

EXPLORE!

Madeira Island Discovery
8 days

Madeira, Portugal - Trip code MDR

Madeira Island Discovery

Discover Madeira's best known sights and learn why it's known as 'the pearl of the Atlantic'. This highlights trip is based in the sun drenched coastal city of Funchal and has a mix of full and free days. From here explore the island to find out more about its short, but turbulent history and see the dramatic mountainous scenery criss-crossed by levadas and colourful flora. Set out on the Atlantic to the Desertas Islands in hope of spotting dolphins and whales. Experience everything from rum making to taking in the sea views from one of the highest sea cliffs in the world.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Funchal** - Stay in the centre of this vibrant island capital; explore the atmospheric old back streets and sip a potent glass of 'Poncha' over a plate of freshly cooked fish
- ★ **Whale and dolphin safari** - Enjoy a boat trip to the Desertas Islands
- ★ **Calheta** - Discover the history of Madeira's rum and 'white gold' industries
- ★ **Wine** - Enjoy a wine tasting and tour of Blandy's Wine Lodge
- ★ **Levada walk** - See the beautiful rugged landscapes of the island, including an easy walk along a small part of Madeira's vast levada network
- ★ **Afternoon tea** - Take in the ocean views, as Churchill once did, at Madeira's elite and colonial Reid's Palace Hotel

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.

TRIP PACE:**Moderate**

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:**12 - 18**

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 trip in Funchal

Arrive Funchal and check-in to the hotel that will be our base for the next seven nights from which we will explore Madeira's highlights. Funchal takes its name from 'funcho', meaning fennel and according to local legend, when Zarco landed here in 1419, he named this spot after the abundance of the herb he found. Visiting sailors used to call the city 'Little Lisbon' because of the grandeur of its cathedral and the buildings that line its harbour that reminded them of those in Lisbon.



Accommodation: Windsor Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Tour of the north of the island and easy levada walk

Today we leave Funchal on a full day tour of the north and north-west of the island including Camara de Lobos, where we see a plaque dedicated to Sir Winston Churchill who used to holiday on the island and would sit at this spot to paint the beautiful coastline scene. We continue to Pico da Torre viewpoint, which offers stunning views of the traditional buildings in Camara de Lobos lining the bay. The 360 degree panoramic views stretch back as far as Funchal. Our next stop is Cabo Girao, which is second highest cliff face in the world and offers yet more captivating sea views. We continue through Ribeira Brava and into the mountains to Encumeada. From here there's the chance to take an easy 3 kilometre walk along Levada Folhadal. Madeira's levadas are a unique series of mini-canals used for irrigation. There are a number of great walking trails on the island that follow these channels. After our walk we journey down through the forested area of Chao dos Louros to the pretty town of Sao Vicente on the north coast. Lastly we'll stop to see Pousada dos Vinhaticos, a heritage hotel, which is the last remaining pousada on the island, before heading back to Funchal for the evening.



Accommodation: Windsor Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Walking tour of Funchal and afternoon tea at Reid's Hotel

This morning we go on a walking tour of the island's capital Funchal. We'll see Mercado dos Lavradores - a fascinating fruit market where every fruit and vegetable imaginable offers a huge array of colours and sweet smells. Another market well worth seeing is the fish market where the fresh catches of day will be on sale.

Next we head for Bordal Embroidery Factory, which produces some of the finest traditional embroidery and tapestries to be found on the island. After time to look around we continue into the historic centre of Funchal's Old Town, where you can find a large selection of restaurants and bars and also a permanent outdoor art gallery displaying over 200 works of art by guest artists that are painted onto the doors of Rua de Santa Maria. We'll also have the opportunity to admire the colonial architecture outside Santiago Fort, the Regional Government Palace and the fort and palace of Sao Lourenco.

We'll visit the Municipal Theater and Jardim Municipal - the large garden here is sure to enchant you with its collection of alluring exotic flowers, both endemic and from around the world, and its native ancient trees.

After a morning of exploration we have time to relax and soak up the history at Reid's Hotel, where Churchill used to stay in 1950's, and where we'll partake in afternoon tea before returning to our hotel in the late afternoon. For the afternoon tea please wear smart casual clothing and avoid wearing shorts or sportswear, such as trainers.



Accommodation: Windsor Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 4 - Visit to a 16th century sugar mill, Ethnographic Museum and wine tasting at Blandy's

This morning en route to Ribeira Brava we will visit the Ethnographic Museum. The museum holds a collection of objects relating to Madeira's culture and traditions such as wine, fishing, transport and much more.

After time to explore the museum we drive on to Calheta to visit one of the last working sugar mills on the island dating back to the

16th century. We'll learn of the 'white gold' and rum making history of the area and have a tasting of the popular local drink 'Poncha', which is made from lemons, honey and rum and also sample honey cake. If you're lucky enough to be here between April and mid-May then we should be able to see the mill working, as it'll be sugar harvesting season and production will be in full swing.

Next we'll head for Prazeres, which is small parish not far from Calheta. Here there is the opportunity to take an easy barefoot walk along an 800 metre path, which is made up of 17 different items sourced from the island including pine, eucalyptus berry, laurel, beach pebbles, black and yellow sand, gravel and mud. It's designed to provide natural reflexology for your feet and offers a completely different sensory experience.

Before returning to Funchal we'll make a stop in Jardim do Mar, a beautiful spot between the sea and the mountains. This small parish preserves the calm of days gone by with its narrow streets and low level houses with beautiful gardens. You'll have free time here for lunch.

This afternoon we head for Blandy's Wine Lodge where we enjoy a premium tour and tasting. The tour will explain the full wine making process from the making of the barrels through to the production and storage of the finished product. Followed by a tasting of, what it arguably the island's most famous export, Madeira wine.



Accommodation: Windsor Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Free day to explore or the option to visit Porto Santo by ferry

Today has been left free for you to further explore Funchal or there'll be the chance to go on a full day excursion to the island of Porto Santo by ferry. The journey takes approximately two and half hours each way. Porto Santo is a popular beach destination with the locals and with its 9 kilometre unspoilt white sand beach stretching all the way from Vila Baleira to Ponta de Calheta it's easy to understand why. Whilst on the island you may also choose to visit the Columbus House Museum, which is the former home of the legendary explorer Christopher Columbus.



Accommodation: Windsor Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Boat trip to the Desertas Islands, whales and dolphins search

Today we'll travel by boat out to the Desertas Islands and we'll hopefully get to see dolphins and whales along the way. Our boat will be 'Bonita da Madeira', a 23 metre long wooden sailing boat. The Desertas Islands are a group of 3 uninhabited islands, which lie around 25 kilometres off the coast of Madeira. They have been dedicated as a Natural Reserve to protect the rare species of monk seal, monachus monachus, which favours them. Our boat will anchor at Doca where you'll have time to swim in the clear waters and relax in the secluded bay. After lunch on the shore we'll then begin our journey back to the mainland.

Please note that in the event of poor weather it may be necessary to cancel this boat trip or change the day of operation. If the boat trip isn't possible to do during your stay then we'll enjoy an excursion to Pico do Arieiro and Santana on the east of the island instead.



Accommodation: Windsor Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 7 - Free day with the chance to walk to Caldeirao Verde Waterfall

Today is free for you to do as much or little as you may like. For those who want something more active then there's the chance to walk to Caldeirao Verde Waterfall. Starting at the Queimadas Guesthouse and walking along the Levada of Caldeirao Verde, we make our way westwards through an emerald green paradise. Soon after the start we see the most spectacular views of the villages far below. Walking further then a waterfall comes into view and soon after passing it, we go through some short tunnels and after a while we arrive at Caldeirao Verde majestic waterfall. Following a short rest, during which we have our picnic, we begin the return journey. This is a highly recommended walk to some of the most remote and beautiful parts of the island.

Difficulty grade: moderate walk, walking time: 5-6 hours and distance: 13 km

If you're looking to take things at a more relaxed pace then you may wish to take the cable car to Monte or to the Monte Botanical Gardens. The cable car to Monte takes approximately 15 minutes and then to the gardens it's a further nine minutes each way. The gardens have been open since the 1960's and are one of Madeira's best known tourist attractions. The huge gardens display over 2500 exotic plants that provide an exuberance of colour and scents. You may decide to return from Monte to Livramento in Funchal (around 15 minutes walk from our hotel) by a ride on a traditional wicker toboggan. The downhill journey takes about 10 minutes along a 2km long road course. The toboggan will be steered by two operators and can reach up to 48kms per hour.

For those looking for the best of both worlds there'll be the chance to join a half day excursion to Quinta Palheiro Gardens with a moderate levada walk at Vale Paraiso. These gardens showcase a variety of plants in a beautiful setting in the hills to the east of Funchal.



Accommodation: Windsor Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Trip ends in Funchal

The trip ends at our hotel in Funchal after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 7
Lunch: 2



Transport

Bus
Boat



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.

Porto Santo - a day on the Golden Island (including transfers, ferry to the island and 1hour island tour) - €99.00 per person, Casa Meseu Cristovso Colombo - €2.00 per person

Eastern Island Tour Pico do Areeiroantana (full day) - €36.00 per person, + lunch - €13.00 per person.

Jeep Tour (full day) - €44 per person, + lunch - €13 per person

Walk from Queimadas to Caldeirao Verde Santana (including transfers and guide) - €37.00 per person

Quinta Palheiro Garden and easy levada walk (half day) - €65.00 per person (minimum 4 people)

Nun's Valley tour (half day) - €28.00 per person

Monte Botanical Gardens trip (half day) - €28.00 per person

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, as are gloves, a hat and a warm jacket, jumper or fleece for higher altitudes and evenings. We also recommend taking a swimsuit.

Footwear

Comfortable walking shoes and trainers or sandals for relaxing. Plastic sandals are useful if swimming off lava rocks.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a day pack for personal items. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage - so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

We recommend taking a waterbottle, sunhat, sunscreen, sunglasses, torch and towel for swimming.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore 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 please allow £15.00 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 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

Bus, Boat

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

On this centre based holiday our hotel is central located within Funchal city centre and is around 10 minutes' walk from the beach and 5 minutes from the Old Town. It's a recently renovated 4 star hotel. Facilities include a bar, rooftop outdoor swimming pool, restaurant and a laundry service (additional charges apply). Bedrooms have modern decor in neutral colours and each has cable television, mini bar, telephone, hairdryer, Wi-Fi (additional charges apply) and a safety deposit box (additional charges apply). All rooms are en suite and most have a shower over bath. Bedrooms do not have air-conditioning.

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.

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.

Non refundable permits

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.
