

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 its ancient footpaths, this trip incorporates some of the best walking trails on this beautiful volcanic island. Enjoy a variety of picturesque walks to 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 with its beautiful gardens, historic buildings and colourful farmers' market.

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** - Enjoy a guided walking tour of this laid-back city with beautiful gardens, parks, historic buildings and a colourful farmers 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. There is the option to extend the walk with a short but steep ascent to Ponta do Furado for a viewpoint of the two islands Ilhéu da Cevada and Ilhéu do Farol.

We continue with a drive to Santana, through a peaceful agricultural area, where the rich soil helps to yield up to three crops yearly. Along the route we stop at a sugar cane factory and rum distillery for an optional tasting of this dark nectar!

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 and through tunnels to the waterfall of Caldeirão Verde. Standing at the bottom of the 'green cauldron' natural amphitheatre we get a spectacular view of the water pouring down into it. After a picnic lunch we continue 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 drive to the north-western end of the island, where we follow the Levada do Moinho. This levada once served several watermills, and was a private levada for the use of those who paid to have it constructed. The levada irrigated the whole of the Pico Alto area with several springs coming from the channel.


The trail follows the Ribeira da Cruz River, past waterfalls and the ruins of Achadas Mill, Cancelas Mill and Levada Grande Mill. The trail ends at Tornadouro, in Junqueira, where the levada splits and we can enjoy a tasting of Poncha, a traditional Madeiran cocktail which is made from distilled sugar cane juice. 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 10km walk is expected to take around 4.5hrs.



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, here we visit a local teahouse famous for its fruit jams and garden. On the natural terrace there it is possible to relax and take in the views out along the coast.


Once we reach Faja da Ovelha, we descend to Paul do Mar via Vereda dos Zimbreiros this path to the sea which was originally used by fishermen and farmers, often laden down with goods. It is a steep but scenic walk showcasing flora endemic to this area and altitude and views of Paul do Mar and the sea as you walk down. There is the option to take the minibus back to the hotel instead of the descending by this verada. 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 and through several tunnels including the Túnel do Pico do Gato. This walk can be more challenging than the previous walks, and there are some short, steep sections involving stone steps and metal staircases. There is an alternative shorter and easier walk which can be taken to reach Pico Ruivo for those who don't feel as confident. From the pico we descend to Achada de Teixeira (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 Arreiro 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 - Guided Walking Tour of Funchal; optional dolphin and whale watching

This morning we'll discover the old town of Funchal with a guided walking tour. Walking along the narrow, cobbled lanes we pass renovated fishermen's cottages, restaurants, art and craft shops. We wander through the Mercado dos Lavradores, farmers market, and visit a Madeiran embroidery workshop. Take time to admire the art work painted on the doors of oldest street, Rua de Santa Maria. We will also visit a wine cellar where we can taste the different varieties of Madeira wine, the famous fortifies wine produced in the island since the 17th century.

After lunch there is choice of activities. You could take a half day cruise and try your luck searching for whales and dolphins. You may simply wish to enjoy more time exploring Funchal, strolling through the botanic gardens and 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 DISTANCE

Day 2	8km	0.5km
Day 3	12.5km	
Day 4	10km	
Day 5	10km	
Day 6	11km	

Optional Walks

Walking grade

Moderate

Trek details

Walks on 5 days for between 3 to 5.5 hours. Walks are mainly along levadas and ancient paths. Parts of the walk to Pico Ruivo are not suitable for vertigo sufferers, an alternative is available.



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

Portugal

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

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Funchal - Wine lodge guided tour and tasting €5.90 (Friday at 16:30); Botanical gardens €6.00; Tropical gardens at Monte €12.50 (take the cable car from Funchal €16 return); 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 €35.50; 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 from Monte, 2km descent taking approximately 15 minutes - €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 or packed lunches (brought locally in supermarkets) so any equipment to assist in your preparations would be recommended. i.e Lunchbox or something similar to pack food in for the day.

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

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

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.

Price Guarantee

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 and Passport 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 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.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

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, Polar, 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. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. 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

Portugal

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory but Tetanus is usually recommended as a precaution. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.
