

EXPLORE!

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BEST SELLER

Levada Trails of Madeira

MADEIRA, PORTUGAL - TRIP CODE TM

WALKING AND TREKKING

Why book this trip?

Following Madeira's unique network of levadas and ancient footpaths, this trip discovers the many different sides to this beautiful volcanic island. Walk through Laurel forest, along cliff tops to the Ponta de São Lourenço and past alluring waterfalls.

- **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 peaks of Arieiro and Ruivo
- **Funchal** - Absorb the delights of the laid-back capital with its beautiful gardens, historic buildings and colourful farmers' market

- **Christmas and New Year Departures** - Festive markets and spectacular fireworks

					
INCLUDED MEALS Breakfast: 7	TRIP STAFF Explore Tour Leader Driver(s)	TRANSPORT Minibus	ACCOMMODATION 7 nights comfortable hotel	WALKING GRADE: Moderate	GROUP SIZE: 10 - 15

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Join trip in Santana. Option to visit the traditional festival at Machico

Arrive in Santana, a peaceful agricultural area, where the rich soil helps to yield up to three crops yearly.

For those arriving on time our Leader plans to meet you in the hotel reception at 7.30pm for the welcome meeting and for those that wish, there is the chance to go out for dinner. There are no other activities planned today, so you are free to arrive in Santana at any time. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to arrive into Madeira Airport (FNC), which is a 40 minutes' drive. Should you miss the welcome meeting, your Leader will inform you of any essential information as soon as you catch up.

If your flight arrives earlier in the day, perhaps you might choose to visit the "Noite do Mercado" at Machico (a 30 minute drive from Santana). Noite do Mercado is a traditional festival taking place at the markets all over the island to promote local products, gastronomy and entertainment.

Christmas celebrations in Madeira offer a varied programme of cultural, folk and artistic events. You'll have your first glimpse of this in Santana tonight, walking through the decorated streets.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel O Colmo (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - Scenic coastal walk on Sao Lourenco Peninsula

This morning you could attend the Missa do parto "Childbirth Mass", one of the Madeiran Christmas tradition. This mass is celebrated in the early morning (around 6.00 am), it's the celebration of the nine months of pregnancy of the Virgin Mary, beginning nine days before Christmas and ending about sunrise 24th December, accompanied by traditional songs. At the end it is tradition to drink hot cacao or homemade liquors.

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.

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 eight kilometre trek is expected to take around three-and-a-half hours with 100 metres of ascent and descent.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel O Colmo (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Walk through UNESCO forest to Ilha village. Christmas lights and decorations at Porto Moniz

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 (a torch is necessary) 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!

In the evening you can admire the Christmas lights and decorations at Porto Moniz. The festive season in Madeira starts in December when streets are magnificently decorated, and the colourful lights are switched on until early January.

Today's 12.5 kilometre trek is expected to take around five hours with 480 metres of ascent and descent.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Euro Moniz (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 4 - Follow Levada do Alecrim from Rabaçal to Risco Waterfall

Today's walk starts at Rabaçal where we follow the Levada do Alecrim (rosemary), one of the most beautiful levadas of Madeira. Along the trail there is a high rate of endemic flora and amazing views onto the Rabaçal and Ribeira da Janela valleys. We will reach the majestic Lagoa do Vento a river basin formed by the water which falls from the top of the cliff, coming from the Ribeira do Lajeado and moving towards the waterfall of Risco. After a quick stop and swim we have an hour walking amongst the Laurel forest to reach the house of Rabaçal where we will stop for lunch.

After lunch we follow the Levada do Risco to the waterfall that feeds this levada. After enjoying this magnificent viewpoint we continue to the 800m Tunel dos Cavaleiros through which the beautiful valley of Calheta and the sea is visible. We drive to Paul do Mar, a small coastal town in the west of the island.

Today's 12 kilometre trek is expected to take around five hours with 475 metres of descent.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Paul do Mar (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 5 - Coastal views from Prazeres, descend to Paul do Mar. Festive night market

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 Zimbrieros 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 vereda. On reaching the coast we walk through Paul do Mar and from here continue by bus to the islands capital, Funchal, our base for the next three nights.

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.

Tonight "Noite do Mercado" takes place in Funchal, this festival and all-night market is the peak of Christmas celebrations. The event attracts thousands of locals and tourists alike into the bustling, busy streets as last-minute shoppers pick up fresh produce. The streets are lined with bars and eateries tempting everyone to enjoy in a little late night feasting and drinking while listening to Christmas Carols, try the traditional sandes de carne vinho alhos a special sandwich of pork meat marinated in wine and

garlic.

Today's 10 kilometre trek is expected to take around four-and-a-half hours with 500 metres of descent.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel do Carmo (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 6 - Explore the streets of Funchal. Free afternoon, optional whale watching

This morning we'll discover the old town of Funchal, your Explore Tour Leader will take you on an orientation walk around the city. 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. There is the opportunity to visit a wine cellar and taste the different varieties of Madeira wine, the famous fortifies wine produced in the island since the 17th century.

In the afternoon 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, taking afternoon tea at the atmospheric Reids Palace Hotel, or riding the cable car up to the tropical gardens at Monte. There is also the option of a half day excursion to Nun's Valley and visit a Christmas village with many decorations and nativity scene, where details and scenes of Madeiran daily life are well represented.

Today there is the option to have a three-course lunch or dinner at your hotel, please see the optional excursion section for more details. This can be arranged by your leader at the beginning of the trip.

You may wish to stroll the beautifully brightly decorated streets of Funchal tonight or attend midnight mass. It is celebrated at Funchal's Sé Cathedral by the Bishop of Funchal, the church fills up quickly so make sure to get there early to get a good seat.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel do Carmo (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 7 - 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 (a torch is necessary) 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.

From the pico 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.

*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.

This evening you may like to return to the Christmas Market, a chance to buy your last souvenirs before departure and enjoy a traditional Poncha, an alcoholic drink made from sugar cane and lemons.

Today's 11 kilometre trek is expected to take around five-and-a-half hours with 320 metres of ascent and descent.



ACCOMMODATION:
Hotel do Carmo (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - Trip ends in Funchal

The trip ends after breakfast at our hotel in Funchal.

There are no activities planned today, so you are free to depart from Funchal at any time. If your flight is departing later in the day luggage storage facilities are available at our hotel. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you need to depart from Madeira Airport (FNC), which is a 25 minutes' drive.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Climate and 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	Plugs	Religion	Language
0	2 Pin Round	Roman Catholic	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 - Blandy's wine lodge guided tour and tasting €6.50 (14:30, 15:30 and 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 (summer months only); Reids Palace Hotel - Afternoon tea €36; Catamaran trip €35 half day; Full day Boat trip to Islas Desertas inc. lunch €80

Porto Santo - Ferry €57.40 (apr - Sep) €46.95 (Jan - Mar) return ticket

Tobogganing from Monte, 2km descent taking approximately 15 minutes- €25 (one person), €30 (2 people), €35 (3 people max)

Christmas dinner at the hotel - €19.50 per person (starter, main & desert, not a special Christmas menu)

Drinks supplement:

€6 per person - half a bottle of wine or 2 beers or 2 soft drinks, water, coffee or tea

€ 4 per person - 1 glass of wine, water or juice (instant juice)

New Years Eve - Gala dinner supplement (drinks included): € 95 per person, New Year's Fireworks on board a catamaran (22.30 to 01.30) boarding at 22.00 from Marina of Funchal (open Bar, soft drinks, tapas, champagne, music) € 120 euros per person.

Clothing

July and August are the warmest months, though the islands are freshened by cooling sea breezes. Bring light and comfortable clothing that can be layered according to the temperature. It can become cool, especially at night, so bring warmer layers. Tops made from wicking materials which keep you drier, a warmer fleece is recommended as a mid layer, and walking trousers are preferable to trousers of heavier material such as jeans. A waterproof jacket is essential at all times in case of rain and wind.

-Breathable wind and waterproof jacket (you may also wish to bring waterproof trousers)

-T-shirts

-Long sleeved tops

-Sunhat

-Long trousers

-Shorts (if you prefer to walk in them)

-Swimwear and towel

-Midlayer Fleece/pullover

-Socks (liner and thicker pair)

-Insulated jacket

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

Bring one main piece of luggage and a 20-30 litre day sack is recommended. You will need to carry what you need for the day which may include a raincoat, jumper, camera, sun-cream, water and picnic lunch. On hot days you will carry fewer clothes but more drinking water.

Equipment

- Sunglasses
- Sun cream
- Small Torch (with spare batteries and bulb)
- Camera
- Walking poles (if you usually use them)
- Personal toiletries
- Personal first aid kit - On each walk a first aid kit is carried but you should have your own blister kit, supply of plasters, aspirin and other essentials.
- Insect repellent
- Small waterproof dry bag (for items such as your mobile phone)
- Reusable water bottle (minimum 1 litre) - Get 15% discount on a Water-to-Go bottle www.explore.co.uk/about-us/responsible-travel/water-to-go-discount-with-explore
- Lunch bag/Tupperware (for packed lunches)

Tipping

Explore leader

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. You may however, want to recognise a leader that has done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It is a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we would recommend £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline.

Local crew

Although 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 of local currency for tipping. In order to make things easier for you, the Explore Leader may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip.

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

£18

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 Recommended Currency For Exchange

Euro.

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

Accommodation notes

Accommodation and service levels in Madeira are generally very good. On this trip we stay in a number of smaller, family-run hotels that might not offer the same luxuries as larger chain-style hotels, but they do provide a warm welcome and a comfortable place to stay. The facilities are good and the majority have a swimming pool, bar and restaurant.

Essential Information

Government Travel Safety 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 citizens, check the latest Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office advice.

Please refer to our COVID-19 entry requirements page for any country-specific conditions of entry. Whilst we strive to update this on a regular basis we recommend you also check the FCDO website for the latest advice on entry requirements in this fast-evolving situation. Information can change at any time.

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 be able to apply 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 receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

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.

Maximum altitude (m)

1862

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.

Walking and Trekking information

DAILY DISTANCES

Day 2	8km	0.5km	3hrs/20min
Day 3	12.5km		5hrs
Day 4	12km		5hrs
Day 5	10km		4.5hrs
Day 6			
Day 7	11km		5.5hrs

 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. Day 7 walking between Pico Arieiro and Pico Ruivo is the most challenging and may not be suitable for those afraid of heights. There are some short, steep sections involving stone steps and three metal staircases and small sections with steep drops offs to the sides. There are handrails/wire sides at these points and your Explore leader will be there to support you, there is an alternative route is available.

Max walking altitude (m)

1862

Additional Information



Why book this trip

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

Reviews



**AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT
TRANSFERS**