



Island Wildlife and Nature



HOLIDAY TYPE: Small Group

VISITING: Madeira

BROCHURE CODE: 5524

DURATION: 7 nights

In Brief

Madeira is a haven for marine life with its surrounding waters home to whales and dolphins. The island itself is brimming with natural wonder and amazement. This seven-night tour takes you from land to sea, searching for wildlife and discovering the lush forests and towering peaks of Madeira.

Our Opinion

“ Snorkelling with dolphins was one of the best experiences of my life. To see them swimming alongside the boat in the beautiful blue sea was absolutely incredible. Not only was the wildlife amazing, but the landscape was utterly breathtaking and simply beautiful. ”

Jono Archer



What's included?

- **Transfers:** all transfers included
- **Accommodation:** 7 nights' hotel accommodation in double/twin rooms
- **Meals:** 7 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 1 dinner
- **The following activities are included in the holiday:** East island tour with wine tasting, evening with folklore, Desertas Islands boat trip, west island jeep tour, whale and dolphin watching, snorkelling with dolphins, Levada do Rei (**the order of activities is subject to change**)
- Fully qualified guides and instructors during activities

Trip Overview

The landscape of Madeira is simply stunning and for such a small island, it has a huge variety of scenery. Towering mountain peaks covered in thick, green forests are home to a wealth of flora and fauna and the terraced hillsides are packed with colourful flowers and blooming fruit trees.

The Atlantic Ocean wraps around the Madeiran archipelago and the Gulf Stream makes the sea warm and pleasant and also a perfect year-round home for all sorts of marine life. Bottlenose and Atlantic-spotted dolphins, as well as humpback and short-finned pilot whales, are often found here in abundance, making it a wildlife lover's paradise.

This itinerary has been designed for you to explore as much of Madeira as possible and to maximise your chances of seeing wildlife on land and sea. You'll enjoy a tour of both the east and west parts of the island, travelling along the winding coastline, through the deep ravines and across the high, jagged mountain peaks. The sub-tropical climate has created beautiful forests of emerald green, filled with flowing rivers and streams and enchanting Levada, which are just asking to be explored and enjoyed. From the towering mountain peaks, you'll enjoy splendid views of the landscape beyond and the beautiful blue ocean below.

Thanks to its position in the Atlantic, Madeira enjoys warm, comfortable summers and mild winters. In fact, during most months of the year, you can enjoy the sub-tropical climate of Madeira in comfort, with average highs of 16-18°C from December to February and 18-23°C in the spring, summer and

autumn, it is a fantastic place to explore across the seasons.

After exploring the island by road, you'll take part in a boat trip to the dramatic Desertas Islands, which are a haven for wildlife, including a variety of birds and a monk seal colony. You'll also get to enjoy a whale and dolphin watching cruise aboard a small boat and, if you are in luck, you'll even have the chance to snorkel with the wild dolphins as they swim in the waters below; a truly magical experience like no other.

Back on land, a guided walk along the Levada do Rei will take you through the forests and terraces that surround the beautiful valley of Sao Jorge. Walking through ancient laurel forest, keep your eyes peeled for local wildlife as you head towards a gorgeous waterfall and savour the beautiful scenery of this stunning island.

Image credits: Madeira Promotion Bureau, Francisco Correia, Visit Madeira, Miguel Moniz, Carlos Viveiros, Miguel Perestrelo, Madeira Promotion Bureau

Agenda

Please note the order of activities is subject to change

DAY
1

ARRIVAL AND TRANSFER

You will be met at Funchal Airport and transferred to your hotel, the Castanheiro Boutique Hotel, which is located in Funchal's charming historic Old Town and surrounded by wonderful restaurants and shops.

For dinner, why not head to one of the many fantastic restaurants that are within easy reach of your hotel.

Changes to the itinerary: very occasionally, the itinerary and/or duration of activities may change according to local conditions, events or guest preferences. Decisions will be based first and foremost on your safety and comfort.

Included Meals: None

DAY
2

EAST ISLAND TOUR WITH WINE TASTING AND EVENING WITH FOLKLORE

The activities included in your itinerary are all group-based, with a focus on island exploration and discovery, so it is with that in mind that you will set out for a day of exciting adventure with your expert guide leading the way. Our guides know Madeira from top to bottom, so you're sure to come away with an array of facts from your day of adventure.

From Funchal, you will follow the winding road up towards Pico do Arieiro, into the heart of the Madeiran mountains. If the weather is clear, hopefully, you will be treated to clear views of the island below and the glittering expanse of the Atlantic Ocean. Driving on to Ribeiro Frio, this charming village is nestled in amongst lush forest and there is a charming trout hatchery, the products of which you will no doubt see swimming along the island's levadas!

From Ribeiro Frio, you can enjoy a short walk to the magnificent Balcoes viewpoint, where you can savour the landscape of rugged peaks and jagged mountain ridges, coated in dense forest. Heading down from the mountains, you'll pass through Santana, where you can see the traditional thatched roof houses of Madeira and then it is on to enjoy a three-course lunch in one of the most spectacular restaurant locations imaginable. Situated atop gigantic sea cliffs, the restaurant looks out towards the sea and the along the dramatic coastline. Sample some local Madeiran wine from the hotel's vineyards before heading back to Funchal via Porto da Cruz.

After a chance to refresh at your hotel, tonight you will be taken to a popular local restaurant where you will enjoy a traditional Madeiran meal, which will most likely be the fabulous local favourite Espetada, which consists of grilled chunks of garlic beef, served fresh at the table. You'll also experience the warm-hearted hospitality that the Islanders are so famous for, as you sit back and enjoy the local singers and folklore dancers. This is usually a very popular evening with various groups of visitors enjoying the entertainment and flavoursome, local food in an atmospheric setting.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY
3

DESERTAS ISLANDS BOAT TRIP

Today you will be transferred a short distance to Funchal's harbour where you will embark on a boat trip to the mysterious Desertas Islands. Setting sail at approximately 10 am, you will cruise along the seas in a traditional wooden gullet with covered seating and standing space on deck.

As the name suggests, the islands are deserted, however, they are a haven for birds, seals and other wildlife. Approaching by sea, the islands gradually loom into focus and the towering cliffs create an imposing vision, which makes you feel as if you are entering the Lost World.

A colony of monk seals call these islands home and hopefully, you will get to see whales and dolphins as you make the crossing from Madeira. Birds such as shearwaters, petrels, terns, buzzards and canaries flock to these islands and nest on the tall cliffs and barren ground and the skies are filled with their calls as they fly through the air.

After sailing past the colourful rock formations and enchanting coves, you will anchor in a secluded bay where you will have the chance to relax on the deck or swim in the sea. Following this, lunch will be served on board. You will then go ashore and enjoy a guided tour of the area before you head back to Funchal, arriving at approximately 6 pm.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY
4

WEST ISLAND JEEP TOUR

After a day of maritime exploration, today you will stay on land as you explore the western part of Madeira by jeep.

This full day tour will take you from Funchal and along the coast to Lugar de Baixo before heading into the mountains. Climbing up to the incredible Paul de Serra plateau, you will drive along this breathtaking landscape, which is so high that clouds often breeze over the roads. Descending towards Porto Moniz, you will drive through the magical laurel forest, brimming with colour and life. Plants and flowers line the roads and fruit orchards and vineyards line the terraces and hillsides.

The northern coastline is home to domineering sea cliffs and charming towns and villages. Stopping at Porto Moniz, you will enjoy a picnic lunch and have a chance to see the lava formations which have formed natural swimming pools, which are popular with the locals – bring your swimming kit, just in case there is time to bathe in the warm sea waters!

Heading back via Seixal and Sao Vicente, you will return to the hotel this evening.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY
5

WHALE AND DOLPHIN WATCHING; SNORKELLING WITH DOLPHINS

Today is hopefully going to be a wildlife experience like no other, as you set off this morning in search of whales and dolphins.

Following breakfast, you will head out into the Atlantic in search for marine life on a tour lasting approximately two hours. The waters that surround Madeira are teeming with species, including whales and dolphins, so hopefully, luck will be on your side today.

You will sail aboard a RIB (Rigid-hulled Inflatable Boat), or small catamaran and your expert captain will navigate the seas as your onboard marine biologist tells you about life in the Atlantic. Bottlenose and Atlantic-spotted dolphins are two of the most common species here and often they enjoy swimming alongside boats as you cut through the waves. Humpback, short-finned, pilot and sperm whales are known to live in these waters and perhaps you'll spot one of these as you cruise through the seas.

If the conditions are right, you will also be given the chance to join the dolphins in the sea as you snorkel alongside the boat. Although the dolphins may not swim as close to you as you would expect in a marine park, seeing them in the wild is an amazing experience and sure to create lifelong memories.

You will return to your hotel to enjoy an afternoon of relaxation or city exploration.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY
6

LEVADA DO REI

The Levadas of Madeira criss-cross the island travelling from the mountain tops down to the terraces, fields and villages below.

In the 15th Century, settlers on Madeira began cultivating the land, creating terraces and designing irrigation channels to bring the water down to their crops and by the early 1900s, there were about 200 levadas across the island.

During the mid-90s, the State implemented a large construction project to distribute the water more widely and there are now over 1350 miles of levadas on the island. Many of these can be enjoyed on foot as you walk alongside, marvelling at the spectacular views, wildflowers and luscious forests.

After breakfast this morning, you will be transferred to the northern part of the island to enjoy the Levada do Rei. This levada starts in Sao Jorge, journeying through thick laurel forest (designated as a World Heritage Site) and then opening up to panoramic views of the farmlands below. Rich in biodiversity, you will see a variety of trees, wildflowers and shrubs, as you venture along this fascinating path. Along the way, there are a few tunnels to travel through, so please bring along a small pocket torch and do mind your head as you go.

Arriving at the source of the levada, Ribeiro Bonito, you will enjoy a picnic lunch and savour the beautiful tranquillity of this wonderful location.

The walk will last for approximately three and a half hours, encompassing a round trip of roughly 6.3 miles (shorter, less strenuous levada walks are available on request). Due to the nature of the levada, in some places, there are steep drops which should be navigated with care. Please bring along suitable footwear (walking shoes or boots).

Returning to the hotel in the early evening, you will be able to relax and unwind.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY
7

FREE DAY

Today has been left free to you enjoy as you wish. You can choose to simply relax and unwind in the hotel's rooftop pool, or perhaps amble into Funchal to explore the markets and fascinating galleries and museums. There are a huge variety of cafes and restaurants, so you're sure to find something to tickle your taste buds.

Alternatively, if you would like to have a guided tour of Funchal's Old Town, or enjoy a walk to the stunning Ponta de Sao Lourenco peninsula, this can be arranged. Please see the '[Personalise](#)' tab for full details.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY
8

DEPARTURE

After breakfast at the hotel, you will be transferred back to the airport for your flight home.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Personalise this tour

Our pick



Old town tour of Funchal

Funchal's Old Town is a fascinating place to explore. This guided tour will take you to the local market 'Mercado dos Lavradores' where you'll find a huge array of fruits, flowers, spices and local delicacies.

After the market, you'll venture further into Funchal's Old Town, past the amazing 'Art of Open Doors' where artists have painted fascinating scenes on the historic doors that line the cobbled streets. The local shops and cafes are buzzing with excitement and atmosphere; it is a wonderful place to discover.

The tour ends with a chance to enjoy some wine tasting at The Wine Lodge, where you can sample some of Madeira's famous vintages.

Minimum numbers: 4

Please speak to our Travel Experts for a quotation.

Image credit: Visit Madeira & Francisco Correia

Other options

ACTIVITIES



Ponta de Sao Lourenco guided walk

Ponta de Sao Lourenco is the easternmost point of Madeira. The peninsula's terrain is completely different to the rest of the island, with towering sea cliffs of red, brown and orange. With little vegetation, the walk has unobstructed views out to sea and back towards the inner mountains of Madeira.

The sea cliffs are home to numerous species of bird, such as terns, canaries and the Madeiran Storm-Petrel and on a clear day, the Desertas Islands and Porto Santo can be seen.

This guided walk takes you along the sea cliffs and to the end of the peninsula. You will be picked up from your hotel and the walk will cover approximately 8 kilometres, lasting for around 4 hours, not including transfer time.

Minimum numbers: 2

Please speak to our Travel Experts for a quotation

Included Accommodation

Other options are available - see below for details.

Castanheiro Boutique Hotel (Nights: 1-7)



The Castanheiro Boutique Hotel is situated in Funchal's fascinating Old Town, next to the Palace of Jesuits and only steps away from a host of wonderful local restaurants, cafés and shops. The cobble streets, terracotta-roofed buildings and beautifully painted houses make for charming surroundings.

The hotel is composed of five historical buildings, each with a unique heritage and character.

Spanning from the 18th – 20th centuries, the buildings have been lovingly restored and transformed into this spectacular hotel.

Hotel facilities

- The hotel has a small rooftop swimming pool with wonderful views of the Old Town and the surrounding mountains
- Relax by the hotel's bar and enjoy a meal in the fabulous on-site restaurant
- Enjoy the spa area, complete with hydrotherapy pool, Jacuzzi and sauna
- Free Wi-Fi is available throughout the hotel
- For those wanting to exercise while away, there is also a small fitness room

Room options

Standard double/twin room

Our package includes accommodation in a double or twin-bedded standard room. Each room has an en-suite bathroom, as well as air conditioning, TV, telephone, hairdryer, in-room safe, minibar, robes & slippers.

Upgrade options are also available; please speak to our Travel Experts for further information.

Other accommodation options

Contact us for a personalised quote.



Castanheiro Boutique Hotel - upgrade

DE LUXE DOUBLE/TWIN ROOM

These rooms have all of the same inclusions that the standard rooms do, however, they each have a balcony with table and chairs, enjoying courtyard views, as well as a small kitchenette.

The Specifics

Holiday group size (approximate)

Approximately 2 - 30 people (up to 80 people may be present during the Desertas Islands boat trip)

Group Size

We always try to provide an approximation of the group size you can expect to be with for the duration of each of our holidays. It may be that you are joined by others for parts of your holiday (such as transfers and particular activities) but the above number reflects those you can normally expect to be with from beginning to end. If group size is something which is particularly important to you, please speak to our Travel Experts and they can suggest the best holidays for you.

Tailor-made holiday group sizes will vary for all activities as will the group size for any additional activities you book.

Minimum and maximum age

If a specific minimum age applies to this holiday, it can be found in the Key Facts box on the holiday Overview page.

Unless otherwise stated in the in the Key Facts box on the holiday Overview page, the minimum age for participation in an Artisan holiday is typically 8 years old (there may be younger children in some destinations who have booked with other companies). If an adult-only environment is important to you, then please contact our Travel Experts and they will advise on the best dates and destinations for you. If you are looking for a holiday designed specifically for families then please see our sister company www.activitiesabroad.com

Itinerary amendments

The order of activities listed in this agenda is provided for guidance only, your final and detailed itinerary will be provided either with your final travel documents (which are uploaded into your online account around a week prior to departure) or upon arrival.

Terms and Conditions

Our full booking terms and conditions can be found on our website: <https://www.artisantravel.co.uk/booking-conditions>