
PRINTABLE TRIP COMPANION

7 Days in Madeira

The complete day-by-day itinerary: trail distances, timings, tickets, and the packing list you'll actually need. Built to travel folded in a pocket, not just read once on a screen.

COMPANION TO THE FULL 7-DAY MADEIRA ITINERARY GUIDE

Sunrise summits · ancient forests · lava pools · the good poncha

At a Glance

This companion sheet mirrors the full itinerary. Keep it on your phone or print it, every trail distance, time, and cost is here so you're not re-reading the whole article at a trailhead with no signal.

Day 1	Funchal Old Town	<i>City walking, market, poncha</i>
Day 2	Santana & Ribeiro Frio	<i>Easy hike, best-value viewpoint</i>
Day 3	Pico do Arieiro to Pico Ruivo	<i>The big one: sunrise plus summit trail</i>
Day 4	Levada das 25 Fontes	<i>Forest levada + waterfall lagoon</i>
Day 5	Porto Moniz & Fanal Forest	<i>Lava pools + ancient laurel forest</i>
Day 6	Whales & Cabo Girão	<i>Boat trip, glass skywalk, poncha village</i>
Day 7	Monte & Departure	<i>Toboggan, souvenirs, fly home</i>

Before You Fly: The 5-Minute Checklist

- ☐ Rental car booked (automatic, if you're not used to steep roads)
- ☐ Trail-fee tickets bought online for PR1 and PR6 (see Days 3 & 4)
- ☐ Guided tours booked 2–3 weeks out (Jun–Sep especially)
- ☐ Offline Google Maps downloaded for the whole island
- ☐ Headlamp packed, not your phone (Days 3 & 4 tunnels)

Nightly habit once you land: check the trail status page on [visitmadeira.pt](https://www.visitmadeira.pt) before any hike in this itinerary. Closures happen with little warning.

DAY 1

Funchal Old Town

Arrival day, easy pace, big flavor

Land, collect the car, drop your bags, and keep it low-key. Walk the painted doors of Rua de Santa Maria in Zona Velha, then head into Mercado dos Lavradores, flower sellers upstairs, fish market below.

Do	Zona Velha painted doors, Mercado dos Lavradores
Eat	Espada com banana (scabbard fish, fried banana, passion fruit)
Drink	Poncha at a small old-town bar. Sip, don't shoot.
Get around	Walk by day. Taxi (not the rental car) on poncha nights.
Book ahead	Funchal food & wine tour, ~€50. Great for one capital night.

Good to know: Zona Velha gets busy once the cruise ships dock. Go before 10 AM or after 6 PM for clear shots of the painted doors.

“It looks like something from a nightmare but tastes like something from a dream.”

DAY 2

Santana & Ribeiro Frio

The gentle warm-up day

Drive east on the VR1 to Santana for the thatched-roof palheiros, then inland to Ribeiro Frio for an easy first taste of levada walking.

Trail	Vereda dos Balcões
Distance / time	3 km return · about 1.5 hours
Difficulty	Easy, almost flat
Best window	Start before 11 AM. Cloud usually rolls in by afternoon.
Evening	Dinner in Machico, Madeira's original capital

Good to know: Bring cash for the roadside stalls near Ribeiro Frio selling honey cake and local fruit. Card machines are rare this far into the hills.

“It might be the best effort-to-reward ratio of any walk in Europe.”

DAY 3

Pico do Arieiro to Pico Ruivo

The headline hike: leave by 6:30 AM

Sunrise above the clouds at Arieiro (1,818 m), then the ridge trail to Pico Ruivo (1,862 m), stairs, exposure, and several pitch-black tunnels.

Trail	PR1, Pico do Arieiro to Pico Ruivo
Distance / time	10–11 km · 5–6 hours
Difficulty	Moderate–hard: stairs, exposure, unlit tunnels
Parking	Free lot at Arieiro. Fills by 8 AM in high season.
Ticket	Small per-person trail fee. Buy online the night before.
Non-negotiable gear	Real headlamp (not your phone). Microspikes Nov–Mar.
No car?	Guided Pico Ruivo trek, ~€40–55, includes transfer

Good to know: This trail closes most often after rockfall. Check status the night before, without exception.

“It's not the difficulty. It's the scale.”

DAY 4

Levada das 25 Fontes

The famous levada: plan the whole morning

Trailhead is Rabaçal, on the Paúl da Serra plateau, about 90 minutes from Funchal, not Ribeiro Frio. Park at the Rabaçal car park and walk or shuttle down the access road to the start.

Trail	PR6, Levada das 25 Fontes (+ Risco spur)
Distance / time	~11 km including access road & spur · 4–5 hours
Difficulty	Moderate: flat, but narrow ledges and tunnels
Parking	Rabaçal car park on the ER105. Arrive before 9 AM.
Ticket	Small trail fee + a few euros for the optional shuttle van
Best window	Before 9 AM or after 3 PM. Buses arrive around 10:30.
Swimming	Check current rules/signage at the lagoon before you get in
Unsure of navigation?	Guided 25 Fontes walk, ~€35–45, hotel pickup

Good to know: You're already up on Paúl da Serra by evening, so stay for sunset before driving down. Pack a warm layer, it drops fast up there.

“Flat doesn't mean easy here.”

DAY 5

Porto Moniz & Fanal Forest

Lava pools, then a forest from another world

West via the VR1 then coastal ER101. Stop at Vêu da Noiva waterfall, swim the lava pools at Porto Moniz, then chase fog into Fanal Forest.

Stop 1	Vêu da Noiva viewpoint, cliffside waterfall
Stop 2	Porto Moniz natural lava pools, a few euros entry, budget 2+ hrs
Stop 3	Fanal Forest, ancient Laurisilva, best in fog, check webcams first
Pack	Waterproof phone pouch / dry bag for the pools
Overnight tip	Stay in São Vicente to cut tomorrow's driving

Good to know: Fanal is only magical in fog. Check the area webcams before the drive up. Clear skies mean a nice forest, not the fairytale version.

“Clear weather and it's a nice forest. Foggy weather and it's another planet.”

DAY 6

Whales & Cabo Girão

Ocean morning, cliff-edge afternoon

Morning catamaran from Funchal marina for whales and dolphins, then the glass skywalk at Cabo Girão, ending in poncha country at Câmara de Lobos.

Book	Morning catamaran with underwater viewing deck, ~€35–45
Bring	Seasickness tablets (before boarding) + polarized sunglasses
Afternoon	Cabo Girão glass skywalk, 580 m sea cliff
Evening	Câmara de Lobos, Taberna da Poncha, poncha de maracujá

Good to know: Marina pickup points shift by operator. Confirm your exact departure spot the evening before, not just the company name.

“Kids lose their minds. Adults lose their minds.”

DAY 7**Monte & Departure**

One last ridiculous thing, then home

Keep the morning slow. If time allows, ride the Monte toboggan before heading to the airport along the coast.

Do	Monte wicker toboggan + Monte Palace Tropical Garden, ~€30/2 people
Buy	Madeira wine (Blandy's), bolo de mel, aguardente (check customs rules)
Skip	Airport souvenir shops. Everything's cheaper and better in town.

Good to know: Airport security moves fast most of the year, but budget extra time in July and August when cruise and charter flights overlap.

“Everyone says they're coming back. Most of them actually do.”

The Packing List

What actually gets used on this itinerary, nothing more, nothing less.

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| ☐ Real headlamp (not your phone) | ☐ Polarized sunglasses |
| ☐ Collapsible hiking poles | ☐ Waterproof phone pouch / dry bag |
| ☐ Waterproof hiking shoes | ☐ Reef-safe SPF 50 |
| ☐ Microspikes (Nov–Mar only) | ☐ EU plug adapter |
| ☐ Packable down jacket | ☐ Motion sickness tablets |
| ☐ Lightweight rain shell | ☐ Offline maps downloaded |

If you buy one thing on this list: the headlamp. Two of the island's best hikes go through tunnels with no light at either end.

Tours Worth Booking

Tour	Price (pp)	Notes
Whale-watching catamaran	€35–45	Book morning slot, underwater deck
Guided Pico Ruivo trek	€40–55	Best if unsure of the full crossing
Guided 25 Fontes walk	€35–45	Hotel pickup, no getting lost
Funchal food & wine tour	~€50	Worth it for one capital night
Monte toboggan + gardens	~€30	Pair with the Tropical Garden

Daily Budget, Roughly

Budget traveler	~€80 / day
Comfortable traveler	~€150 / day
Rental car	€25–40 / day

Enjoy the island. And when you're already planning the return trip on the flight home, you will be, the hidden-gems guide picks up where this one leaves off.

My Trip Notes

Flight times, confirmation numbers, restaurant names a friend mentioned, whatever you don't want to be searching for at a trailhead with no signal.
