

# The best MARCO POLO Insider Tips

## Our top 15 Insider Tips



### INSIDER TIP Colourful doors

Art in the *Zona Velha*: Local artists have created striking designs for the doors of the *Rua Santa Maria*. Hidden behind them lie art galleries, cozy restaurants or just ordinary old town flats → p. 38

### INSIDER TIP Live music after a spot of golfing

So much for the stuffy golfer hangout: At the *Hole in One* there is groovy live music in the evenings and everyone is in high spirits. Both locals and tourists frequent the comfy pub and the secluded outdoor area → p. 42

### INSIDER TIP Nuns' retreat

The *cemetery of Curral das Freiras* provides not only an interesting insight into Madeiran burial traditions, but opens up a spectacular view of the mountains around the "valley of the nuns" → p. 46

### INSIDER TIP A drink in the mill

For the local cocktail made from lemon juice, sugar-cane spirit and honey, Madeirans come from far and wide to the *Bar Moinho* (mill), where the *poncha* tastes terrific → p. 57

### INSIDER TIP Raid the garden

In the organic orchard and vegetable garden of the *Quinta do Cabouco*, hotel guests are allowed to help themselves for free, and their hosts are happy to explain what the exotic fruits are → p. 58

### INSIDER TIP Forest path for the blind

From the Pico das Pedras a one-hour trail that was made for the blind leads to the *forest lodge of Queimadas* – along a levada and through lush laurel forest (photo above) → p. 66

### INSIDER TIP Unspoiled view

A wide-ranging panorama from the *Ponta Vigia* lookout point on the north coast of Madeira → p. 66

### INSIDER TIP Snorkellers' paradise

When the beach of Porto Santo is too crowded, snorkellers go down to the remote *bay of Zimbralinho*, in which they find turquoise water and peace → p. 85

### INSIDER TIP Horsepower on the beach

Discover the hills and beaches of Porto Santo on horseback: *Centro Hípico* also organises riding tours for children and beginners → p. 85

### INSIDER TIP A fairytale park

An abundant mixture of local and exotic fauna, works of art from five centuries, a collection of minerals and an Asian garden with koi carp delight visitors to the *Tropical Palace Garden* in Monte (photo below) → p. 48

### INSIDER TIP To honour nature

With many outdoor activities, the island celebrates its nature for a week in autumn → p. 113

### INSIDER TIP Tea and golf

In the *Porto Bay Serra Golf*, once the tea parlour of Santo da Serra, you can still take your afternoon tea in style – whether you want to play golf or not → p. 78

### INSIDER TIP Madeira from the air

A bird's eye view of the island is unforgettable. Book a flight in Arco da Calheta, and up you go into the skies above Madeira → p. 53

### INSIDER TIP Sail to a desert island

On a day trip to the uninhabited nature reserve of the *Ilhas Desertas* you can spot sea birds, dolphins, whales and sometimes even monk seals → p. 108

### INSIDER TIP The old market hall

Dine well in historic surroundings: the food is excellent at *Café Mercado Velho* by the old fountain in Machico → p. 75



# BEST OF...

## GREAT PLACES FOR FREE

Discover new places and save money

### ● *A garden to die for*

The *Quinta Splendida* hotel in Caniço has a wonderful garden in which many plants are labelled. Hotel guests as well as the general public can enjoy its beauty and the ocean view (photo) → p. 46

### ● *Live like Asterix*

The village of *Santana* is reminiscent of a Gallic settlement with its red doors, blue-framed windows with green shutters and drooping thatched roofs. The historic houses make the past come alive – like a trip to a museum, but for free → p. 63

### ● *Learn about what creeps, crawls and swims around Madeira*

There is usually an entrance fee to see the exhibits on Madeira's flora, fauna and geology at the *Museu de História Natural*. But, on Sundays, you can visit the museum and the aquarium for free → p. 37

### ● *A fortress with a view*

The climb up to the *Fortaleza do Pico de São João* is steep, but well worth it! Not only is a visit to this over 400 year-old fortress free, you can also enjoy a fantastic view of Funchal and the Atlantic from the walls of the Pico dos Frias which sits at a height of 111 m/364 ft → p. 35

### ● *A beacon of light at night*

Lighthouses always seem to have a certain kind of appeal. Madeira's most attractive one stands at the tip of the Rocha da Vigia in *Ponta do Pargo*. Originally constructed in 1922, it lures visitors inside to see its photo exhibition depicting the other beacons of light around the island → p. 55

### ● *A multi-purpose crop*

At one time, sugar cane made the island's plantation owners rich. Today, there are only a few sugar cane mills still in use on Madeira. One of them is run by the *Sociedade dos Engenhos da Calheta*. In this mill, you can see how rum and honey are made – and give them both a try → p. 52



●●● Dots in guidebook refer to "Best of..." tips

# ONLY ON MADEIRA

Unique experiences

### ● *Colourful and varied delicacies*

Flowers in glowing colours, exotic fruit, delicious vegetables and fresh fish – these are the treasures of Madeira. Sellers tastefully display their wares in the *Mercado dos Lavradores* in Funchal where you can try the best that the island has to offer. Friday is the liveliest market day (photo) → p. 36



### ● *Island of eternal spring*

In Funchal's *Jardim Botânico* you will quickly discover why Madeira is called the island of eternal spring. More than 2,500 tropical and subtropical plants present themselves in all shades of green → p. 46

### ● *Sleds without snow*

Take one of the famous basket sleds on runners, propelled by the muscles of strong men, along the road from Monte down towards Funchal → p. 78

### ● *Along the levadas*

Walk alongside ancient irrigation channels through woods of eucalyptus and laurel, past dizzying gorges or along broad forest tracks. You will never forget the paths on the *levadas* of Madeira, for example on the *Levada do Furado* → p. 73

### ● *Favourite local dishes: espada and espetada*

Madeira's national dishes are truly delicious – try black scabbard fish with banana in the *Borda d'Água* in Ribeira Brava. *Espetada*, juicy chunks of beef on a laurel-wood skewer, is served in traditional style at the *Portela à vista* on the Portela Pass → p. 58, 78

### ● *Set sail on the Santa Maria de Colombo*

Christopher Columbus lived on Madeira for a few years and planned his voyages here. On a replica of his ship, built true to the original, you can feel like an explorer yourself → p. 110

### ● *Pools made of volcanic rock*

The surf crashes on the black rocks a few metres away while you take a relaxed swim in the natural *lava pools* in Porto Moniz. An extraordinary experience! → p. 62

# ONLY ON

# DISCOVERY TOURS

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## MADEIRA AT A GLANCE



**START:** ① Funchal  
**END:** ① Funchal

**Distance:**  
🕒 approx. 200 km/124 miles

**1 day**  
Driving time  
(without stops)  
6–7 hours



**COSTS:** Car hire at least 30 euros/day, petrol approx. 50 euros, poncha 2 euros, lift 7.50 euros

**WHAT TO PACK:** swimming kit, hiking boots, drinking water

**IMPORTANT TIPS:** The mountain road leading from Paúl da Serra to the Encumeada Pass is sometimes closed in winter due to falling rocks or snowfall. If this road is closed, take ER209 from Paúl da Serra towards Canhas to return to the south coast. In general, be particularly careful when driving along Madeira's narrow coastal and mountain roads. It is often impossible to see oncoming traffic coming from a distance and good brakes are essential for the steep inclines.

Every corner of the earth has its own special charm. If you want to explore all the many different facets of this region, head off the beaten track or get tips for the best stops, breathtaking views, hand-picked restaurants or the best local activities, then these customised discovery tours are just the right thing. Choose the best route for the day and follow in the footsteps of the MARCO POLO authors – well-prepared to navigate your way to all the many highlights that await you along the tour.

Can you see the highlights of Madeira in just one day? Yes, you can with this well-planned route. It takes you from Funchal to the impressive mountains and valleys of the highlands before heading along the rugged north coast to reach the plateaus on the west side of the island. From there, the route leads through the southern coastal towns and back to Funchal.

**09:00am** After breakfast in ① Funchal → p. 32, the island's sophisticated yet charming metropolis, **head towards the northwest, passing through Santo António** to leave the bustling city behind you. Stop at the lookout

