

SOME IDEAS TO PLAN YOUR VISIT TO MADEIRA

How to Organize your Days

Most clients spend 4-5 nights on Madeira to fully appreciate what the island has to offer. A shorter itinerary is always an option if you reduce your exploration and concentrate on the highlights.

Reserve ideally at least half a day to explore Funchal and at least another half to a full day to visit areas outside of Funchal. Both offer very different experiences.

The location of our apartments allows for a visit without driving. You will need to hire a transfer from the airport, and we recommend a tour guide for a visit outside of Funchal. Everything else is walking distance or with a short cab/Uber ride.

Many visitors like to split their time between Funchal and the rest of the island. You have the option of staying in two accommodations, one in each area. You can also consider using one of our apartments as your base. They are all centrally located with private parking and easy road access to go out exploring and return to a cozy home.

Itineraries Without a Vehicle

Our apartments allow for a walk around Funchal and a visit up to Monte without the need of a car. If you have a minimum of 2 hours, feel free to explore the city and with some extra time, go up to Monte.

Downtown Funchal – From Reid’s Gardens, walk downtown through Avenida do Infante, passing through the Placa Central, Jardim Municipal, Teatro Baltasar Dias, Cathedral (Sé), all the way up to Rua Fernão de Ornelas, visit the Mercado dos Lavradores (especialy Fridays and Saturdays during the morning when local produce is sold), continue through rua Santa Maria all the way until the Barreirinha, then come back with a stop by the Forte de Sao Tiago and return by Avenida do Mar or take the cable car to Monte if you have some extra time. From Savoy Residence Insular, you will be next to Mercado dos Lavradores. Therefore, we encourage you to walk down Avenida do Mar and come back by Avenida Arriaga, then head to Zona Velha through rua Santa Maria all the way up to Barreirinha.

Downtown Funchal you can enjoy a visit to the Bordal workshop, where they make the famous Madeira Embroidery, go for a tasting experience of Madeira wine at Blandy’s Wine Lodge or one of the other local wineries or buy some freshly baked traditional cookies at Fábrica Santo Antonio on rua 5 de Outubro.

Monte – From downtown Funchal take the cable car uphill with magnificent views, visit Monte Palace Tropical Gardens and the Igreja do Monte. After walking around Monte, take the Monte Sledges downhill. It is an unmissable experience (and check out the picture they sell at the end of the ride. It is usually worth it!). After the sledges, you can return home by car service or taxi (always remember to ask the driver to have the meter turned on).

Jardim Botânico – From Monte, you can continue on another cable car to visit the beautiful botanical gardens. You can return by cable car back to Monte and then down to Funchal or grab a taxi to take you back to town.

Lido – From Reid's Gardens, if you head to the left by Estrada Monumental, you will reach the Lido area with the impressive municipal pool complexes of Lido and further out Ponta Gorda. You can even get to Doca do Cavacas at the beginning of the Praia Formosa, a large pebble beach. The pathway along Praia Formosa can take you all the way to Camara de Lobos. It is a great walk by the sea. From Insular it could be a long walk. Consider grabbing a car or a taxi up to Lido and walking around in the area maybe all the way up to Camara de Lobos.

Itineraries With a Vehicle (whether your own car rental or a hired car service with a driver)

We highly recommend hiring an organized tour guide for a half-day or full-day tour of the island. It is worth it. You can divide and visit select areas of the island in different days to minimize the time you spend driving from one place to another. If you are more independent and prefer to rent a car, we suggest that you book your car as early as possible. Lately car rental companies tend to be very busy and with limited last-minute options. Driving in Madeira is a great way to see the different parts of the island and stop for amazing views.

For private tours, consider these alternatives:

Mountain Expeditions: www.mex.pt

MB Tours: www.mb-tours.pt

There are multiple itineraries, tours and parts of the island that can pique your interest. Some of the highlights are:

Levada Walks – Madeira offers fantastic walks for all levels of fitness, ages, and time requirements (from less than an hour to full day walks). We highly recommend hiring a tour guide for these walks, especially to help you avoid the crowded areas as well as to highlight some of the less signaled paths. Exploring the Levadas will offer you views and contact with nature that are impressive. Try not to miss at least one of them. Our more adventurous guests usually do the Pico do Areiro-Pico Ruivo walk (there are some shorter and longer versions). We are also fans of the Levada do Alecrim / Lagoa do Vento that has a good number of steps, and it is great for travelers with a good fitness level, but depending on when you go it can get crowded. Try to avoid the times of the large groups, remember to take food and water, proper clothing, avoid getting out of the main path, share your itinerary with us or someone you trust if going alone and verify on the official website if the hikes are open before doing them: <https://visitmadeira.com/en/what-to-do/nature-seekers/notice-to-walkers-and-list-of-walks/>

SAFETY TIP: One of the most common accidents in Madeira involves walking off the main path and falling or getting lost in the forest. The levadas are safe and friendly, but please don't go off path where accidents happen.

Cabo Girao – Amazing viewpoint on a cliff by the ocean that you shouldn't miss. Very easy to visit by yourself with a car.

Pico do Areiro – Mountain summit reachable by car at 1,818 meters above sea-level. Offers fantastic views of the island and the ocean and it is a unique spot to watch the sunrise over the sea. We highly recommend an organized breakfast to watch the sunrise, absorb the incredible views and take some amazing pictures. You can even do it by yourself but watch out for the crowds and be mindful of the weather. For a high-end sunrise experience with warm breakfast and champagne, contact the concierge at Savoy Palace. Remember to dress appropriately for the changing weather. On the mountain top, it can be windy or colder than in town.

Camara de Lobos – Quaint fishing village in a bay next to Funchal. It is very picturesque. Walk along the bay and absorb the beautiful views of the small fishing boats on the bay. There is also a nice stroll along Praia Formosa in Funchal all the way to the Camara de Lobos bay. Just follow the path along the coast and enjoy the views until you reach the harbor.

Ponta do Sol – Quaint old seaside village for a short stroll by the ocean and beautiful sights. Very easy to visit by yourself. Park your car and walk towards the pier on the left. You can still peak the beginning of an old “Camino Real” at the base of the pier.

Cascata dos Anjos – Waterfall by the ocean that hits the road. Ideal for a “car wash”. Instagramers love it but be careful that with the water every now and then also fall small rocks. Better they hit a car than your head! And please avoid the cliffside walls. It is another slippery area prone to accidents and falls.

Calheta – Sandy man-made beaches that are very family friendly and marina on Madeira’s sunny side. Don’t miss the Calhau Beach Club in front of the Saccharum hotel for a drink, a snack or to watch the sunset!

Encumeada – head up the center of the island and watch the fantastic panorama of the green mountains and valleys on your way up to the Paul da Serra. You could stop in Serra d’Água for a poncha in one of the roadside taverns.

Seixal – a small rural village with a beautiful beach of black sand and amazing natural pools that are usually not as crowded as the pools in Porto Moniz. If you prefer a more natural experience, visit the natural pools here.

Porto Moniz – very large natural pools that are part of a municipal seaside complex at the western end of the island with a small entry fee. Worth stopping by even if only to see them and take some pictures. Offers a more organized natural pool experience usually with larger crowds.

Achadas da Cruz – remote and windy village for the more adventurous explorers.

Ponta de Sao Lourenço – Dry rocky landscape at the far northeast end of the island with a beautiful walk enjoying amazing views of the ocean on both sides. Bring some water. The hike has no shade and can be windy. Check out the kayak tours, that can be a great alternative.

Experiences Not to Miss

Boat Tours Out of Funchal or out of Marina do Lorde – if you have a chance, don’t miss the opportunity to see the island from the sea. It’s a highly recommended experience, some tours may give you the chance to see sea mammals, to swim in the crystal-clear ocean waters and/or enjoy the

sunset. There are options for all budgets from group catamarans to private yachts. Consider these alternatives:

Rota dos Cetáceos: www.rota-dos-cetaceos.pt

Luxury Yacht Charter: Instagram [luxurychartermadeira](https://www.instagram.com/luxurychartermadeira)

Swimming in the Ocean – There are great sea accesses in the Funchal area where you can jump in the water from a platform. The best ones free of charge are in Lido. If you are up for paying a small fee, there are great municipal pool complexes in Funchal: Lido, Ponta Gorda, Barreirinha. For a beach club experience with sunbeds, towels, and a nice bar and restaurant, consider Next Hotel in Funchal and Calhau Beach Club in Calheta.

The ocean water temperature is normally above 20 degrees Celsius all the way up to 24 or 25 degrees. You can also check out the pebble beaches like Praia Formosa in Funchal and multiple others around the island. However, entering and exiting the water on pebbles or “calhau” as it is called in Portuguese is not for everybody.

SAFETY TIP: Be mindful that the sea on the North coast can have strong currents. Only use the protected areas for your own safety like the sandy beach in Seixal or the natural pools. We advise you not to go to the water on deserted beaches on the North coast since the waters can be very treacherous. The South coast (from Funchal to Calheta) has more gentle waters.

Relaxing at a Spa – Funchal has the largest spa in Portugal, located at the Savoy Palace hotel. Enjoy some relaxation time in the impressive Laurea spa whether you book a massage, a treatment or just spend time in the interior pool, sauna and steam room. Contact the hotel for availability and prices: <https://www.savoysignature.com/savoypalacehotel/pt/spa/laurea-spa/>

Wineries and Wine Tasting Tours – There are many wineries of Vinho Madeira and other types of wine on the island that offer tours. You can consider group tours, private tours, and more exclusive experiences in the following wineries: Blandy Wine Lodge, Quinta do Barbusano and Terras do Avo. Check them out online to see which one is to your liking.

Transportation Options

You have multiple options to organize your visit. From renting a car, to hiring a private transfer and tour guide to using public transportation.

Our apartments are well located for all these options. We don't have a preferred car rental company. We strongly recommend making your reservation quickly because some cars tend to run out.

For private transfers, we recommend:

Madeira Airport Transfers: www.madeira-airport-transfers.com

Private Car Driver with Mercedes V for up to 7 pax: Phone/WhatsApp +351.919.912.420 (Sergio)

Some Companies and Websites That We Like

Visit Madeira: www.visitmadeira.com

Mountain Expeditions: www.mex.pt

MB Tours: www.mb-tours.pt

Madeira Airport Transfers: www.madeira-airport-transfers.com

Private Car Driver with Mercedes V for up to 7 pax: Phone/WhatsApp +351.919.912.420 (Sergio)

Rota dos Cetáceos: www.rota-dos-cetaceos.pt

Luxury Yacht Charter: Instagram [luxurychartermadeira](https://www.instagram.com/luxurychartermadeira)

Surf Lessons: Contact our team member Miguel who is an experienced surf instructor
(miguel@madeiranests.com)

Dress for a Changing Weather

As you visit the island, prepare to dress for multiple weather situations during the day. We have been able to experience the four seasons during the same day as you visit different parts of the island. We recommend you keep a light jacket handy and be aware that rain, clouds, and sun come and go in an instant. We have amenable and very variable weather almost all year-round.

In Funchal, the usual weather cycle is a sunny morning followed by some clouds later in the day. So, enjoy the sunny mornings as much as you can. Don't leave it for later!

Local Foods to Experience

Feel free to research them online. These are some of the highlights of the local/traditional cuisine in Madeira that you don't want to miss:

Espetada de Carne	Bolo de Caco com Manteiga e Alho
Milho Frito	Bolo de Mel
Milho com Atum	Queijadas
Lapas grelhadas	Pudim de Maracuja
Bife de Atum à Madeirense	Vinho Madeira
Peixe Espada Preta	Poncha