Mimosa Levada and the northern coastal path to Porto da Cruz

Today's walk takes you along the Mimosa Levada to Marocos. It gives you an idea of what life on Madeira was like when there were no roads and following the levada irrigation canals was the only way to get around. For nearly five centuries, this levada served to transfer the 'must' used to make wine between Porto da Cruz and Machico. From Canical, you start on a level path hiking along the levada, surrounded by the mimosas that bloom throughout the year. You'll see some 'Palheiros' (the distinctive small 'A'-shaped two-sided houses used as agricultural shelters) that lie scattered on the mountain terraces in the small valleys of Ribeira Secca,

Ribeira de Noia and Ribeira Grande. Before reaching the village of Marocos, the landscape becomes more populated and both sides of the levada are bordered by a beautiful array of flowers. Today's 16 km walk is expected to take about 5.5 to 6 hours and you will ascend 240m and descend 400m.



Accommodation: Hotel Costa Linda (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Dinner

DAY 4 - Porto da Cruz, Levada do Furado and Ribeiro Frio

Today's walk is one of the most beautiful in the east of Madeira. You can choose to start from sea level at Porto da Cruz or avoid the first 600 metres of ascent by taking a taxi (at your own expense) to Portela. The route starts out on a good path following the Levada do Furado eastwards, passing through lush gardens spread out on the terraces in the valley of Faial. At first, the path is wide then becomes narrower and follows deep ravines through the laurisilva forest, the native marquis-like vegetation which includes trees of heather, bay, cedar and laurel to name just a few species. The mountains of the island dominate the sky high above you. At Ribeiro Frio, you can enjoy the awesome views from the lookout point at Balcoes, looking out over the valley of the Faja de Nogueiras and the great peaks of the island. At the end of the walk it's a short taxi ride to your hotel in Sao Roque do Faial, facing the distinctive rocky mountain of the Pena de Aguia. Today's 11km walk is expected to take about 4 hours (40 minutes less if you take a taxi to avoid the first climb).



Accommodation: Hotel San Roque (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Dinner

DAY 5 - Walk from Ariero to Achanda de Teixeira via Pico Ruivo, the Island's summit

A taxi will take you to Pico de Ariero (1818m), the starting point of today's hike. The trail undulates along through some very impressive gullies between Ariero and the Pico de Gato that you will cross by a small tunnel. The views to the east side of the island are incredible. A beautiful section of the path follows a 'balcony' passing under the Torres to a point below the summit of Pico Ruivo. The final section of the climb ascends through the heather trees to Pico Ruivo (1862m) the panoramic summit. From here, part of the descent is back on the same route then continues to the road head at Achada de Texeira. Here a taxi transfer will take you to Santana, the largest settlement on Madeira's northern coast. Today's 10 km walk is expected to take about 4 to 4.5 hours and you will ascend 550m and descend 700m.



Accommodation: Hotel O Colmo (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Dinner

DAY 6 - The Caldeirao Verde and the Lapa Valley

A taxi takes you to Quemaidas, a green and luxuriant park which is where today's walk starts. The wide path is surrounded by spruces which is unusual for Madeira. This former levada runs along the northern flanks of the high peaks. The path becomes narrower as you walk along the levada; offering amazing views over one of the wildest valleys of the island. After hiking through a few short tunnels you arrive at Caldeirao Verde. A truly spectacular sight, the waterfall which is about 100 meters high flows into the characteristic 'green caldron'. From here you trek back to Santana, firstly descending to Sao Jorge by the Lapa valley which offers great views over the landscape dotted with villages. Today's 14 Km walk is expected to take about 5 hours and you will ascend 80m and descend 600m.



Accommodation: Hotel O Colmo (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Dinner

DAY 7 - Walk from Achada de Texeira to Encumeada

Today's walk from Achada de Texeira to Encumeada opens up some of the most beautiful landscapes of the island. The crest path that you follow is surrounded by heather trees and at points opens up to stunning panoramic views of the northern and southern coasts. You will walk up and down some sections of large paved steps along this amazing way. At the Torrinhas pass, you take the path to Curral da Freias and Boaventura then continue to the Pico da Jorge. Following the path leads to the pass of Encumeada (1004m), overlooked by the Paul da Serra plateau and some gigantic wind turbines. On most days a fascinating display of clouds can be seen arriving from the north and curling their way down the southern slopes. Today's 18 Km walk is expected to take about 6.5 hours and you will ascend 500m and descend 1100m. Attention! This hike is for good to very good walkers only and can be replaced by a rest day with a taxi transfer from Santana to Encumeada along the great northern coast (the transfer is not included).



Accommodation: Hotel Encumeada (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Dinner

DAY 8 - Walking the Levada do Norte

Today you have the pleasure of walking along a levada of flowers, where hydrangeas, agapanthus, lilies, azaleas, conifers and laurels enhance the walk. The views over the Sao Vicente valley are beautiful, interspersed with a few tunnels that lead to the extraordinary cove at Folhadal. It's a basaltic cove, submerged by vegetation with endemic species like the lily of the valley and the native laurisilva; a wonderful forest with wild laurels and giant ferns. The waterfalls flow from one cove to another, giving this place a very wild aspect. The levada then continues to the pass of Encumeada and then down to your hotel. Today's 10 Km walk is expected to take about 3 to 4 hours and you will ascend 250m and descend 250m.



Accommodation: Hotel Encumeada (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Dinner

DAY 9 - Walk from Encumeada to Boca de Corrida, taxi to Jardim do Mar

Today's path goes up along the Fenda do Ferreiro and continues under the crest of Pico Grande (1600m) along a large cliff wall of black basalt. The panoramas over the valley of Serra de Agua and Paul da Serra to the pass of Boca do Cerro are wonderful. From here, you see the astonishing valley of Curral das Freiras (valley of nuns) in the centre of the island, dotted with traditional Palheiros, some with characteristic thatched roofs. In the distance, the chain of the Great Peaks stands proudly. The trail ends at the road at Boca de Corrida. From here it is a short taxi ride to Jardim do Mar where you will spend the next two nights. Today's 14 Km walk is expected to take about 6 hours and you will ascend 550m and descend 100m.



Accommodation: Hotel Jardim do Mar (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Dinner

DAY 10 - Walking to the village of Prazeres

Today starts with a taxi ride to the Levada of Nova where an easy walk will take you to the heights of Prazeres and its small village. It's one of the flattest villages on the island, in a wonderful setting and a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site. The descent starts with a great view over the Atlantic, taking a stunning path that ends in a volcanic fault and leads to the attractive fishing village of Paul do Mar. The abrupt and multi-coloured volcanic rock walls give this descent an extraordinary dimension. A short taxi takes you back to Jardim do Mar for the night. Today's 14 Km walk is expected to take about 5 to 6 hours and you will ascend 600m and descend 600m.



Accommodation: Hotel Jardim do Mar (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Dinner

DAY 11 - Drive to Porto Moniz, natural lava pools

Today is a good opportunity to take a rest from walking and enjoy the scenic drive along the remote northern coast. Once you have arrived at the charming town of Porto Moniz, check in to your hotel and enjoy the afternoon relaxing; the natural swimming pool in Porto Moniz is possibly the most beautiful place to swim on the island. It's also one of the nicest villages in Madeira and well worth exploring the Fort Sao Joao, the church and Main Square.



Accommodation: Hotel Euro Moniz (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available

DAY 12 - Hiking the Paul da Serra plateau and Ribeira de Janela

With your walking boots back on and feeling refreshed you start today on the Paul da Serra plateau. At the Fonte da Bispo, a wide path will take you to the wildest valley of the island: Ribeira de Janela (about 2 hours of descent). This is one of the most beautiful levadas of Madeira. After a short walk to see its source you then take the surrounding path which has a few easy tunnels livening up the walk. This well protected levada is one of the most peaceful and panoramic on the island. You will walk along the levada surrounded by hydrangeas, apple and fig trees, offering splendid views of the western side of the valley and its cultivated terraces. Return by foot over the village and the narrow streets with beautiful views over the ocean. Today's 18 Km walk is expected to take about 6 to 7 hours and you will descend 1200m. Attention! This hike is for good walkers, it can be replaced by a rest day with only the Ribeira de Janela return walk (no difference in altitude).



Accommodation: Hotel Euro Moniz (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast and Dinner

DAY 13 - Walk to Rabacal, the country of waterfalls

Today's walk is in the heart of the 'Emerald Mountains'. Three levadas emerge from this stunning landscape, some of the most beautiful of the island. You will start by the Levada do Risco, an easy walk on a wide path surrounded by ancient trees. Reaching Risco you will see the magnificent waterfall cascading from a height of a hundred metres, surrounded by lush vegetation. A little further on you will join the levada of '25 fontes' (25 sources). From there, you descend to the third of the day's levadas with its mossy waterfalls. Cross the river to climb up to the House of Rabacal. From here a taxi takes you by the Paul da Serra plateau to Funchal with a stop in Cabo Girao, the highest cliff over the Madeiran Sea (600m). Your last night in Madeira is spent in the lively island capital Funchal. Today's 5 Km walk is expected to take about 4.5 hours and you will ascend 250m and descend 250m.



Accommodation: Hotel Windsor (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 14 - Trip ends Funchal Airport

After breakfast you will have an included taxi transfer to the airport.

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

Walking grade

Moderate

Trek details

On this trip you will walk 137 km over 11 days (an average of 12.5 km per day). Walking is generally on well-marked paths and dirt tracks, there are some road sections. Parts of the 'balcony walk' on day 5 are not suitable for vertigo sufferers. We have graded the walking on this trip as Moderate.

Max walking altitude (m)

1862

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 13

Dinner: 12



Accommodation

13 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

Clothing

The following are essential: good quality waterproof jacket and trousers, fleece jacket, comfortable walking trousers, shorts, warm hat and gloves, sunhat and sunglasses.

Footwear

We recommend walking boots with proper ankle support and good tread. Make sure that your boots are worn-in and comfortable before the start of the trip. We recommend that you wear/carry your walking boots as hand luggage on the international flight. Should your luggage be delayed, your well broken in boots will be irreplaceable. Trainers or trekking sandals are useful for relaxing in the evening.

Luggage transfer

A luggage transfer between each accommodation. This is provided by a local taxi supplier.

Equipment

Bring a water bottle (preferably 2 litres) and high factor sun cream. Trekking poles are recommended. Tap water is safe to drink as are the fountains found in villages, but water sources along the trail may not always be drinkable. Using tap or purified water rather than bottled water will help avoid creating plastic bottle waste. Energy snacks including chocolate and sweets are recommended whilst on trek.

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

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

Visas are not required by UK, E.U Nationals, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office. All visa information is subject to change. 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 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.

Maximum altitude (m)

1862

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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.
