

Madeira

Portugal

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Madeira is a Portuguese island region in the Atlantic, about 1,000 km southwest of Lisbon and closer to Africa than to mainland Europe. It is volcanic and very steep. Peaks above 1,800 m stand only a few kilometres from the sea, and most of the coast is cliff rather than beach. The climate stays mild all year, so the island works as a winter escape as much as a summer one.

This is a walking and driving destination, not a beach one. Centuries-old irrigation channels called levadas carry footpaths deep into forest and mountain valleys that would otherwise be unreachable. A good road network puts most of the island within about 90 minutes of the capital, Funchal, which holds most of the hotels, restaurants and museums. *Cristiano Ronaldo* was born in Funchal in 1985, and the island's airport carries his name.

When to visit

Madeira has no bad season, and the gap between winter and summer is small. Spring and early summer are the driest and clearest on the south coast. Most rain falls between October and January. Weather also differs sharply across the island. The north coast and the high peaks are often in cloud while Funchal is sunny, so check conditions the same morning before you commit to a hike. The event worth planning around is the Flower Festival in Funchal, which runs for roughly a month in spring, starting a few weeks after Easter. Its flower carpets, children's "Wall of Hope" ceremony and parade of floats fall mostly on weekends.

Allow four or five nights. That is enough for Funchal, one long day in the mountains and a loop of the north coast.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Good Good for hiking	18° / 21° 11–18°	15° / 12°	Dry air
February	Great Great for hiking	18° / 21° 10–18°	15° / 12°	Dry air
March	Good Good for hiking	18° / 21° 10–19°	15° / 12°	Dry air
April	Great Great for sightseeing	19° / 22° 11–20°	15° / 13°	Calm winds
May	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 24° 12–22°	17° / 14°	22 sunny days · Calm winds · UV 8 (Very high)
June	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 26° 13–24°	19° / 17°	22 sunny days · Humid air · Calm winds · UV 9 (Very high)
July	Great Great for sightseeing	25° / 28° 15–26°	21° / 19°	26 sunny days · Muggy, humid air · UV 10 (Very high)
August	Great Great for the beach	26° / 29° 16–27°	22° / 20°	25 sunny days · Muggy, humid air · Calm winds · UV 9 (Very high)
September	Great Great for sightseeing	25° / 28° 16–26°	21° / 19°	21 sunny days · Muggy, humid air · Calm winds
October	Good Good for sightseeing	23° / 26° 15–24°	20° / 17°	Humid air · Calm winds
November	Good Good for sightseeing	20° / 24° 13–21°	18° / 15°	14 rainy days
December	Good Good for sightseeing	19° / 21° 12–19°	16° / 14°	13 rainy days

Varies by region: the smaller figure under each day temperature is the range from the cooler to the warmer parts.

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5; NASA POWER (MERRA-2) · 1996–2025

Top sights

A Cabo Girão is the island's signature viewpoint. A glass-floored platform hangs about 580 m above the sea, on one of the highest sea cliffs in Europe.

B Pico do Areeiro is the one high peak you can reach without a hike, because a road runs almost to the summit. From the car park a paved path leads to the viewing platform in a few minutes.

C Pico Ruivo is the highest point on Madeira at 1,862 m, and can only be reached on foot. The classic approach is the ridge path from B Pico do Areeiro, with carved steps, tunnels and long drops.

D Ponta de São Lourenço is the bare eastern tip of the island, all red and ochre rock with almost no trees. The out-and-back trail along the peninsula is one of Madeira's most popular walks.

E Laurissilva Forest is the ancient laurel forest covering much of the island's north and centre. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the largest surviving forest of its type in the world.

F Porto Moniz Natural Pools are seawater pools held in black lava rock on the north-west coast, with the Atlantic breaking just beyond the wall. There is a free natural section and a paid complex with changing rooms.

G Mercado dos Lavradores is Funchal's covered market, best in the morning for fish, tropical fruit and flowers. Fruit sellers press free samples on visitors and then charge by weight, so agree the quantity first.

H Monte Palace Tropical Garden sits above Funchal at Monte. It combines a steep hillside garden with Portuguese tile panels, African sculpture and Japanese-style water gardens.



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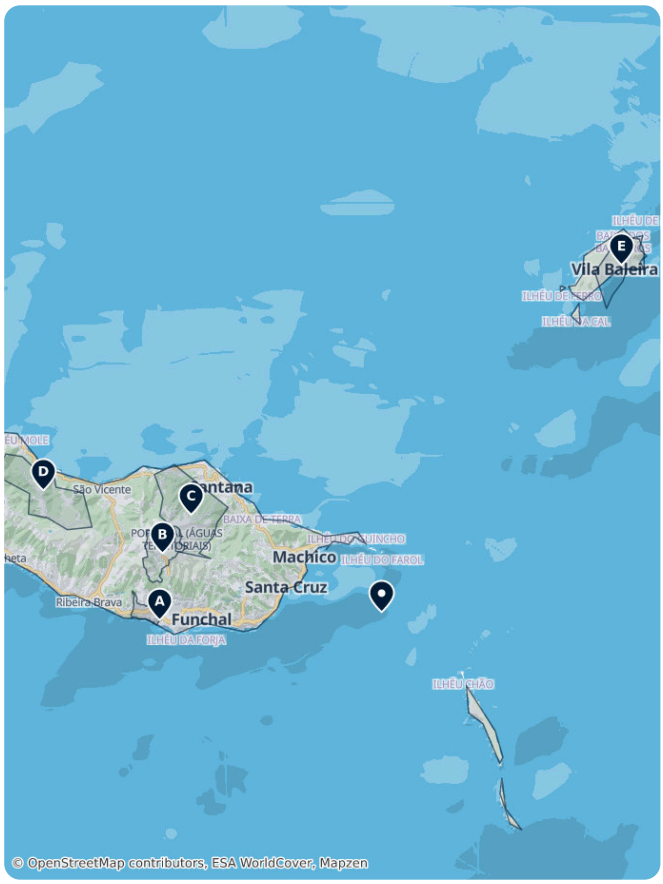
What to experience

A few things here are worth building a day around.

- Madeira Toboggan is the wicker sledge run down from Monte. Two men in straw hats and white uniforms steer a basket on greased wooden runners for about 2 km of public road. It began as transport for people coming down from the hills.
- Walk a levada. The maintenance paths beside the irrigation channels give nearly level trails through forest that would otherwise be closed off. Cascata das 25 Fontes and Caldeirão Verde are the two classics. Both need a paid permit, bought in advance on the regional government's SIMplifica portal. The second route crosses four unlit rock tunnels, so a torch is essential there.
- Drive up for sunrise at Pico do Areeiro. On many mornings the summit stands above an unbroken layer of cloud. Leave Funchal about 90 minutes before sunrise and bring a warm jacket; it is often near freezing up there.
- Go whale and dolphin watching from Funchal marina. Boats sail all year, and bottlenose dolphins and pilot whales live in these waters rather than passing through on migration.
- Watch the New Year fireworks over Funchal bay. The city is built in a bowl around the harbour, so almost every street above the water has a view. Hotels and ferry cabins sell out many months ahead.

Day trips

Madeira is small enough to base yourself in one place, usually Funchal, and reach almost anything in a day. Times below are one way by car. Buses serve the same towns, but far less often.



- Ⓐ Câmara de Lobos — 15 minutes west. A working fishing harbour full of painted boats, easily combined with the cliff viewpoint above it.
- Ⓑ Curral das Freiras — 40 minutes north. A village at the bottom of a ring of mountains, reached through a tunnel that opens straight onto the valley. Known for chestnuts.
- Ⓒ Santana — 1 hour north-east. Home to the triangular thatched A-frame houses at Santana Traditional Houses, and the usual starting point for the Caldeirão Verde levada walk.
- Ⓓ Porto Moniz — 1 hour 15 minutes north-west, and the best full-day loop on the island. Pair the lava pools with the misty laurel plateau around Lagoa do Fanal and the dark-sand cove at Praia do Porto do Seixal.
- Ⓔ Porto Santo — about 2 hours 30 minutes by ferry from Funchal. A flat, dry island whose single beach, Porto Santo Beach, runs for 9 km of golden sand, on a scale Madeira's own small dark-sand and pebble beaches cannot match. It works as a long day trip and better as an overnight.

Where to explore

Madeira's municipalities differ a lot in character, and the one you stay in shapes the trip.

- Funchal is the capital and the practical base. The airport transfer, most hotels, the market, the marina and the cable car are all here.
- On the sunny south coast, Câmara de Lobos is a fishing town a short drive from the capital, and Calheta in the south-west has Praia da Calheta, one of the island's few sandy beaches.
- The wilder north coast holds São Vicente, set in a deep green valley where the old cliff road runs out to Véu da Noiva, Santana with the thatched houses, and Porto Moniz at the north-west corner. São Vicente's lava caves, once the area's main draw, have been shut for structural work since 2020.
- To the east, Machico was the site of the first Portuguese landing and has Praia de Machico, a sheltered beach of imported sand. Offshore, Porto Santo is the archipelago's other inhabited island.

Getting there

- **By air**: Cristiano Ronaldo Madeira International Airport (FNC) is at Santa Cruz, about 18 km east of Funchal. Direct flights link it with Lisbon, Porto and many European cities. The Aerobus reaches Funchal hotels in roughly 30–40 minutes; a taxi takes about 25 minutes and costs around 25–30 €. Official site: Madeira Airport. The runway sits on a platform above the sea, and strong crosswinds occasionally divert flights to Porto Santo or the mainland.
- **By sea**: there is no regular year-round passenger ferry from mainland Portugal, so nearly everyone flies. Funchal's harbour is a busy cruise stop, and a daily ferry links it with Porto Santo in about 2 hours 30 minutes.
- **Onward to Porto Santo**: besides the ferry, a short flight from Funchal takes about 15 minutes and lands at Porto Santo Airport (PXO).

Getting around

- **Bus**: Horários do Funchal runs the yellow city buses, and separate regional operators cover the rest of the island. Since 2024 they all sit inside one network, **SIGA**, with shared ticketing. Buy tickets from the driver, or load a rechargeable card at a kiosk for a lower fare. Timetables are built around residents rather than day trippers, so check the last return before you plan a bus day out. Horários do Funchal
- **Cable car**: Funchal Cable Car climbs from the old town up to Monte in about 15 minutes. It is a real transport link, not only a ride, and it saves a long uphill drive.
- **Taxi**: metered yellow taxis wait at ranks across Funchal and are easy to find. Fares to villages outside the city follow a fixed tariff, so ask for the price before you leave.
- **Car**: the practical way to reach the mountains and the north coast — see the driving section.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

Central Funchal is compact and pleasant on foot, but it is built on a slope, so most walks involve real climbing and steps. Outside the towns, walking is recreation rather than transport.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

Gradients are severe, roads are narrow, and much of the main coastal expressway runs through tunnels closed to bikes. Cycling here is a sport, not a way to get around.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?** Yes, if you want more than Funchal. Buses reach the main towns but not the trailheads or viewpoints, and the clear window in the mountains is often only a couple of hours long. Rental is cheap and the airport desks are the easiest place to collect one.
- **The roads**: the VR1 expressway crosses the south coast through a chain of tunnels and makes east–west travel quick. Inland and northern roads are steep, narrow and full of hairpins, so a small car is much easier than a large one. **Madeira has no road tolls**, unlike the Portuguese mainland.
- **Parking**: Funchal has paid underground car parks and metered blue-zone street parking on weekdays. Trailhead parking at Pico do Areeiro has been paid since 2025 and takes cards only. Both of its car parks fill around sunrise, and cars left on the approach road are towed.

Food & drink

Madeiran cooking is not the same as the mainland's. The dishes to look for:

- **Espada com banana** — black scabbardfish, a deep-sea fish, fried with banana.
- **Espetada** — beef rubbed with garlic and grilled on a laurel skewer.
- **Bolo do caco** — a flat sweet-potato bread served hot with garlic butter.
- **Milho frito** — fried cubes of set maize porridge.
- **Poncha** — the local drink, made from sugarcane spirit, honey and lemon or passion fruit.

Subtropical fruit turns up everywhere, especially passion fruit and custard apple. Madeira wine is fortified and deliberately heated as it ages, which is why an opened bottle keeps for months.

For eating, aim at areas rather than chasing individual restaurants. The Zona Velha in Funchal, along Rua de Santa Maria, is a dense run of small places behind painted doors. The harbour at Câmara de Lobos is the traditional place for grilled limpets and fresh fish. For the wine, Blandy's Wine Lodge in central Funchal runs tours and tastings in its old lodge.

What to eat & drink

LUNCH

Caldo Verde
A simple, comforting soup of shredded kale, potato, and slices of chourico sausage.

Francesinha
A hearty Porto specialty: a meat-stuffed sandwich covered in melted cheese and a spiced tomato-beer sauce.

DINNER

Bacalhau
Salt cod, Portugal's national dish, said to be prepared in hundreds of different ways across the country.

Sardinhas Assadas
Charcoal-grilled sardines, especially popular in summer street festivals and along the coast.

Arroz de Marisco
A rich, soupy seafood rice, similar to paella but wetter, packed with shellfish.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Pastel de Nata
A small custard tart in flaky pastry, best eaten warm with cinnamon and sugar.

DRINKS

Vinho Verde
A young, light, slightly sparkling white wine from northern Portugal, meant to be drunk within a year of harvest.

Port Wine · Vinho do Porto
A fortified wine from the Douro Valley, aged in cellars around Porto, ranging from sweet ruby to complex aged tawny styles.

Ginjinha · Ginãa
A sweet liqueur made from sour cherries, traditionally served in a small cup, sometimes with a cherry at the bottom.

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Safety & health

Madeira is one of the safest destinations in Europe. Violent crime against visitors is very rare, and pickpocketing is limited to the usual crowded spots — the market, the cable car queue, the seafront promenade. Organised tourist scams are not really a problem here.

The real risks are outdoors. Levada paths often run beside unfenced drops, and trails close after rockfalls and heavy rain, so check the official status before you set out: Visit Madeira. Several official trails also need a paid permit bought online in advance. Mountain weather turns fast, so carry a windproof layer and a torch even for a short walk. Swimming outside marked beaches and pool complexes is dangerous because of Atlantic swell and rip currents.

History

Portuguese captains reached the uninhabited islands in 1418 and 1419, and settlement began a few years later under *Henry the Navigator*. Settlers burned off forest to plant sugarcane, and for about a century Madeira was one of Europe's main sugar suppliers. That money paid for Funchal Cathedral, completed in the early 1500s, whose carved cedar ceiling survives from the sugar years.

The wealth also drew raiders. French corsairs sacked Funchal in 1566, and the coastal forts standing today, including Forte de São Tiago, went up afterwards. When Brazilian plantations undercut island sugar, Madeira turned to wine, and British merchant families settled to trade it. Blandy's Wine Lodge is still run by descendants of one of them. Sugarcane never vanished completely: Porto da Cruz Sugarcane Mill still crushes cane with a steam engine each spring.

In the 19th century doctors sent tuberculosis patients to Funchal for the climate, and the island filled with quintas — merchant estates that are now hotels and gardens. *Winston Churchill* painted the harbour at Câmara de Lobos in 1950, and the spot where he sat is still marked.

Country facts

Madeira is an autonomous region of Portugal, so the country's practical basics apply here:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



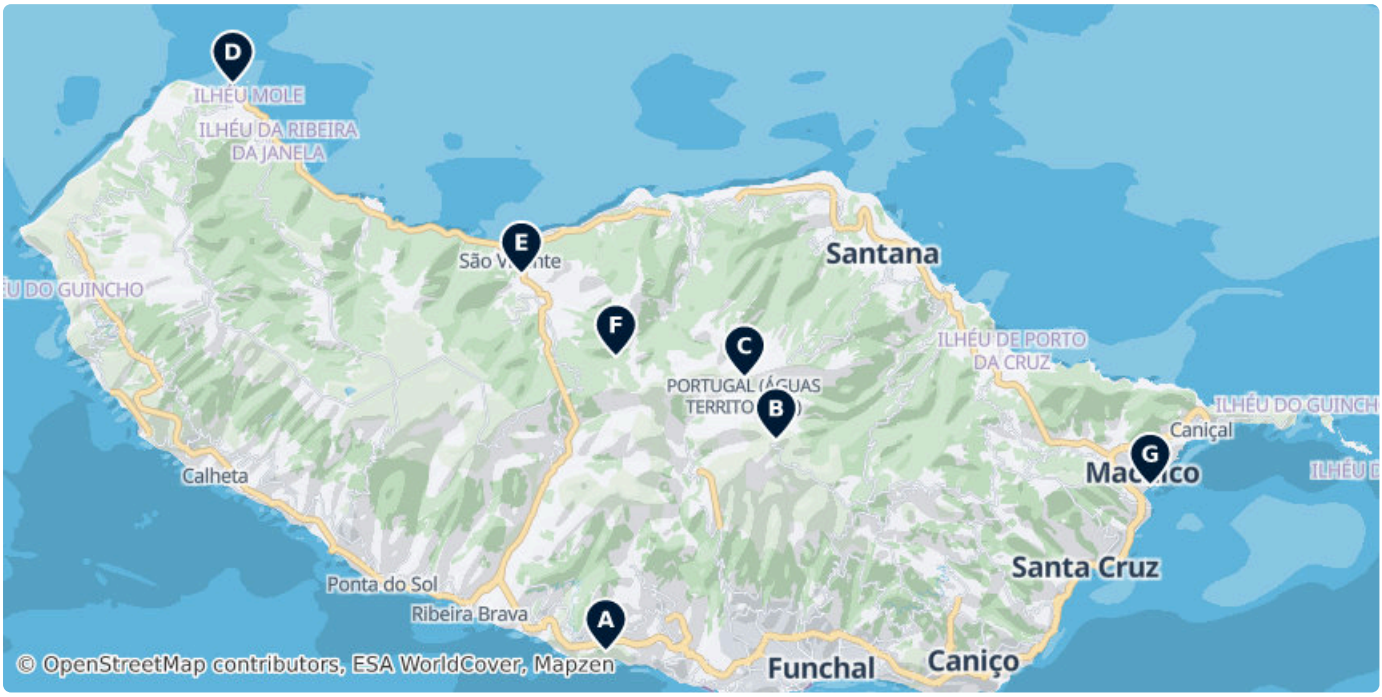
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LANGUAGES
Portuguese

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Madeira's Editor's Choice

This selection highlights Madeira’s standout natural and geological sites: Cabo Girão’s towering sea cliff with a suspended glass platform overlooking terraced farmland and the south coast; Pico do Arieiro and Pico Ruivo, high mountain peaks linked by steep hiking routes and panoramic ridgelines; the volcanic lava pools at Porto Moniz fed by the Atlantic; the São Vicente volcanic caves and interpretation centre; the UNESCO-protected Laurissilva laurel forest; and Machico’s imported-sand beach.





A Cabo Girão

Highest promontory in Europe featuring a suspended glass platform with panoramic views over the south coast and local agricultural landscapes.

Câmara De Lobos, Madeira, Portugal (32.65647, -17.00444)

Mo–Su 08:00–20:00

visitmadeira.com/pt/, +351291214120



B Pico do Areeiro

Mountain peak with an altitude of 1,818 meters, featuring panoramic views of the surrounding mountain massif and the Atlantic Ocean.

9230, Portugal (32.73548, -16.92866)

+351291705555



C Ruivo Peak

Pico Ruivo is the highest peak on Madeira Island. It can be reached only by foot, usually either from Pico do Areeiro after a strenuous hike...

9230, Portugal (32.75888, -16.94276)



D Porto Moniz Natural Pools

Natural seawater pools formed by volcanic rocks, featuring extensive swimming areas and panoramic coastal views. The pools include supporting infrastructure and are accessible year-round.

Praia Porto Moniz, 9270-053 Porto Moniz, Portugal (32.86876, -17.17053)

Mo–Su 09:00–19:00

portomoniz.pt/pt/visitantes/pontos-de-i... , +351291850180



E Sao Vicente Caves & Volcanism Centre

The São Vicente Caves are caves located in the parish and county of São Vicente, Madeira.

Sitio do pé do Passo, 9240-039 São Vicente, Madeira, Portugal (32.79754, -17.04206)

grutasecentrodovulcanismosaovicente... , +351 291 842 404



F Laurel Forest

UNESCO World Heritage Site. Endemic Laurel forest with an abundance of biodiversity and rare species. A must see.

9240, Portugal (32.76670, -17.00000)



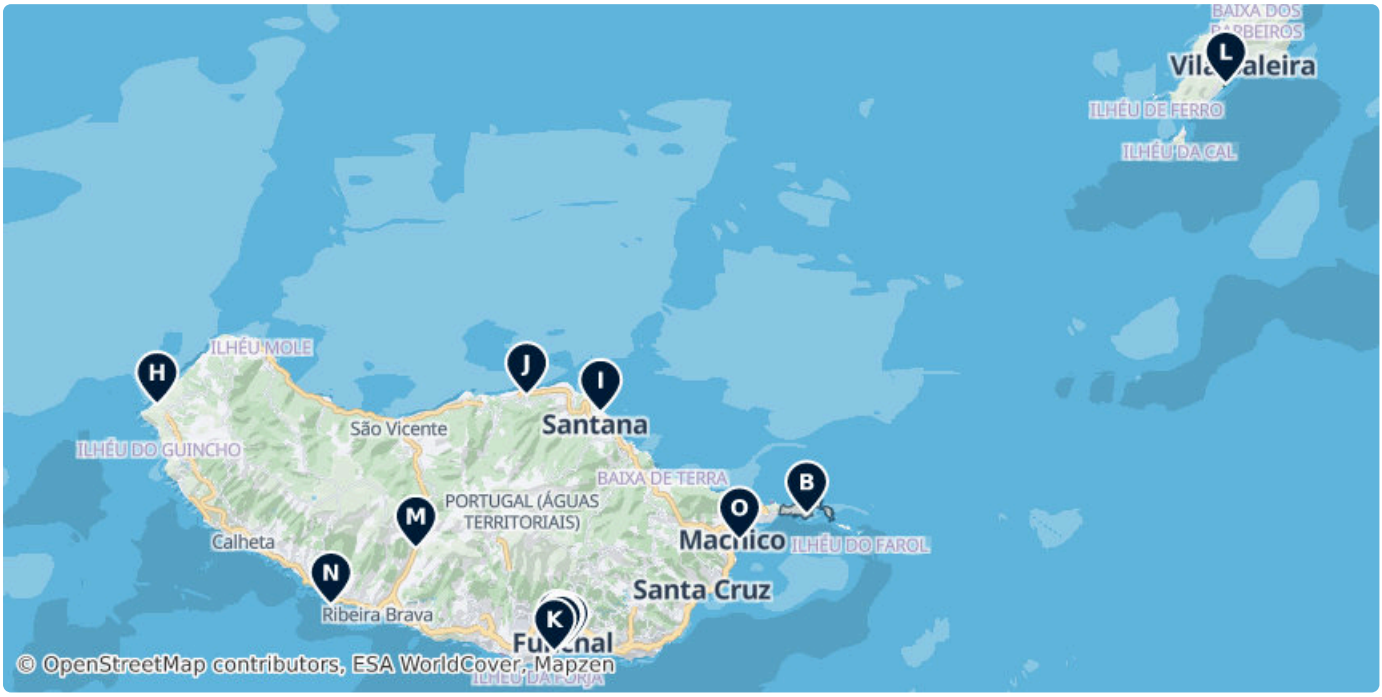
Machico Beach

One of the two sandy beaches on the island with sand imported from Western Sahara.

Portugal (32.71845, -16.76215)

Madeira's Hidden Gems

This collection highlights lesser-known sites across Madeira and nearby Porto Santo, focusing on specific features: a historic farmers market with azulejo panels and fresh fish stalls; 15th-century São Lourenço fortress; traditional Madeira wine lodges demonstrating age-old production; churches and convents with decorated wooden ceilings and tiles; presidential gardens partially open to the public; coastal and cliff viewpoints offering panoramic Atlantic vistas; and Porto Santo's sandy beach.





A Farmers Market

Historic farmers market featuring fresh regional produce, seafood, and traditional Azulejo tile panels. Known for its vibrant atmosphere and cultural heritage status.

Rua Brigadeiro Oudinot, Funchal (32.64861, -16.90392)

Mo–Fr	07:00–19:00
Sa	07:00–14:00

mercados.cm-funchal.pt, +351 291 214 080



B Ponta de Sao Lourenco

Volcanic peninsula and protected nature reserve with hiking trails, unique flora and fauna, and panoramic coastal views.

Estrada Regional 109, 9200, Portugal (32.74224, -16.70229)

+351291145590



C Funchal Cathedral

The Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption in Sé, Funchal, Madeira, Portugal, is the cathedral of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Funchal,...

Street Aljube, 9000-067 Funchal, Madeira, Portugal (32.64819, -16.90822)

sefunchal.com, +351 291 228 155



D Sao Lourenco Fortress-Palace

An impressive colonial fortress from the 15th century served as a seat of military and governors.

Avenida Zarco, 9004-903 Funchal (32.64722, -16.91019)

exercito.pt/pt/quem-somos/organizac... , +351 291 204 902



E Blandy's Wine Lodge

One of the famous Madeira wine lodges dedicated to presenting and promoting the traditional way of making Madeira wine.

Avenida Arriaga 28, 9000-064, Funchal, Portugal (32.64779, -16.91066)

blandyswinelodge.com, +351 291 228 978



F Igreja do Colégio

The church has beautifully decorated walls and ceiling. You can also climb the tower and admire the wonderful views.

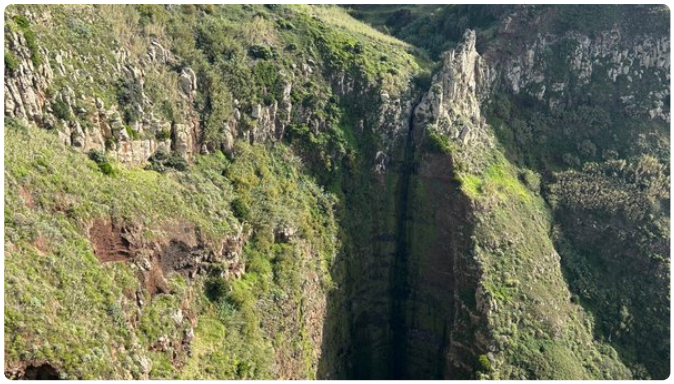
Rua dos Ferreiros 105, 9000 082 Funchal, Portugal (32.64990, -16.90902)



G Santa Clara Church and Monastery

The chapel is characteristic for its traditional tiles and an impressive wooden ceiling.

40 Calçada de Santa Clara, Funchal 9000036, Portugal (32.65055, -16.91311)



H Miradouro da Garganta Funda

Clifftop viewpoint overlooking a deep gorge and sweeping Atlantic coastline.

9385, Portugal (32.82009, -17.25134)



I Miradouro Rocha do Navio

Coastal viewpoint above the Rocha do Navio marine area, with steep cliffs.

(Unnamed Road), 9230, Portugal (32.81463, -16.87652)



J Miradouro Beira da Quinta

Lookout providing views across Funchal's eastern suburbs and the nearby coastline.

Estrada Regional 101, 9230014, Portugal (32.82661, -16.93894)



K Quinta Vigia Gardens

The official residence of the President of the Autonomous Region of Madeira. A part of the gardens are open to the public.

Avenida do Infante, Funchal, Madeira, Portugal (32.64464, -16.91548)

+351 291 211 902



L Porto Santo Beach

Praia de Porto Santo is a beach located near the town Vila Baleira, on the island of Porto Santo, Portugal.

Estrada do Forno da Cal, Porto Santo 9400139, Portugal (33.04729, -16.34802)



M Taberna da Poncha

Traditional bar known for serving poncha, the local sugarcane spirit.

R104, 9350, Portugal (32.71784, -17.03264)

N Miradouro Cais da Ponta do Sol

Harbour-side viewpoint facing Ponta do Sol's pier and low coastal cliffs.

Cais da Ponta do Sol, 9360-209 Ponta do Sol, Portugal (32.67792, -17.10441)

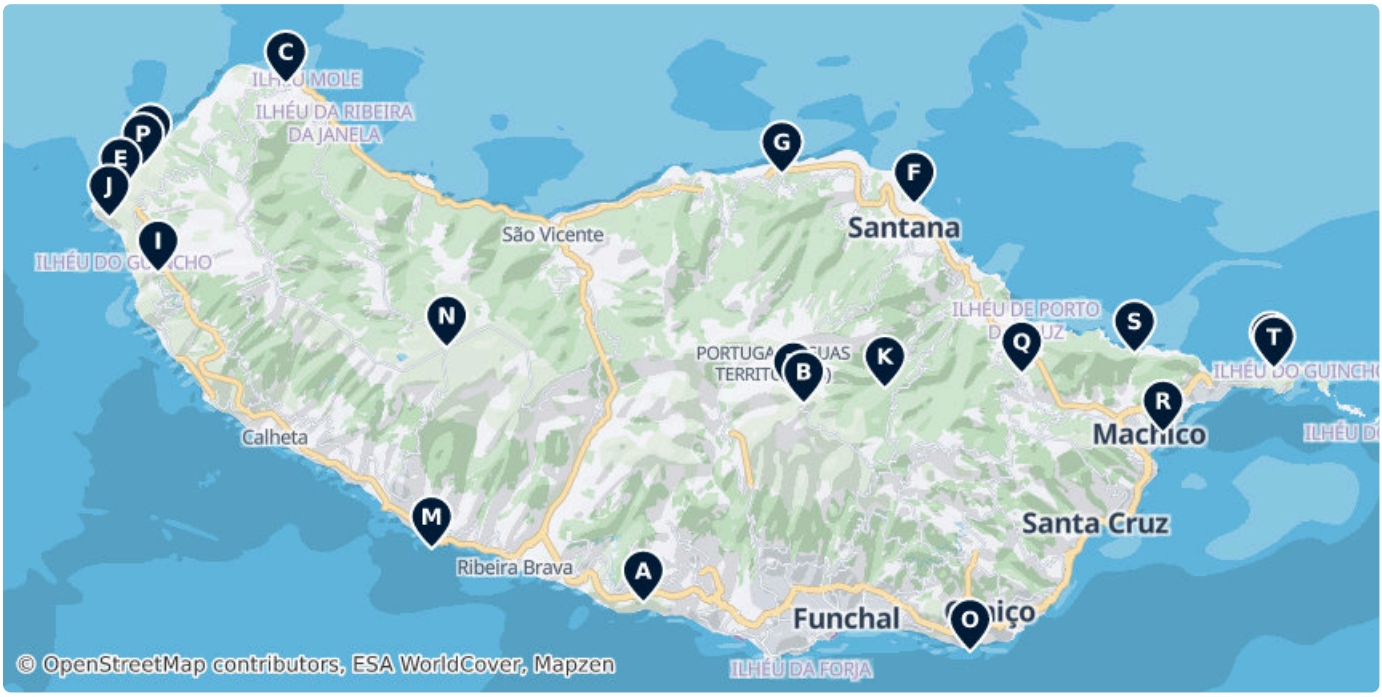
O Miradouro do Pico do Facho

Hilltop vantage point offering panoramic views toward Madeira's eastern shoreline.

(32.72394, -16.75902)

Madeira's Best Viewpoints

This selection highlights Madeira's foremost viewpoints and capes, from the sheer sea cliffs of Cabo Girão with its suspended glass platform to high-altitude summits and plateaus. Included are coastal promontories, levada-access lookouts, volcanic-pool overlooks in Porto Moniz, the Paul da Serra plateau, and short-approach forest viewpoints like Balcões, each offering clearly defined vantage types and access characteristics.





A Cabo Girão

Highest promontory in Europe featuring a suspended glass platform with panoramic views over the south coast and local agricultural landscapes.

Câmara De Lobos, Madeira, Portugal (32.65647, -17.00444)

Mo–Su 08:00–20:00

visitmadeira.com/pt/, +351291214120



B Pico do Areeiro

Mountain peak with an altitude of 1,818 meters, featuring panoramic views of the surrounding mountain massif and the Atlantic Ocean.

9230, Portugal (32.73548, -16.92866)

+351291705555



C Miradouro da Santa

Another lookout point that enables you to overlook the town and volcanic pools of Porto Moniz and adjacent Mole islands.

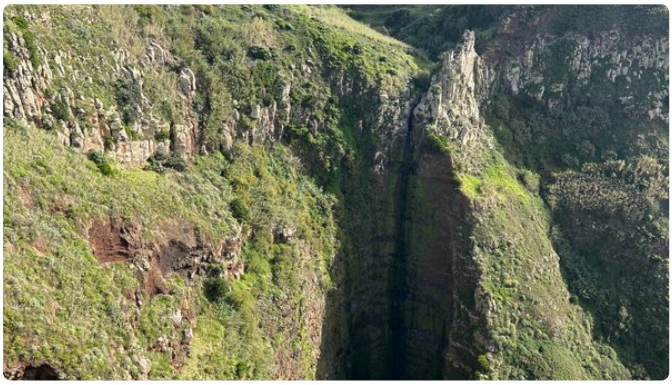
Antiga Estrada Regional 101, 9270, Portugal (32.86239, -17.17320)



D Miradouro do Ninho da Manta

Cliffside lookout adjacent to Pico do Areeiro ridge, providing panoramic views across the eastern mountain massif.

9230, Portugal (32.73923, -16.93355)



E Miradouro da Garganta Funda

Roadside viewpoint overlooking deep sea-facing ravines and the northwestern coastal escarpments near Porto Moniz.

9385, Portugal (32.82009, -17.25134)



F Miradouro Rocha do Navio

Coastal miradouro above Rocha do Navio, with views toward the islet and access to the cable-car/via ferrata area.

(Unnamed Road), 9230, Portugal (32.81463, -16.87652)



G Miradouro Beira da Quinta

Lookout positioned above agricultural terraces and coastal slopes, offering wide views of the northern coastline.

Estrada Regional 101, 9230014, Portugal (32.82661, -16.93894)



H Cabo

Small headland viewpoint providing direct sea views and sightlines along the adjacent rocky shore.

9385, Portugal (32.83344, -17.23706)



I Miradouro da Lombada dos Marinheiros

Roadside terrace overlooking coastal cliffs and fishing coves, with clear views toward nearby promontories.

Rua do Miradouro, 9370375, Portugal (32.78747, -17.23352)



J Miradouro do Fio

Clifftop viewpoint offering unbroken views of the Atlantic and nearby coastal escarpments.

9385, Portugal (32.80938, -17.25668)



K Miradouro dos Balcões

Forest-edge viewpoint in the Ribeiro Frio area, reached via a short path and looking out to central island peaks.

9230, Portugal (32.74160, -16.89031)



L Miradouro da Ponta do Rosto

Promontory viewpoint on the eastern seaboard with views across coastal rock formations and the open Atlantic.

9200, Portugal (32.75089, -16.70810)

youtu.be/m6o4SnV84FU

M Miradouro Cais da Ponta do Sol

Harbour-side viewpoint in Ponta do Sol with views over the marina, coastal terraces and sunset-facing horizon.

Cais da Ponta do Sol, 9360-209 Ponta do Sol, Portugal (32.67792, -17.10441)



N Paul da Serra

Paul da Serra in the municipal county of Ponta do Sol, Madeira, is the largest and most extensive plateau of Madeira, at about 24 km2, with...

Caminho Cales e Chada, 9370, Portugal (32.75772, -17.09732)



O Ponta do Garajau

Coastal cape east of Funchal, characterised by steep cliffs and sea vistas toward the neighbouring headlands.

9100, Portugal (32.63709, -16.85010)

youtu.be/DD1v_O_ADIg



P Pico Vermelho

Hilltop viewpoint rising above nearby farmland, providing outlooks across northern coastal valleys.

9385, Portugal (32.82987, -17.24075)

Q Portela Viewpoint

Follow one of the famous levada walks to reach the Portela viewpoint. Well-kept path and wonderful views.

(Unnamed Road), 9225, Portugal (32.74737, -16.82571)

R Miradouro do Pico do Facho

Elevated viewpoint on a minor summit offering direct views of adjacent coastal escarpments and the ocean.

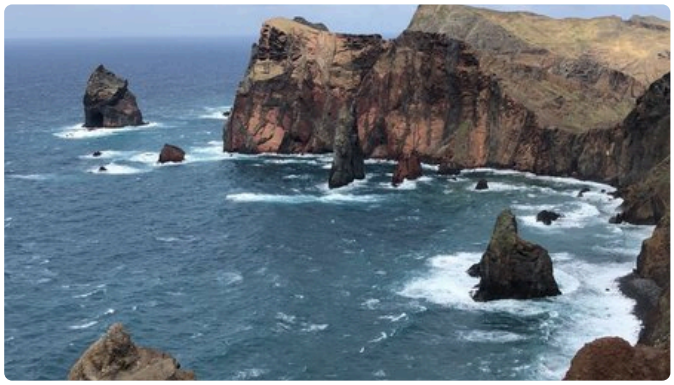
(32.72394, -16.75902)



S Boca do Risco

Coastal cliff viewpoint with clear lines of sight along the island's eastern shoreline.

9200, Portugal (32.75549, -16.77244)



T Miradouro Ponta de São Vicente

Headland viewpoint at Ponta de São Vicente with panoramic views of the westernmost coastal cliffs and Atlantic approaches.

(Unnamed Road), 9200, Portugal (32.74940, -16.70668)

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