

Hiking in Madeira: the Flower Island

Madeira: an island of adventure, lush landscapes, and unforgettable hikes! This self-guided tour in Madeira offers the freedom to explore the island at your own pace. Wander through the Laurissilva Forest, a UNESCO World Heritage site, discover the natural pools of Porto Moniz, and enjoy breathtaking panoramic views from Pico Ruivo, the island's highest peak. With stunning scenery, towering mountains, winding levadas, and dense forests, each day gives you the chance to create your own adventure.

PROGRAMME

Day 1: Arrival; drive to Ribeira Brava

You will be met by your car hire company at Funchal airport, from where you make your way to Ribeira Brava on the island's south coast. Known for its mild, sunny climate, the south coast boasts a rich cultural and natural heritage.

Check-in at your hotel in Ribeira Brava for 3 nights.

TRANSFER TIME: 35 min

ACCOMMODATION : Hotel ****

Days 2 to 3: Explore the South and centre of the island

The majestic peaks of Madeira, with Pico Ruivo at the island's highest point, dramatically shape the landscape. This region is a hiker's dream, offering numerous trails and levadas (irrigation channels) that provide panoramic views of deep valleys, lush forests, and stunning waterfalls.

Easy:

Boa Morte to Cabo Girão: Follow the Levada do Norte, shaded by the acacia trees, maintaining the same altitude as Pico Alto at 524m, until you reach the Cabo Girão glass platform. From here, enjoy one of Europe's highest cliffs, offering breathtaking views of the coast. Approx. 3h 20m walk - 12.4 km - D+ 80m, D-10m.

Pico Ruivo from Achada do Teixeira: Hike to the highest peak on the island at 1,862m, accessible via a paved path. Enjoy sweeping panoramic views—just be sure to pick a day with clear weather. Approx. 2 hours walk - 5.5 km - D+/- 270m.

Medium:

Boca da Encumeada to Curral das Freiras: This trail follows an old royal road, once heavily traveled, leading to a ridge with views of Curral das Freiras (Valley of the Nuns). The route offers a mix of rocky ridges and forest sections. Approx. 4h 20m walk - 12.9 km - Elevation Gain 450m - Loss 850m.

Challenging:

Pico Ariero to Pico Ruivo: A challenging hike along the roof of Madeira, following a well-prepared path. Traverse through heather forests and past the Casa Abrigo refuge before ascending to Pico Ruivo. The views from the summit are truly spectacular. Approx. 5h 30m walk - 11.4 km - D+/- 1250m.

Summit of Pico Grande: Standing at 1,654m, this peak boasts an impressive geological formation resembling a jagged rock fortress. From a panoramic platform, enjoy views of Curral das Freiras, and from the summit, take in views of the island's interior. Approx. 4 hours walk - 9.4 km - D+/- 670m.

ACCOMMODATION: Hotel ****

Day 4: the Northwest of the Island

After today's hike (see choice of hikes above), you take your vehicle to the wilder north-west coast of the island. You reach Porto Moniz, where natural pools filled with tidal water are the ideal place for a swim.

Check into your hotel in Porto Moniz for the next 2 nights.

ACCOMMODATION: Hotel *** or **** , depending on your chosen accommodation standard.

Days 5 and 6: Discover the north-west of the island

Over the next two days, you can choose from a variety of hikes starting from Porto Moniz.

Easy:

Cascata do Risco near Rabaçal: A short hike leading to a stunning 100m-high waterfall. Approx. 2 hours walk - 6.4 km - D+/- 240m.

Intermediate:

Levada de Rabaçal: A scenic hike along the levada's edge, stretching between the Encumeada pass and the Rabaçal tunnel. On clear days, enjoy views of the Ribeira Brava valley and the island's interior. Approx. 2h 20m walk - 8 km - D+/- 10m.

From Rabaçal to the Levada of the 25 Springs: Wander through heather and laurel forests along the levada, heading towards the Calheta power station. Approx. 2h 45m walk - 7.8 km - D+/- 350m.

Levada dos Cedros Loop: A route along the Cedars levada, winding through laurel forests, descending to a spring, and reaching a viewpoint above Janela valley. Approx. 3 hours walk - 11.1 km - D+/- 300m.

From Achadas da Cruz to Porto Moniz: A great hike for panoramic views, descending into deep gorges before climbing steeply towards rugged mountains that plunge into the sea. Along the way, you can visit Santa. Approx. 3h 20m walk - 6.6 km - D+ 400m, D- 800m.

Difficult:

Jardim do Mar Loop: A coastal hike with spectacular views of vertical cliffs and steep climbs and descents. The effort is rewarded with breathtaking vistas. Approx. 3h 15m walk - 7.2 km - D+/- 550m.

At the end of day 6, you make your way to Santana, a town known for its traditional thatched-roof houses with triangular facades, known as "palheiros." Santana is also a UNESCO-recognized "Biosphere Reserve."

Check-in at your accommodation in Santana for a two-night stay.

ACCOMMODATION: hotel **/*** or **** hotel, depending on your chosen standard of accommodation.

Day 7: Discover the Northeast of the Island

Madeira's east coast showcases a diverse range of landscapes, from lush, forested mountains to the arid regions around the Sao Lourenço Peninsula, home to striking geological formations. Over the next two days, you can choose from several hikes starting from Santana:

Easy:

Sao Lourenço Peninsula: This dramatic and rugged coastline is one of the island's most popular hikes, offering breathtaking views of the eastern tip of Madeira. Approx. 3 hours walk - 7.7 km - D+/- 430m.

The Royal Coastal Path of São Jorge: A scenic walk along an old paved path, descending to São Jorge, climbing up to Cabeço da Vigia, and continuing along the cliffs. Approx. 1h 50m walk - 4.8 km - D+ 290m, D- 310m.

Medium:

Caldeirão do Inferno Cirque: Hike from Caldeirão Verde to Caldeirão do Inferno along a levada that winds through a rugged mountain landscape. The trail features waterfalls, tunnels, canyons, and a stunning cirque. Approx. 2 hours walk - 5 km - D+/- 110m.

Caldeirão Verde: A popular hike through the lush "green" cirque, where years of water seepage have created a rich environment filled with vegetation, dramatic gorges, and a waterfall with a small lake. Approx. 3h 30m walk - 13.3 km - D+/- 40m.

Levada do Rei: Follow this irrigation canal through thriving laurel forests to the picturesque "Ribeiro Bonito" valley, known as the beautiful river. Approx. 2h 30m walk - 9.7 km - D+/- 40m.

Difficult:

From Porto da Cruz to Machico: Once a vital communication route, this coastal trail offers unspoiled views of steep landscapes, terraced fields, the Boca do Risco with its dramatic views of the northern coastline, and the Levada do Caniçal, before reaching Machico. Approx. 4h 40m walk - 14.8 km - D+ 410m, D- 420m.

ACCOMMODATION: hotel **/** or ****, depending on chosen standard of accommodation

Day 8: Santana - Funchal

Choose from one of the hikes listed above or enjoy a day at leisure in Funchal. Explore the island's vibrant capital, known for its bustling tropical market, charming old town, Madeira wine tasting cellars, craft shops, botanical garden, and stunning cable car ride overlooking the bay.

Alternatively, you can take an easy hike from Monte to the Jardim Botânico along the Levada dos Tornos. The botanical garden features an impressive collection of exotic and tropical plants from around the world. Approx. 1h 40m walk - 5.8 km - D+ 160m, D- 430m.

Depending on your flight schedule, return to the airport after dropping off your rental car.

TRANSFER TIME: 25 min

FICHE PRATIQUE

ACCUEIL

Your tour starts at Funchal airport.

How to get there :

By plane

Regular flights

With TAP Air Portugal, there are regular flights via Lisbon from numerous airports in the UK and the US.

Seasonal flights

From Spring to Autumn, a number of airlines offer direct flights to Funchal from the UK and Europe (Ryanair, Easyjet).

DISPERSION

The tour ends at Funchal airport.

NIVEAU

Each day, you can choose the difficulty level of your hike based on your preferences and fitness level. Most of the trails are well-marked, though be aware that signage may not be as thorough as in other countries. Some routes require good physical fitness and a good sense of direction. Due to the island's steep terrain, there may be a risk of vertigo, but this will be noted for each specific trail.

To assist you in making your choice, the hikes are categorized into different levels of difficulty:

Easy: Relatively wide, moderately steep paths that can be completed in any weather.

Medium: Trails with steeper, often narrow sections that may be exposed in places. These should be avoided if you have a fear of heights.

Difficult: Narrow, steep mule tracks, sometimes covered in loose scree, where you may need to use your hands to climb. These hikes are not suitable for those afraid of heights.

HEBERGEMENT

Comfort Version:

Days 1 to 3: Ribeira Brava

Stay in a 4-star hotel nestled on the hillside, offering stunning views of the ocean and surrounding mountains. The spacious and comfortable rooms are complemented by indoor and outdoor pools, as well as a wellness area with a fitness room.

Days 4 and 5: Porto Moniz

Enjoy a stay in a 3-star hotel with sea views and a central location, just a 10-minute walk from the natural pools of Porto Moniz.

Days 6 and 7: Santana

Relax at a 2/3-star hotel overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, with an outdoor swimming pool surrounded by lush vegetation.

TRANSFERTS INTERNES

This is a self-guided drive and hike tour, so all transfers are done with your rental car. During your stay, you will drive a Category B or D rental vehicle, depending on the number of people in your group.

Higher category vehicles are available at an additional cost. Please contact us for further information.

Please note: drivers must be at least 23 years old and have a valid driving license, held for at least 1 year prior.

Category B – 1 to 2 people

Vehicle type: Citroën C1 or similar

Category D – 3 to 5 people

Vehicle type: Hyundai I20 or similar

Included in the rental price:

8-day car rental with unlimited mileage

Pick-up and drop-off at Funchal airport

Third-party liability insurance

Not included in the rental price (payable locally):

Excess buy-back, theft, glass damage, and tyre damage

Passenger insurance

Additional driver insurance

Supplement for arrival after midnight (even for delayed flights)

Extra charge for infant/child seats, payable locally

Important Information:

Before you leave:

Check with your bank that your international bank card is compatible for vehicle collection.

Ensure the international option on your card is activated, and that the credit limit is sufficient to cover the excess.

When collecting your vehicle:

Present your bank card and driving license in the name of the main driver listed on your booking, along with the licenses of any additional drivers for insurance purposes (as per your booking).

If you have purchased additional protection or optional services, they must be included in your rental contract, so be sure to confirm this (you can request a contract in English).

Double-check that any optional services or insurance you've booked are not listed as extra charges to be paid on-site. Remember that any contract you sign is binding.

Inspect the vehicle's condition before driving and ensure any pre-existing damage is documented in the contract.

In all cases, we strongly recommend you carefully read the contract on-site. If you sign a contract with additional insurance, the rental company will charge your credit card accordingly, and this amount will not be refundable by us.

PORTAGE DES BAGAGES

GROUPE

From 1 participant.

ENCADREMENT

There is no guide on this trip. This is a self-guided tour.

Before your departure, we'll provide a guide with detailed information about each hike, which will enable you to explore at your own pace. To fully enjoy your hiking trip, you need to be confident that you can navigate by yourself with the documents provided.

MATERIEL FOURNI

EQUIPEMENT INDIVIDUEL A PREVOIR

Luggage

Check with your airline for luggage restrictions and weight limits.

Recommended Clothing

Sun hat or cap

Scarf

T-shirts (avoid cotton, as it takes a long time to dry; opt for short-sleeved, breathable fabrics)

Undershirt or long-sleeved shirt

Fleece jacket

Trekking shorts and trousers

Comfortable evening trousers

Lightweight, simple Gore-Tex jacket or waterproof cape

Waterproof overtrousers (optional)

Swimming costume

Walking socks (avoid cotton tennis socks, which take longer to dry and increase the risk of blisters)

Hiking boots with good ankle support (preferably with Vibram-type soles)

Sandals or casual shoes for the evening

The clothing list should be adjusted based on the season.

Equipment

High-quality sunglasses

Hiking poles (optional): These make ascents and descents easier and are especially helpful on uneven or slippery terrain

Water bottle (minimum 1.5 liters)

Headlamp (essential for tunnels)

Pocket knife (to be packed in checked baggage)

Small waterproof pouch for your money

Toiletries: Preferably biodegradable products

Sun cream and lip balm

An airtight plastic container for carrying your picnic, along with a cup and cutlery

Personal Pharmacy

Your regular medications

Pain relief medication: preferably paracetamol

Elastic adhesive tape (e.g., Elastoplast, 6 cm wide)

Adhesive dressings and disinfectant pads

Blister prevention (e.g., second skin, available at sports shops, pharmacies, or drugstores)

Mosquito repellent (optional)

LE PRIX COMPREND

- Travel documents
- Rental car from Day 1 to Day 8
- Accommodation in a double room
- Breakfasts from Day 2 to Day 8
- Dinners from Day 2 to Day 7

- Registration fees

LE PRIX NE COMPREND PAS

- Insurance, including optional vehicle hire insurance
- Air travel
- Fuel
- Parking charges
- Entrance fees to sites
- Drinks
- Lunches
- Dinner on Day 1
- Personal expenses
- Single room supplement
- Late drop-off fee for arrivals after midnight