



madeira islands



EN 2013 Photography: © Hugo Reis

Active Tourism



Nature rich in adventure, experiences and emotions...



Funchal Bay

Madeira Islands are only at one step away from the major European capitals and only 90 minutes from Lisbon, are the ideal holiday destination for anyone who wants both relaxation and fun, and to enjoy the mountains, the sea, walks or simply to go on an adventure.

Madeira's mild climate, magnificent landscapes and welcoming people promise the visitors' unforgettable holidays.

Find out more about some of the activities we have to offer, and start planning your next holiday now!

Find inspiration in the pure mountain air...

Breathe in the fresh air, walk around the Laurissilva Forest, observe the local flora or simply perceive the surrounding landscape. These are just a few suggestions for those who like to spend their holidays in touch with nature. Come and discover the wealth of flora and fauna in Madeira.

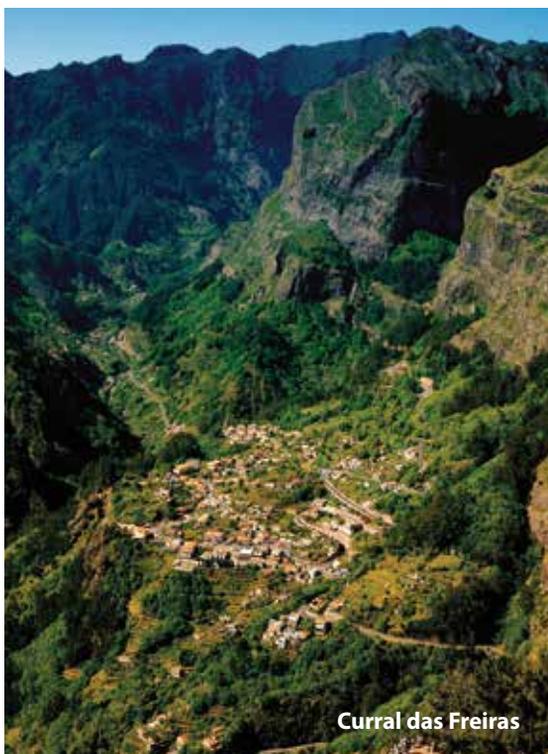
Sport in nature

Madeira's volcanic origins provide a hilly landscape and a mild climate all year round, encouraging close contact with nature.

With excellent conditions for practising adventure tourism, Madeira is home to a number of companies that work with active tourism, offering a wide range of alternative activities for a real escape from stress and daily routine.

There are plenty of choices regarding mountain sports, ranging from trekking to rock climbing, canyoning, trail running, to jeep expeditions, mountain biking and horse riding.

Save a few days of your stay to practise some sports while you enjoy the best corners of this archipelago that offers so many exciting plans.



Curral das Freiras



Laurissilva Forest

Madeira's Laurissilva Forest

Around 20 million years ago, the Laurissilva Forest covered wide areas of southern Europe and the Mediterranean basin. However, during the last glacial period it was reduced to the region of Macaronesia: Madeira Islands, the Azores archipelago, the Canary Islands and Cape Verde.

The Laurissilva Forest stretches to almost 15,000 hectares at the north of the island of Madeira, gathering the largest area of Laurissilva forest in the world.

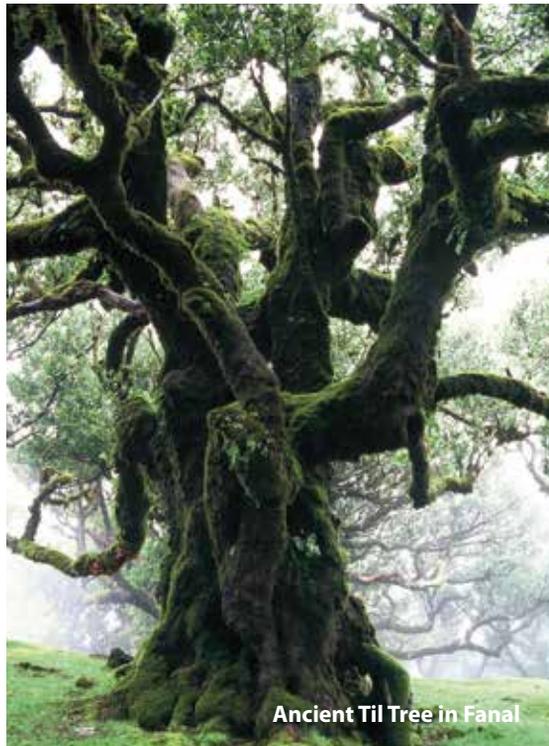
In 1999 Madeira's Laurissilva Forest was classified as Natural World Heritage by UNESCO, thanks to its specific biological characteristics, the diversity of native species and its good conservation.

Considered a living relic, the largest area of the Laurissilva is included in the Madeira Natural Park and classified with the highest protection status: Total Preservation Area.

Flora in Madeira

The steady temperature and humidity levels, which in areas like Ribeiro Frio and Ribeira da Janela can reach 80%, provide ideal conditions for preserving the plant life of the Laurissilva Forest. These plants include some of Madeira's ancient trees, such as the Laurel (*Laurus novocanarienses*), the Barbusano (*Apollonias barbujana*), the Til (*Ocotea foetens*) and the Vinhático (*Persea indica*), which belong to the Lauraceae family, from where this type of forest takes its name.

The flora in Madeira also includes other important species such as the Pau Branco (*Picconia excelsa*), the Lily of the Valley Tree (*Clethra arborea*), the Sonchus (*Sonchus fruticosus*), the Madeira Broom (*Genista tenera*), the bowles' mauve (*Erysimum bicolor*) and the original Leafy Orchid (*Dactylorhiza foliosa*), which only grows at high altitudes. Pride of Madeira (*Echium candicans* and *Echium nervosum*), Fig of Hell (*Euphorbia piscatoria*) and Aeonium (*Aeonium glandulosum* and *Aeonium glutinosum*) are other native plants that can be seen scattered around the island.



Ancient Til Tree in Fanal

An unforgettable natural heritage...



Levada Walk

The Levada Walks

The conquest of the impressive mountains that rise from the sea to the sky, walking along the *Levadas* – the primitive irrigation channels that measure more than 3000km – is one of the most fantastic experiences to have within the exuberant nature of Madeira!

For both cultural and environmental reasons, this is one of the most traditional open-air activities in Madeira and is highly sought after all year round by residents and visitors alike, who can use the *Levadas* to get to the heart of the island.

Most paths are accessible by anyone, although the difficulty levels do differ, offering interesting alternatives, from walks in exclusively mountainous areas to walks along the coast and shoreline or walks through a mixture of different types of landscape.

This magnificent irrigation system causes the admiration of all who wander the *Levadas*. This is a living document of the gigantic effort by local ancestors in order to distribute down the slopes and valleys the abundant water that emerges from the springs at the top of the mountains.

They are normally open on the ground but some are "torn" into the rock over precipices several hundred metres deep, and yet other cross the mountains, from north to south, through hundreds of metres of tunnels.

Following these *Levadas* – true world heritage – means enjoying the best views and experiencing a true alliance between nature and human beings.

There are over 200 *Levadas* running through the valleys and mountains, totalling 3000km, in a range of protected areas, among which Madeira Natural Park and the Funchal Ecological Park stand out.



Trekking



Canyoning in the Ribeiras

Canyoning

Canyoning is the exciting challenge of exploring gradually a stream or steep watercourse and it began in Madeira in 1989.

The vertical and aquatic obstacles are overcome using several different techniques, such as rock climbing, jumping, abseiling and swimming. Following the streams, of which there are many in the region, shows visitors the purest, most untouched parts of the island.

In the summer, the streams on the north side are more attractive, since their flow rate is higher. At winter, those on the south side are recommended because their drops are softer and their currents weaker.

The Ribeiro Frio and the Ribeira das Cales were the first canyoning spots to be explored and set up but currently this sport is enjoyed in dozens of other places like Ribeira da Pedra Branca, Ribeira da Hortelã, Ribeira do Passo, Ribeira do Inferno and Ribeiro Frio.

Every year the **RIC Madeira International Canyoning Meeting** takes place and is already a well-known event in this segment.

Trekking, rock climbing, abseiling and zip-wires

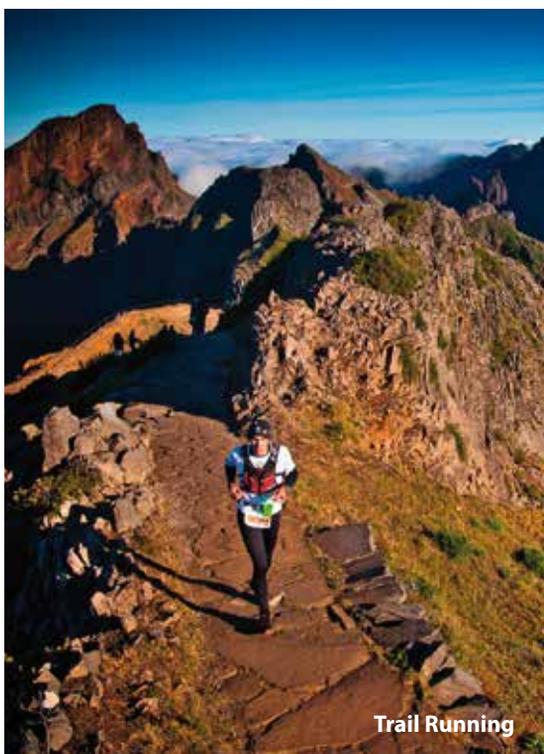
The untamed nature of the relief in Madeira and its medium mountain relief scenarios offer the chance to use paths of outstanding beauty and to enjoy deep contact with nature. The north of the island of Madeira and the central mountain range are the areas where you will find the most challenging paths to walk.

Those who like adventure can go rock climbing, abseiling or use zip-wires in the central mountain range of Madeira. The sea cliffs and some rocky walls of the north shore are also excellent places to do these types of radical sports.

Trail Running

Trail running is running over mountain paths and trails with uneven, slippery or varied ground. Trail running races, of different distances, can be very demanding, and this activity is recommended only for responsible participants who are aware of their abilities, and who have appropriate physical and psychological conditions for the scheduled routes.

Every year, Madeira hosts the **MIUT - Madeira Island Ultra Trail**, which is a mountain race comprised of different routes, as well as difficulty levels, registering a large entry of Portuguese and foreign athletes.



Trail Running

Activities for every taste...



**Madeira Firecrest
in the Laurissilva Forest**

Bird watching

The Madeira Islands have many areas classified as Biogenetic Reserves and Natural World Heritage, and there are numerous opportunities to observe land or sea birds, some of which are very rare.

The variety and specific nature of their ecosystems mean that some places are excellent for watching nesting and migratory birds, such as the Madeiran Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs madeirensis*), the Madeira Firecrest (*Regulus ignicapillus madeirensis*), the Robin (*Erithacus rubecula rubecula*), the Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea schmitzi*) or the Freira (*Pterodroma Madeira*).

Wherever you go, you will always find beautiful, rare birds.

There are companies in Madeira that are specialised in this area and organize trips on land or at sea, in accordance with the visitors' preferences.

Golf

The golfing tradition in Madeira goes back to 1937, when the first golf course was built.

On this island, you can play on two different golf courses: Palheiro Golf and the Santo da Serra Golf Club, with 18 and 27 holes correspondingly. Both are renowned for their beautiful, engaging settings.

The neighbouring island of Porto Santo, located 40km from Madeira, has a magnificent beach of golden sand and also has a 27-hole golf course designed by Severiano Ballesteros.

Whichever course you choose, you can be sure that you will find high-quality services and fabulous views over the sea, Funchal bay and the deep valleys.

Every year, one of the region's courses is chosen to host the **Madeira Island Open**, part of the Main Tour of the PGA European Tour, where many professional golfers from the region, Portugal and abroad attend to and it always appeal to large crowds.



Porto Santo Golf Course



Jeep Excursions

Jeep/Off-road Excursions

Discovering the island of Madeira in 4x4 vehicles means enjoying a different kind of day out, on an adventure in the cliffs and mountains in the middle of a dense, rich forest.

The sensations when travelling over natural obstacles, reaching rarely-visited or difficult-to-reach areas will stay in the memory of all those who go on this adventure!

Horse riding

You can go horse riding in Madeira and Porto Santo, at equestrian centres found in several different locations, with the support of experienced professionals.

You can also enjoy a horse ride escorted by an instructor.

Some places where you can take part in this activity are Caminho dos Pretos, in Funchal, Santo da Serra and Estreito de Câmara de Lobos.

Orienteering

Large forested areas and mild temperatures make this archipelago the perfect setting to practise orienteering. At Madeira Islands there are associations that promote and organise competitions throughout the year.

Segway tours

Follow your sense of direction at a Segway controls and discover some of Funchal's best locations in an electric and ecological two-wheel vehicle.

Cross-Country

Discover the pleasure of riding a XC bicycle or a Quad Bike along Madeira's water channels ("levadas") or its uneven earth roads with obstacles within Madeira's forest. A bicycle or a motorcycle can be rented on the islands of Madeira and Porto Santo, in order to discover the pleasure of driving along rough tracks of dirt. The **Downtown Funchal competition** takes place yearly in the city centre causing big thrills amongst the spectators.



Cross-Country

An ocean with so much to discover...



Desertas Islands Nature Reserve

Discover the secrets of the sea...

Whether watching the sunset from the top of the cliffs, swimming in the warm waters of the natural swimming pools or diving with the dolphins, the archipelago of Madeira offers many opportunities to make our visitors' stay truly unforgettable.

Garajau Partial Nature Reserve

This reserve was created in 1986 and is located on the south coast of the island of Madeira. Here you can experience a fantastic sea reserve, where you can find some large fish, such as the emblematic Dusky Grouper (*Epinephalus marginatus*), the Barred Hogfish (*Bodianus scrofa*), the Whiting (*Merlangius merlangus*) or the Manta Ray (*Manta birostris*) and several types of Mobula Rays (*Mobula sp.*), among many other coastal species.

The crystal clear water allows observing up to 20 metres deep and it is considered an excellent location for underwater photography.

Sítio da Rocha do Navio Nature Reserve

This sea reserve is located on the north coast, between the Ponta de São Jorge and the Ponta do Clérigo. It comprises the islet of Rocha das Vinhas or São Jorge and the islet of Viúva or Rocha do Navio. It is an important nesting point for pelagic sea birds, such as the Cory's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea borealis*) or the Bulwer's Petrel (*Bulweria bulwerii*) and coastal sea birds like the Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*). The sea environment is also very rich in biodiversity.

Ponta de São Lourenço

On the way to Ponta de São Lourenço, among the most untouched places in Europe, we find one of the best areas to observe groups of dolphins, turtles or even whales. At this spot, that covers several bays, an invitation to go swimming. It is also possible to uncover the north sea from the south sea and spot the local lighthouse.

Nature Reserves on the Desertas and Selvagens Islands

These small islands and islets to the south of Madeira Island are of volcanic origin and uninhabited.



Ponta de São Lourenço



Monk Seals on the Desertas Islands

On a magnificent boat trip to the Desertas Islands you will find the last Atlantic refuge of the Monk Seal (*Monachus monachus*), the rarest seal in the world, as well as dolphins, turtles and whales. Here, you can also see the Fea's Petrel (*Pterodroma feae*), an endangered species of bird. On Deserta Grande, there is a cove that is the perfect place to snorkel, with a great variety of marine fauna.

The Selvagens Islands are a nesting sanctuary for pelagic sea birds, such as the Cory's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea borealis*), the Madeiran Storm Petrel (*Oceanodroma castro*) or the Bulwer's Petrel (*Bulweria bulwerii*). Ground flora is very rich, with many native species.

Network of Marine Protected areas of Porto Santo

Are part of this network all other surrounding islets to the island of Porto Santo: Islet of Cenouras, islet of Baixo or Cal, islet of Cima or Farol, islet of Fora, islet of Fonte de Areia, islet of Ferro and also the marine area around the islet of Cal and the islet of Cima, up to 50 metres deep. The surrounding waters are home to a wide biodiversity of marine life.

As an island surrounded by a warm, clear ocean, Madeira is perfect for nautical activities all year round, including diving, fishing, surfing, windsurfing and stand up paddle surfing, among others.

Surfing, Windsurfing and Stand Up Paddle Surfing

If it's adrenaline you're after, the coasts of Jardim do Mar, Paul do Mar, Porto da Cruz and São Vicente, with their challenging waves, are perfect for a day of surfing. In some of these places there are schools that will assist you and make easier a first approach to this kind of sport.

You can also go windsurfing at Reis Magos or in Funchal and Stand Up Paddle Surfing at the Garajau and Ponta de São Lourenço Reserves, as well as at other bays around the archipelago.

Throughout the year there are several regional, national, European and even world competitions taking place in sailing, windsurfing and jet skiing, like the **Transquadra** regatta, the **Clipper Round the World Yacht Race** and the **Big Game Fishing Championship of Madeira**.



Porto Santo Island

At sea or in the air, these experiences are unforgettable!



Diving

Diving

Dive into the Atlantic waters and discover an underwater garden in one of the best places for diving in Europe. The warm, clear waters around Madeira allows you to dive in its Nature Reserves and observe cnidaria like anemones, black coral, fish like dusky groupers, moray eels, manta rays and even fur seals, the rarest seals in the world.

Caníço, Garajau, Machico, Caniçal and Santa Cruz are just a few of the places you can go diving in Madeira. There is also Madalena do Mar, where – 21 to 30 metres deep, 180 metres from the coast – you can find the "Bowbelle", the ship that sank there a few years ago. Today, is an artificial reef inhabited by the Salema Porgy (*Sarpa salpa*), the Bastard Grunt (*Pomadasyz incisus*), the Greater Amberjack and the Almaco Jack (*Seriola dumerili*, *Seriola rivolina*), the White Trevally (*Pseudocaranx dentex*) and even the Wahoo (*acanthocybium solandri*), which is definitely worth a visit!

Once in Funchal, you can take an underwater trip like "Baixa do Carneiro" or "Baixa das Moreias", which allows you to cover a specific route and see moray eels (*Gymnothorax unicolor* and *Muraena sp*) and surrounding flora.

Boat trips, Kayak trips and cetacean watching trips

Thanks to its excellent location on the Atlantic Ocean, it is possible to see cetaceans throughout the year around Madeira Islands.

Watch closely some of the 28 species of cetaceans that live or visit the waters of the Archipelago of Madeira. Throughout a boat trip, it is not unusual to see the Short-Beaked Common Dolphin (*Delphinus delphis*), the Atlantic Spotted Dolphin (*Stenella frontalis*), the Common Bottlenose Dolphin (*Tursiops truncatu*), the Sperm Whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*), the Short-Finned Pilot Whale (*Globicephala macrorhynchus*) or the Bryde's Whale (*Balaenoptera edeni*). Of the turtles, the Loggerhead Sea Turtle (*Caretta caretta*) is the most commonly seen.

Come to swim with playful dolphins and make your trip truly unforgettable!



Boat trips



Coasteering

On the island of Porto Santo you can see the diverse and abundant sea fauna from a new artificial reef created by the sinking of the cargo ship "O Madeirense", which for decades linked the Island of Madeira to mainland Portugal.

Coasteering

Coasteering is a recent outdoor activity on the island of Madeira, which combines abseiling, rock climbing and jumping into the sea with a trip along the coastline. It is an original way to enjoy the steep slopes around the bays, as well the grottoes and nooks with translucent water available around the island.

At the easternmost point of the island of Madeira, 9km long and 2km wide, we find the Ponta de São Lourenço Nature Reserve, which has a Coasteering route that allows visitors to see the natural beauty of the Baía d'Abra.

Fun in the air...

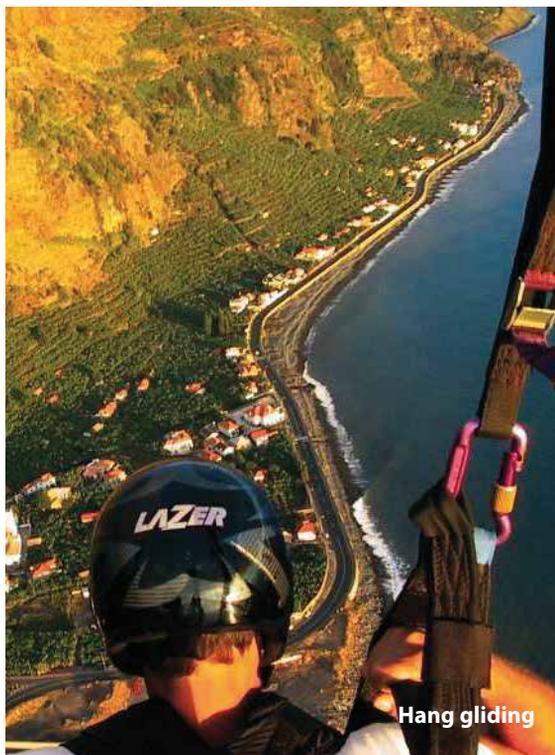
The Madeira Islands have great morphological conditions for air activities, giving visitors an original way to enjoy wonderful views over the islands. The dense valleys and sharp cliffs leading to the ocean encourage "journeys" that will take your breath away!

See the beautiful landscapes in Madeira in a way that only hang gliding can provide.

At different locations around the island of Madeira, you will find ideal places to take off on magical, unforgettable journeys! Pico da Cruz, the belvedere of Madalena, the area around Porto da Cruz and Prazeres are some of the starting points for an adventure in the air.

Madeira has a great number of tourist entertainment companies specialised in organising the activities found in this leaflet.

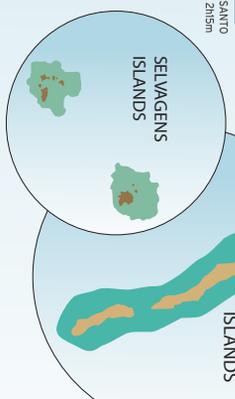
To book your activity or to hire equipment, please find out more about these companies on the website www.visitmadeira.pt



Hang gliding

MADEIRA ISLAND

ATLANTIC OCEAN



-  Freeway
-  Main Roads
-  Secondary Roads
-  Other Road
-  Tunnel
-  Footpath
-  Levada Walk
-  Canyon
-  Laurissilva Forest
-  Madeira Natural Park
-  Garajau Partial Nature Reserve
-  Ponta de São Lourenço
-  Rocha do Navio Nature Reserve
-  Desertas Nature Reserve
-  Selvagens Nature Reserve
-  Network of Marine Protected areas of Porto Santo Island

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