

Visit Curral das Freiras

Magical Madeira – Majesty and Mists

4–9 December 2027

5 nights Funchal, Madeira

AITO
The Specialist Travel Association

Level 3
MODERATE

JON BAINES TOURS



Câmara de Lobos

A Portuguese island located off the coast of Africa, Madeira is dramatic, encompassing remote mountain villages, misty forests, seaside resorts and wild, craggy coastlines. Its food is unique and delicious, with subtropical offerings, local delicacies and the famed Madeira wine. It is blessed with a subtropical climate, with an average temperature of 21°C - making it the perfect getaway for a Northern Hemisphere winter.

Portuguese sailors stumbled upon this uncharted territory in 1419, when it was a densely forested, uninhabited volcanic island. They named it for its lush forests - 'Madeira' means 'wood' in Portuguese - and colonised it over several years, planting sugar cane on its steep slopes and setting the island on its path to being the world's biggest 'white gold' producer by the early 1500s. Its strategic location would later play a crucial role in Portugal's expanding maritime trade routes. Madeira wine gave another boost to Madeira's economy in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Today, Madeira's unique history and setting intertwine in a laidback lifestyle and a rich and diverse culture, evident in every aspect of island life. From its stunning natural beauty to its historical landmarks, vibrant festivals, and delicious cuisine, a visit to Madeira immerses you in a culture that has been shaped by centuries of history, tradition, and a blend of global influences.

Stay at the luxurious Hotel Quinta da Bela Vista, with its superb views over Funchal Bay, and experience Madeira at its most magical in December, when the island twinkles with festive lights and decorations.

THIS TOUR IS CLASSED AS:

Level 3 | Moderate

Regular walking at destinations, extended standing and/or increased travel distances. Good fitness is required.

Tour Leader

Dr Chet Pager grew up in Honolulu and spent a lot of time in his parents' home cities of Melbourne and London. He is qualified as a medical doctor in both the UK and Australia and has practised in both countries. Since completing his PhD in 2015, he has become more settled in London.

Chet originally started out in Education (studying at Harvard, Stanford and Cape Town) and worked in policy and evaluation as a consultant for the RAND Corporation and the Victorian Government. After qualifying and initial training in Medicine at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney, he assisted the NSW Government in developing local Aboriginal health plans. His interest in Indigenous health policy led him to a JD at Yale Law School and a year of studying Zulu. He has also volunteered in medical settings in Mali, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Nepal and South Africa.

On the travel front, Chet has been a Tour Doctor as well as Tour Manager for Captain's



Choice since 2005. He has also worked with the UK-based Golden Eagle Luxury Trains, a number of UK Charity Challenge companies, and is a leader and medical technical advisor for The Perse School's Outdoor Pursuits Programme, which culminated in ascending a 6,200m peak in Bolivia and a 5,800m peak in Ladakh. Chet has visited more than 140 countries and led or assisted leading over 50 tours and expeditions.



São Vicente

Itinerary 4–9 December 2027

B = Breakfast L = Lunch D = Dinner



Day 1: Funchal (Sat, 4 Dec) D

Am/Pm Arrive and transfer to Hotel Quinta da Bela Vista in Funchal.

Eve Hear a brief background on the tour, followed by a welcome dinner at the hotel.

Day 2: Funchal (Sun, 5 Dec) B L

Am Walking tour in the city, visiting the Santa Catarina Park, Arriaga Avenue, the gothic Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption, with its whitewashed walls and Mudéjar-inspired ceiling, the Jesuit collegiate church, and the Old Town.

Pm Visit the Mercado dos Lavadores (farmers' market) and have lunch in a typical restaurant in the Old Town. Continue to Palheiro Gardens, which contain a wide variety of exquisite plants in a beautiful setting in the hills east of Funchal.

Day 3: Funchal (Mon, 6 Dec) B L D

Am Option to take a ride in Madeira's famous Monte Sledges or watch their progress. These hand-made wicker sledges date back to the 19th century, when they were used as public transport to descend the two kilometres from the parish of Monte, about 500 metres above sea level, to Funchal. They are pushed by two strawhatted, white-clad drivers (carreiros), who use their thick rubber-soled boots as control brakes through the journey. Visit the east of the island, stopping at the breathtaking Cristo Rei viewpoint, before continuing to Santa Cruz village to visit the market and the Santa Cruz Church and the Caniçal Parish Church. Continue to the village of Machico to explore the city centre and see the church.

Pm Visit the stunning Ribeiro Frio Forest Park, set in a deep valley surrounded by mountains and home to the indigenous laurissilva forest. Walk (or drive) to Balcões (3km) to enjoy the beautiful scenery, stopping frequently to enjoy the views.

Eve Espetada dinner (traditional technique of cooking food on skewers) in Pico dos Barcelos.

Day 4: Funchal (Tues, 7 Dec) B L

Am Visit Curral das Freiras (the dramatic 'Valley of the Nuns'), where chestnuts rule supreme, and take a short walk and sample chestnut snacks as you learn about its history.

Pm Walk through the pretty Municipal Garden of Funchal and have lunch in Vivaldi, just in front of the Gardens. Continue to Blandy's Wine Lodge to explore the gardens, before a private tour and wine tasting, including Madeira's most famous beverage.

Eve At leisure.

Day 5: Funchal (Wed, 8 Dec) B D

Am Visit Monte Palace Tropical Garden, which contains enormous, lush gardens with flora from all over the world, as well as culture and art, and a lovely house that is now the Monte Palace Madeira Museum. Learn about the history of the house and gardens.

Pm Visit Casa Museu Frederico de Freitas and the 15th-century Convent Santa Clara, which features floor-to-ceiling azulejos tiles and a courtyard garden. Continue to the Museu Quinta das Cruzes.

Eve Farewell Dinner in Câmara de Lobos including time for a walk to see where Churchill painted.

Day 6: Funchal (Thurs, 9 Dec) B

Am Transfer to Funchal Airport for flight home.



Machico

Aerial view of the hotel pool and its beautiful outlook

Hotel

Hotel Quinta da Bela Vista, Funchal
Originating in 1844, historic 5-star Hotel Quinta da Bela Vista is an elegant slice of Madeiran heritage. Awarded Europe's Leading Boutique Hotel by World Travel Awards in 2019, it offers stunning views over the botanical gardens, the Bay of Funchal and Madeira's majestic mountains.

The hotel restaurants and bars provide excellent food and beverage options and there is also a heated outdoor swimming pool, a sauna, jacuzzi, gym and tennis court.

Combining luxury, tranquillity and style, Quinta da Bela Vista will provide a memorable stay in Madeira. Your hotel rooms overlook the beautiful gardens.





Hotel gardens and entrance (top); hotel restaurant (above)







Visit lush Ribeiro Frio Forest Park (top); Picos dos Barcelos; Gardening in Palheiro Gardens (above)

The cost of the tour sharing a double or twin room is £1,698

The cost of the tour with a room to yourself is £1,980

The cost includes:

- 5 nights' accommodation in a standard garden view room at Quinta da Bela Vista
- The services of the tour leader, Chet Pager
- The services of an English-speaking national guide
- Breakfast daily and meals as specified in the itinerary
- A full programme of cultural visits
- All excursions, tours and admission fees
- Private transport services for the duration of the tour.
- All tips

The cost excludes:

- International flights and airport transfers
- Meals and drinks not mentioned
- All optional excursions, tours and visits; all personal extras such as porterage, laundry, inoculation fees; travel insurance and visas (if required)



Pico do Facho

About Us

To travel with us is to dig below the surface, revealing the deeper destination. Of course, you will visit the great historical sites; marvel at the wonders of architecture and engineering; be moved by the riches of culture and art; and experience the most spectacular landscapes in the world. We also ensure that you see the country as it is today, giving you privileged access that independent travel and other tour companies rarely get close to.

From the sublime to the humble, we provide a variety of experiences in the company of intelligent, curious, like-minded people. And while we can be worthy, we also make sure that you have a lot of fun!

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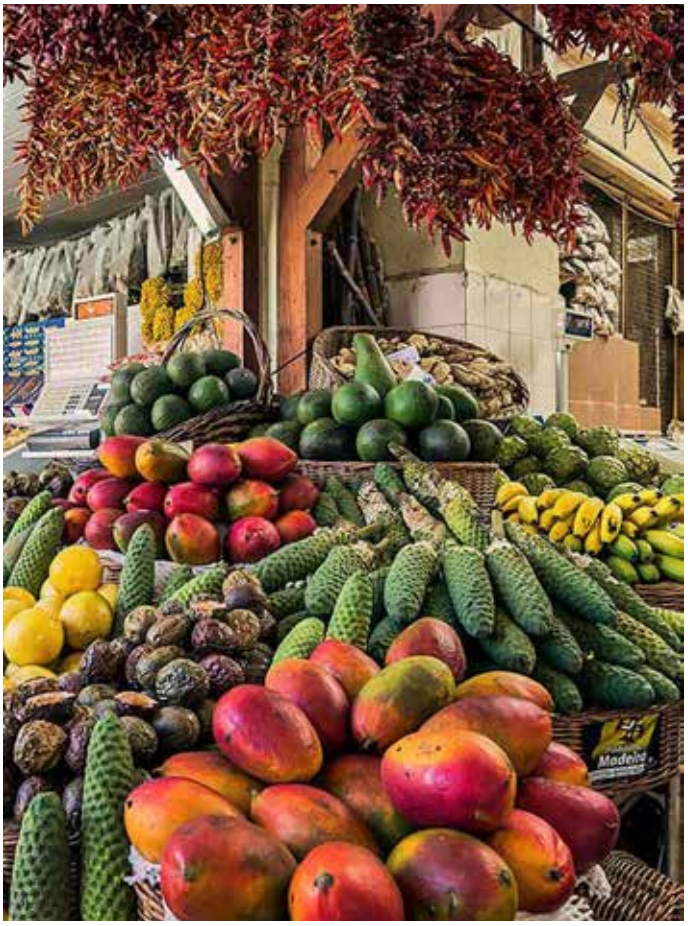
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**Carreiros guiding Madeira's famous Monte Sledges (top);
At Funchal farmers' market (Mercado dos Lavadores);
Visit beautiful Palheiro Gardens (above)**

JON BAINES TOURS

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