



Route through the Pearl of the Atlantic

FAMILIES

From: London

Travel details

● **DAY 1 · CITY OF ORIGIN - SANTA CRUZ - CÂMARA DE LOBOS - CABO GIRÃO - RIBEIRA BRAVA - PRAZERES - FAJÃ DA OVELHA - PONTA DO PARGO - PORTO MONIZ**

Flight departure from the city of origin to Madeira and rental car pick-up. Welcome to Europe's floating garden! You will find what you least expected on Madeira: relaxation, adventure, culture, history...

After landing you will arrive in Santa Cruz where you will pick up your rental car.

Once an important sugar producer, this town is now full of hotels and is also a great place for hiking enthusiasts, since it is close to the main trekking routes.

Despite the influx of tourism, it still retains a particular maritime charm with ancient monuments dating back to its colonisation like the Church of São Salvador (1533), the Municipal Chamber or the 19th century Palace of Justice. If flight schedules allow, we suggest starting the car tour of Madeira by heading straight to Porto Moniz (on the west coast), crossing the south of the island.

(Note: This itinerary must be adapted to the flight schedule).

After driving for only about 20 minutes we are already amazed by the cliffs of Cabo Girão, on the outskirts of Câmara de Lobos, which are some of the highest in Europe.

A sight only fit for the brave that will take your breath away.

And only the very bravest would dare climb the glass-floored viewpoint that juts out above a 500-metre drop! (Note: Câmara de Lobos is a popular area as it is the perfect spot to see sea lions).

Beforehand we suggest a visit to its charming fishing village, where you can pass the time admiring the pretty, colourful boats stranded on its grey, pebbled beaches. No wonder Winston Churchill was inspired to paint a series of pictures of the area that capture this region's charm.

This is the perfect place to try black cod, the village's most popular fish, followed with a "poncho", a strong liqueur made with lemon, honey, sugar and brandy. Ribeira Brava is very close to the cliffs of Cabo Girão.

Commonly known as the angry river, you can see why by witnessing its strong currents. Here the land is fertile, so all its gardens and fields, many of them part of the village, are full of exotic trees, colourful flowers and tropical fruit plantations. A picture full of colours and smells worthy of the best photographer.

After driving half an hour west you will arrive in Prazeres, surrounded by mountains and lush valleys. Here you will find Quinta Pedagógica dos Prazeres, a rural education and awareness project where you can see a local agricultural area, herb gardens and all kinds of exotic animals. Sample some of its traditional herbal teas and sweets in the Tea House and recharge your batteries before heading back to the car in search of new places to discover. A few minutes from here is Fajã da Ovelha, a quiet village of just over a thousand inhabitants whose foundation is due to an old chapel dedicated to São Lourenço.

Its main attraction is the viewpoint of Massapez, which offers breathtaking views of the fishing village of Paul do Mar, surrounded by its verdant terraces, its old tuna canning factory and salt factory.

You will also have views of the beach of Ribeira das Galinhas and the connecting road carved out of the rock.

In quarter of an hour you will arrive at Ponta do Pargo, which gets its name from the most popular catch in the area: "o pargo" (the snapper). This is the westernmost point of the island; the perfect place to disconnect and relax in front of the vastness admired from near the lighthouse, located at 312 metres above the turquoise sea. Also worth a visit is the Vereda da Garganta Funda to take in the natural fall of the water. Our last stop is Porto Moniz, which we will have plenty of time to get to know as it will be our base for the next few days. Before turning in for the night, take a walk along the harbour and try the delicious fresh seafood or fish.

Overnight stay in Porto Moniz.

● DAY 2 · PORTO MONIZ - PAUL DA SERRA - BOCA DE ENCUMEADA - SÃO VICENTE - PORTO MONIZ

Less than an hour from Moniz is the vast, flat mountain marsh of Paul da Serra, full of grazing sheep and goats. This high plateau, located at 1,400 metres and situated between the south and north of the island, offers panoramic views that contrast Madeira's cliffs and mountains.

It is the starting point for many trails that connect various points of the island such as Rabaçal, Risco and Bica da Cana through the Laurel forests, declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Take extra care, naturally, if you see signs for "cows" along the road, because you may meet some on the way. Very close to Paul da Serra is Boca da Encumeada. It is a viewpoint that rises to 1,007 metres above sea level and is located in the mountain range that crosses Madeira. Take your camera and allow yourself some time to enjoy one of the island's finest vistas. From here you have some outstanding views of the north and south coast. The area is home to the ancient "Caminho Real", a treat for walkers who want to uncover the secrets of these mountains.

Leaving the interior of the island, we head for the north coast to reach São Vicente, nestled between a valley and stunning mountains. It is famous for its caves formed by lava some 400,000 years ago. There are guided tours that cover part of its 700 metres, you go through tunnels and underground hideouts, and also learn about its history and how volcanoes work. There is also the Volcanism Centre, perfect for those interested in finding out more about the mysteries of their geology.

Relive the stories of Jules Verne and find out about the epicentre where this volcanic island is believed to have been born!

But São Vicente has much more to offer than caves. This coastal town is the favourite haunt for lovers of water sports as its beaches enjoy huge waves that are perfect for surfing and kitesurfing. We return to Porto Moniz.

If you arrive in time, it is a great chance to visit it. If you don't, you can do so tomorrow before you leave. One of its best attractions are the natural lava swimming pools, some of the most impressive in the world. (Note: If, due to flight schedules, you did not have chance to do everything planned for the first day, this is the time to do it). Do not miss out on anything!

Overnight stay in Porto Moniz.

● DAY 3 · PORTO MONIZ - PONTA DELGADA - SANTANA

Before leaving Porto Moniz, we recommend a visit to the fort of São Joao Baptista, an 18th century architectural wonder. We get back on the road skirting the north coast until arriving at Ponta Delgada. The village, which has beautiful sea and mountain scenery, is popular for its famous religious festival of "Senhor Bom Jesus" that attracts thousands of pilgrims every September.

Celebrations aside, this small coastal town is also a good place to enjoy the sun as it has recently created a complex of saltwater pools with a range of bathing facilities. And they have been created right on the seashore, with the best views of the bay. However, its waters are not the only reason to visit Ponta Delgada, there is also the picturesque 15th century church of Imaculado Coração de Maria, again located on a prime spot by the sea. Following the coastal road east, you will reach the colourful town of Santana in under an hour. Colourful due to its traditional architecture of unique triangular wooden huts built with thatched roofs. The visit to this enclave will give you the opportunity to get to know the culture and the way of life of the local people. From here you can choose to take one of the many interesting routes. You can head to Parque das Queimadas, where Pico Ruivo is located, the highest peak of the island at 1,861 above sea level, and the Laurel Forest, a relic of the past now rarely found in the world. It is the largest remaining laurel forest and is home to a unique collection of plant and animal species. This is why it has been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Remember, if you want to see it, you must book in advance.

Our last option lets you enjoy a 300-metre waterfall that tumbles into a small pool of ferns in the Caldeirão Verde (Green Cauldron).

A wide range of options so you can tailor your trip.

Overnight stay in Santana.

● DAY 4 · SANTANA - PORTO DA CRUZ - MACHICO - CANIÇAL - PUNTA DE SÃO LOURENÇO - SANTANA

Today we leave Santana and follow the north coast up to the eastern tip of Madeira. Our first stop is Porto da Cruz not far from Santana. It is famous for its surfing and surrounding hiking trails. Its name came from the cross that was built on the coast to signal the port to Portuguese explorers. Nowadays, it is a picture-postcard rural village with zigzag streets and white houses with gardens that create a peaceful haven. The ruins of its 18th-century citadel and the Solar da Nossa Senhora de Belém, a manor house dating back to 1770, remind the traveller of its past. Porto da Cruz conserves part of its history of sugar production and still has the refinery where rum and "dry wine" is produced, which has become so popular that an annual festival is held.

In fact, if you are interested, you can still visit a sugar cane mill today to see how its machinery works and the final bottling of its liqueurs.

And you can discover its spectacular nature at Vereda do Larano, on the edge of a cliff some 300 metres above sea level.

Naturally, the views merit more than just one photograph to take home as a reminder.

If you feel like taking a dip, you will find a range of facilities at Praia da Lagoa to enjoy a day in the water. A 20-minute drive is Machico, a landmark municipality in Madeira's history. Gonçalves Zarco and Tristão Vaz Teixeira landed here in 1419 when they discovered Madeira. The bay of Machico with its Banda Além, a 125-metre long beach of yellow sand, is enclosed in a valley and protected by the Pico do Facho.

Even though it is man-made, it is one of Madeira's best beaches, as you can sunbathe, it is quiet and also very sheltered. Its old town will amaze you with its imposing 15th-16th century church, Nossa Senhora da Conceicao, and in the fishermen's quarter, the fort of Nossa Senhora do Amparo that stands out from the picturesque little houses around it.

And from the top of its mountains you will reach another of the island's spectacular viewpoints: the viewpoint of Portela. Nearby is the small fishing port of Caniçal, which until 1981 was the last whaling port in southern Europe. If you want to know more about its past and how they captured these animals, visit the Whale Museum. However, if you want to get more up close to nature, why not hop on board one of the boats that leave the pier to watch some whales and even swim alongside dolphins! (Note: Tour not included). Afterwards, relax in Prainha with its volcanic black sand, before taking a table at one of its restaurants to try one of the local specialties- tuna. After lunch we head to the tip of São Lourenço, one of the last unspoilt places in Europe. A combination of rock formations that join with the sea and contrast with its sparse vegetation. From here you can take in breathtaking views of both the north and south of the island and, on clear days, you can even see the island of Porto Santo.

Return and overnight stay in Santana.

● DAY 5 · SANTANA - FAIAL - RIBEIRO FRIO NATURAL PARK - PICO DO ARIEIRO - CAMACHA - FUNCHAL

It is farewell to Santana because today we set off for Faial, a coastal town whose name comes from the area's native beech trees. A good way to start the visit is to take a stroll around the fishing port, breathe in the sea breeze and watch the fishermen working with their nets. One of the country's best karting circuits is nearby.

At mid-morning, check out the food stalls and buy "anonas" (custard apples).

It is the area's main crop and they are highly prized. You can spend some of the day on the beach. It is pebble, but you can swim there in the summer as it is sheltered from the ferocity of the Atlantic. Do not miss the Fort of Faial that still has several original cannons once used by the villagers to fend off invaders. You can enjoy one of the most spectacular sunsets from here. As a matter of fact, it is rated as one of the 25 most beautiful sunsets in the world.

A genuine claim to fame.

After half an hour's drive you will arrive at Ribeiro Frio, a Natural Park located to the north of the island. Entering is like penetrating the purest nature protected by mountains. Many hikers are drawn here by its trails and the desire to discover their hidden secrets. What is sure is that a visit to the trout farm and fish hatchery is not to be missed. One that should end in sampling a freshly prepared trout. A little over 20 minutes away is Pico do Arieiro, towering some 1,818 metres above sea level, it is one of island's highest points. It is the only peak whose observation point is accessible by car, therefore you don't need to climb all the way up on foot. As you ascend you will see the green forests of Madeira disappear making way for cleaner and more barren scenery in the middle of a steep but equally verdant mountain. With its clear blue sky it is a photographer's paradise. It will be difficult to tear yourself away from the view, but do not worry because there are more jewels still to be discovered. Half an hour away is Camacha, known throughout the world for its wicker baskets and folk tradition. It also the place where football was first played in Portugal. A real milestone to remember!

Today's journey is almost over.

You will shortly arrive in a city full of cobbled streets stretching between the hillside facing the sea. Welcome to Funchal, the capital of Madeira. We will be staying here tomorrow too, so we suggest doing some shopping, admiring its famous embroidery and tapestry, and trying the well-known beef "espetada" (skewer) served with fried corn. Overnight stay in Funchal.

● DAY 6 · FUNCHAL - CURRAL DAS FREIRAS - MONTE - FUNCHAL

Get ready to visit the heart of the island of Madeira. After half an hour's drive from Funchal you will reach the picturesque village of Curral das Freiras, located in the crater of the dormant volcano in the "Valley of the Nuns", one of the most impressive sites in all of Madeira. It is situated in a deep valley that once protected the local inhabitants from pirate raids. A group of nuns from the convent of Santa Clara actually took refuge here during one of those attacks. Hence its peculiar name. This valley has cliffs on three of its four sides. Just how the houses are built on their slopes is real feat of engineering. It goes without saying that this isolated village practically lives on what it cultivates on its lands. The chestnut is one of the most well-known crops and used in all kinds of dishes: soups, cakes and liqueurs. In actual fact, one of its most popular celebrations is the Chestnut Festival. After admiring nature's magic, we can head for Monte, just 30 minutes by car from here, almost in Funchal, the island's capital. It can even be said that this is the top part of the city. It is believed that Emperor Charles I of Austria was exiled in Monte during World War I. Therefore, as you can imagine, it is teeming with history. Even today you can see the remains of the old railway, which had to be dismantled during the Nazi era and its steel used for the war effort. One of the must-sees in Monte is its Tropical Palace, an enchanting garden overflowing with plants and exotic trees. Another place not to be missed is the church Nostra Senhora do Monte, home to the tomb of Charles I of Austria. Its virgin is the patron saint of the island, and the patron festival attracts many faithful followers (on the 15th August). However, one of the most fun ways to get to Monte is to take the cable car that connects it with the capital. You will be lifted some 560 metres up the mountain side in just 15 minutes. And as you can imagine, the views will keep your camera very busy. Upon getting back down, what better way than taking a typical basket sled! Just imagine travelling down Monte's steep streets in a kind of large basket made of wood and wicker driven by the "wagons", two drivers pushing it on foot. They are like sledges, but instead of gliding over snow they do it on asphalt. What an experience! If it doesn't take your fancy and you prefer to go by car, at least stop and watch the spectacle of the basket sleds. You will find them near the church steps. Seeing them is a show in itself. Once you arrive in Funchal feel free to choose how you want to spend your time. The capital of Madeira has a whole host of attractions, with various museums, a great variety of water sports, wonderful beaches to soak up the sun, a port to take a stroll, beautiful gardens where to relax, catamaran trips to see whales and seals, traditional handicrafts and lively nightlife. Some worthy of special mention are the vibrant and lively Mercado dos Lavradores (Farmers Market), located in the heart of the old town. You will notice the sellers are usually dressed in their traditional clothes, creating a fascinating atmosphere. And if you still haven't tasted the island's incredible wine, in Funchal you have the opportunity to visit the Blandy winery, the archipelago's oldest. It is housed in an old monastery, so you can imagine what awaits you inside. A mix of tradition and modernity, without losing an ounce of the area's authentic feel.

Overnight stay in Funchal.

● DAY 7 · FUNCHAL - CITY OF ORIGIN

Arrival at the airport with enough time to drop off your rental car and flight back to the city of origin.

Arrival. End of the trip and our services.

Your trip includes

Your trip includes

- ✓ Return flight.
- ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Porto Moniz.
- ✓ Selected meal plan in Porto Moniz.
- ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Santana.
- ✓ Selected meal plan in Santana.
- ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Funchal.
- ✓ Selected meal plan in Funchal.
- ✓ Rent-a-car.
- ✓ Insolvency protection.

Your trip doesn't include

- ✗ Accommodation taxes in Funchal direct payment in facility.
- ✗ Possible toll charges.

Destinations Visited

Santa Cruz



Câmara De Lobos



Ponta Do Sol



Faja Da Ovelha



Ponta do Pargo



Porto Moniz



São Vicente



Santana



Porto da Cruz



Machico



Canical



Camacha



Funchal



Curral Das Freiras



Important remarks

- Triple rooms in Europe are generally rooms with twin beds or a double, in which a folding bed is installed to

accommodate the third person. Due to the inconvenience this causes, we advise against using this option as far the possible.

- Check-in time at the hotel on the day of arrival depends on each establishment, but in no case will it be before 3:00 p.m., unless otherwise indicated.
- The proposed excursions and tours for each day are purely suggestions, as you can tailor the trip to suit your times, tastes and needs.
- A credit card is considered a guarantee, so sometimes you will need one for check-in at hotels.
- Hotels usually have cots available. Otherwise, babies will have to share a bed with an adult.
- To pick up your rental car, you'll need a credit (not debit) card in the name of the person who made the booking, who must also be the named driver of the vehicle.
- Consult the necessary documentation to enter the destinations visited and for transit in the countries where air stopovers are made.
- If you want to explore its natural attractions and mountainous areas we recommend taking some warm clothing.