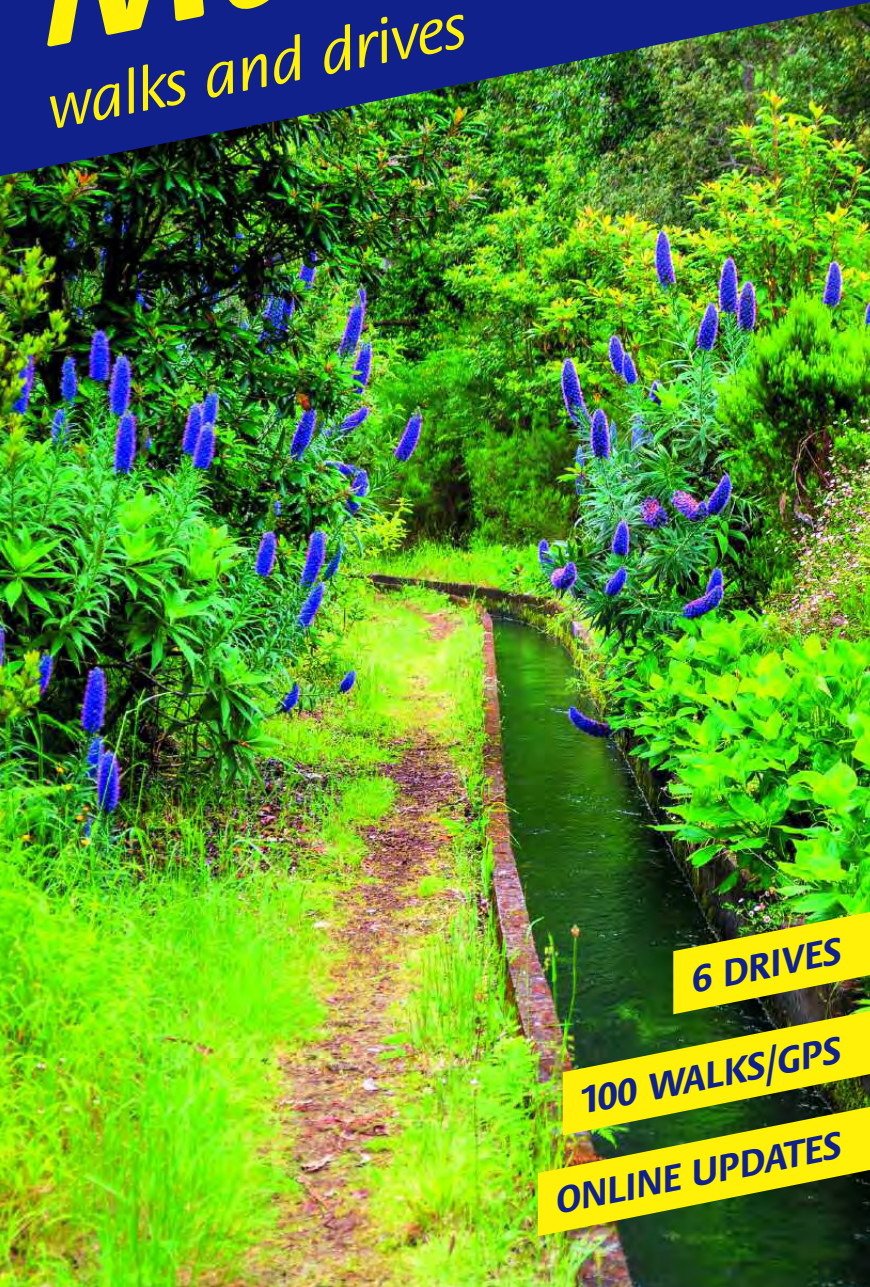




SUNFLOWER

Madeira

walks and drives



6 DRIVES

100 WALKS/GPS

ONLINE UPDATES

This is a sample from the
PDF edition of
Landscapes of
MADEIRA

a countryside guide
Fifteenth edition



John and Pat Underwood

This shorter sampler includes some of the introductory text, the introductions to each of the main sections (Picnicking, Car Touring and Walking) with an example of each. There is a total of 208 pages, plus a pull-out island map, in the full book.



SUNFLOWER BOOKS



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Pico Grande from the flanks of Pico do Arieiro





Getting about

There is no doubt that a **hired car** or taxi is the most convenient way of getting round the island. We hope that the liberal cross-references to picnics and walks in the touring section will inspire motorists to stretch their legs.

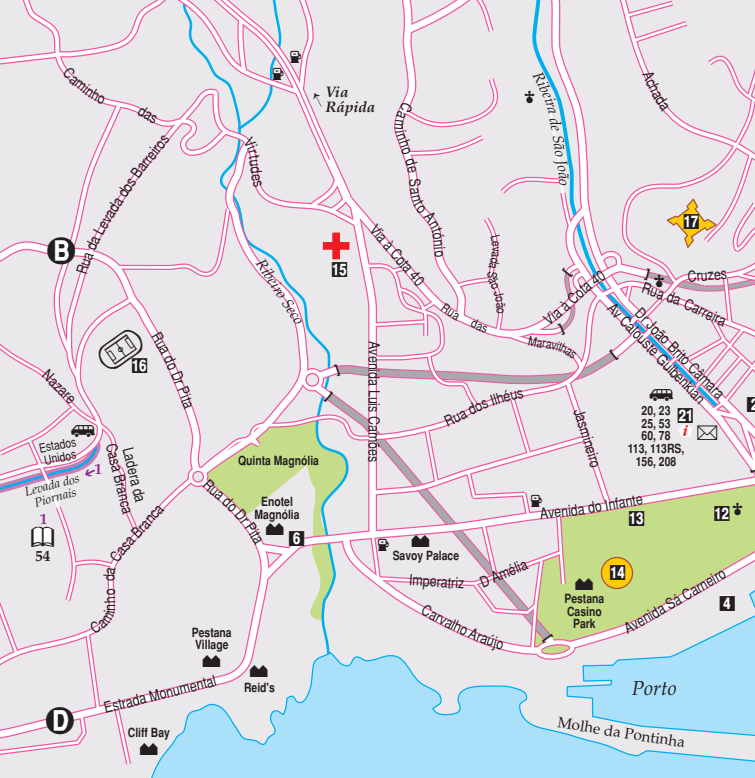
All **taxi** drivers carry a government-approved price list for journeys outside Funchal. Your hotel porter can suggest a driver for an all-day tour: many are knowledgeable about island culture and customs; some are even keen walkers!

Coach tours are the most popular way of ‘seeing Madeira in a day’. They provide a painless introduction to road conditions and a remarkable overview of island scenery.

Since many of Madeira’s best walks are linear, as explained on page 46, you will come to appreciate the **local interurban bus** network. The system is economical, reliable and safe. And you get great views perched up on bus seats! The town plan on pages 10-11 shows you where to board your bus in Funchal; all depart from the Avenida do Mar. There are four operators: Rodoeste (www.rodoste.pt), SAM (www.sam.pt), EACL (www.eacl.pt) and Horarios do Funchal (see ‘town buses’ below). *Double-check our timetables with their websites!*

Orange town buses, as well as **several key interurban routes**, are operated by Horarios do Funchal. Their website (www.horariosdofunchal.pt) is superb, with maps, routes, timetables and more — even bus stops! If you have questions or want to buy fare-saving tickets, *do* call at one of their three sales/information points: Anadia Shopping (11 on the town plan, open 08.30-19.00 *Mon-Fri only*), and two on the Avenida do Mar — between 33 and 36 on the plan (open *daily* 08.30-18.30, *Sun* 16.30); and at the Marina (open *Mon-Fri* 09.00-12.00 and 13.00-18.00, *Sat/hols* 08.30-16.30, *Sun* 08.30-15.30). Otherwise, buy bus tickets at the operators’ kiosks near the relevant departure points or on the bus itself (more expensive in the case of town buses). Key in ‘**Around Madeira by Bus**’ for a very useful 86-page pdf published by Horarios; it includes a map of the island and **which villages are served by the various bus lines**. Although it is slightly geared to their own network, there is ample information about the other bus companies.

Do arrive early! It may take you several minutes to find the bus you want, and they leave spot on time. On the road, it’s always a good idea to *flag down* a bus, even at a bus stop!

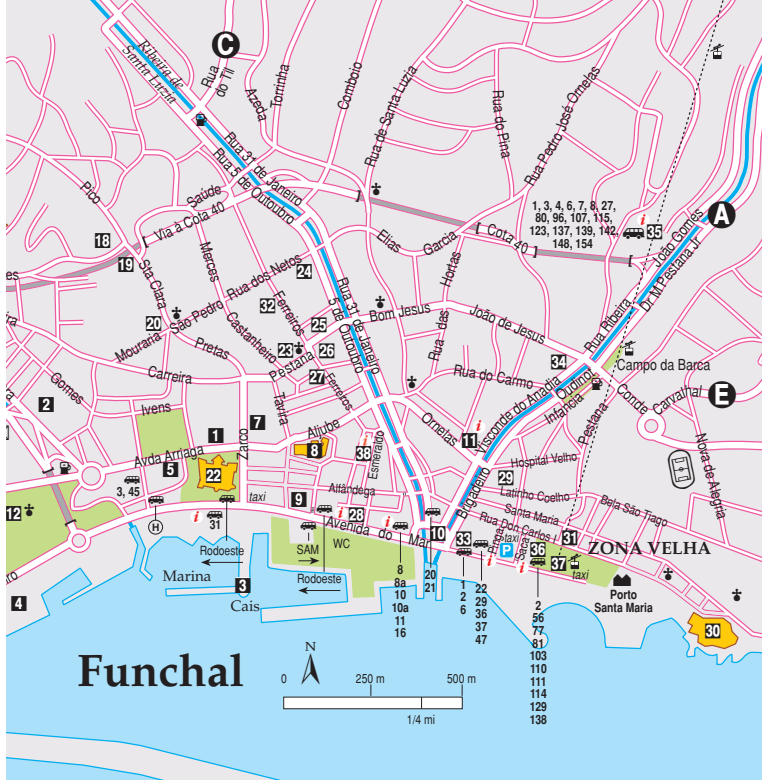


- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | Tourist Office | 20 | Museum of Natural History |
| 2 | La Vic Funchal (Shopping Centre) | 21 | Post Office, SAM Bus Station |
| 3 | Boat Trips | 22 | São Lourenço Palace |
| 4 | Praça CR7 (Ronaldo Museum) | 23 | Collegiate Church |
| 5 | Municipal Theatre | 24 | Madeira Wine Institute |
| 6 | MAMMA (Modern Art Museum) | 25 | Law Courts |
| 7 | Government Offices | 26 | Town Hall |
| 8 | Sé (Cathedral) | 27 | Museum of Sacred Art |
| 9 | Parliament (Old Customs House) | 28 | New Customs House |
| 10 | Praça da Autonomia/Forte San Felipe | 29 | Market |
| 11 | Anadia Shopping, Horarios Office | 30 | São Tiago Fort |
| 12 | Santa Caterina Chapel | 31 | Madeira Story Centre |
| 13 | Quinta Vigia (President's House) | 32 | Livraria Esperanza (large bookshop) |
| 14 | Casino | 33 | Museum of Electricity |
| 15 | Hospital | 34 | Embroidery Museum |
| 16 | Barreiros Stadium | 35 | Rodoeste Bus Station |
| 17 | Forte do Pico | 36 | EACL and Horarios Interurban Buses |
| 18 | Quinta das Cruzes | 37 | Cable Car to Babosas |
| 19 | Santa Clara Convent | 38 | Sugar Museum |

BUS DEPARTURES *(i: bus information kiosk, ticket sales)*

Nº	Destination	from	Company (and Livery)
2	Assomada	36	EACL (grey/red)
3	Estreito de Câmara de Lobos	9	Rodoeste (cream/red)*
4	Madalena do Mar	9	Rodoeste (cream/red)*
6	Arco de São Jorge via Encumeada	9	Rodoeste (cream/red)*
7	Ribeira Brava	9	Rodoeste (cream/red)*
20	Santo da Serra	9	SAM (white/cream/green)
23	Machico	9	SAM (white/cream/green)

*but their excursion buses to tourist destinations are *white*



N°	Destination		from	Company (and Livery)
53	Faial	<i>opposite</i>	9	SAM (white/cream/green)
56	Santana via Faial		36	Horarios (white/yellow/silver)
60	Boqueirão	<i>opposite</i>	9	SAM (white/cream/green)
77	Santo da Serra		36	Horarios (white/yellow/silver)
78	Machico, Faial	<i>opposite</i>	9	SAM (white/cream/green)
80	Porto Moniz		9	Rodoeste (cream/red)*
81	Curral das Freiras		36	Horarios (white/yellow/silver)
96	Corticeiras		9	Rodoeste (cream/red)*
103	Arco de São Jorge via ER103		36	Horarios (white/yellow/silver)
110	Boqueirão via Caniço		36	Horarios (white/yellow/silver)
111	Achadinha		36	Horarios (white/yellow/silver)
113	Machico, Caniçal	<i>opposite</i>	9	SAM (white/cream/green)
114	Nogueira		36	Horarios (white/yellow/silver)
115	Estreito da Calheta		9	Rodoeste (cream/red)*
123	Campanário		9	Rodoeste (cream/red)*
129	Camacha		36	Horarios (white/yellow/silver)
138	São Jorge (Cabanas)		36	Horarios (white/yellow/silver)
139	Porto Moniz		9	Rodoeste (cream/red)*
142	Ponta do Pargo		9	Rodoeste (cream/red)*
148	Boa Morte		9	Rodoeste (cream/red)*
154	Cabo Girão		9	Rodoeste (cream/red)*
156/208	Machico, Marçoços	<i>opposite</i>	9	SAM (white/cream/green)



ORANGE TOWN BUSES (Horarios do Funchal)

1	Lombada		33	22	Babosas	<i>east of</i>	33
2	Quebradas		33	29	Curral dos Romeiros	<i>east of</i>	33
3	Lombada	<i>opposite</i>	6	31	Jardim Botânico	<i>opposite</i>	22
8, 16	Santa Quitéria	<i>east of</i>	28	36, 37	Palheiro Ferreiro	<i>east of</i>	33
10A	Barreira	<i>east of</i>	28	45	Stadium	<i>opposite</i>	6
20, 21	Monte	<i>northeast of</i>	33	47	São João Latrão	<i>east of</i>	33



Picnics and short walks


In the course of some of our rambles we've come upon easy-to-reach picnic spots that might appeal to those of you who prefer *very* short walks. If you are car touring, they are an 'off-the-beaten-track' alternative to the island's many roadside picnic tables.

All the information you need to find these more secluded picnic spots is given below, where *picnic numbers correspond to walk numbers*, so that you can quickly find the general location on the island by looking at the touring map. We give you walking times and transport details. The location of the picnic is indicated by a green-printed symbol **P** on the corresponding *walking map*, which also shows the nearest  stop (if appropriate) and  car parking (park *well off* the road; *never* block a road or track). Most of the picnic settings are illustrated.



Sadly, we've had to drop some of our favourite picnic places because they have become far too busy. But many of these popular spots (like Balcões, shown opposite) are only visited in 'waves' — when coaches or minibuses drop people off. These visitors will usually stay only a few minutes — they have somewhere 'more important' to be! Every year we are able to luxuriate in sun at the keepers' cottage beside the levada outside the Rabaçal tunnel (Picnic 37c), while scores of walkers rush past to get to 25 Fontes...

Please remember, when you set off for one of these picnics, to **wear sensible shoes and take a sunhat** (the symbol **○** after the title indicates a picnic **in full sun**). It's a good idea to take along a groundsheet as well, in case it's damp or prickly — or there's nowhere comfortable to perch.

2 POÇO DA NEVE, ARIEIRO (map on reverse of touring map, photo on pages 58-59) ○

 park on the roadside 100m or in the car park 500m above this ice house; it lies *below* the road, hidden by a stone wall, 2km below Pico do Arieiro (Car tours 1, 4). **Up to 15min on foot.** *Picnic by the ice house itself (no shade), or below it — on the open slopes or in the shade of the heath tree grove. Splendid view over moorlands down to Funchal.*

3 EIRA DO SERRADO (map on reverse of touring map, photos on pages 60-61)

 (Car tour 3) or  81 to the Eira do Serrado (not all 81 buses call at the Eira, check in advance!). **5min or longer on foot.** *Follow Walk 3 (page 60) from the 15min-point for five minutes. Fine view over Curral, away from the crowds. But picnic well off the path, as walkers will want to pass you.*



The high peaks from Balcões, from left to right: Aricieiro, Gato, the Torres and Ruivo (Walk 19). Down in the valley, the Fajã da Nogueira power station (Walk 24) is just visible through the trees. There's a stone picnic table here, but Balcões is very crowded nowadays, so find a quiet spot on your way to the viewpoint and go back to it (Picnic 25).

6 BOA MORTE (map pages 70-71)

🚗 or 🚌 127 to Boa Morte. Travelling by car, use the directions for Short walk 6-3 on page 69 to drive to Boa Morte and park. **Up to 35min on foot.** Travelling by bus, follow Short walk 6-3, page 69, returning on 🚌 148. **Up to 50min on foot.** Pick up Walk 6 at the 4h35min-point and follow it for 25-30 minutes. *Fine views across and up the Ribeira Brava valley and to the Paúl da Serra. Sun or shade.*

8a PORTO NOVO FROM THE EAST (map pages 80-81, photo page 84)

🚗 or 🚌 60 (Boqueirão bus) to the Levada dos Tornos. **15-20min on foot.** By car, take the ER206 south from Águas Mansas (Car tour 2) and park by the levada, 1.6km downhill. By bus, ask the driver for 'Levada dos Tornos, Lombo Grande'; the levada is a minute uphill from the stop. To

return by bus, either catch 🚌 203 to Santa Cruz from just below the levada, or walk uphill to Águas Mansas for 🚌 77. *Head west on the levada: 10 minutes' walking will give you good views, or go as far as the tunnel with 'windows' (20min). This picnic overlooks the western side of the Porto Novo Valley and is at its best in spring. Some shade nearby.*

8b BOAVENTURA VALLEY (map pages 80-81, photo page 85)

🚗 or 🚌 as 8a above. **30min on foot.** *Follow Short walk 8-4 on page 78. You overlook a golden valley and the south coast. Some shade.*

10 LEVADA DA SERRA (map pages 80-81, photo page 89)

🚗 or 🚌 77 to the Sítio das Quatro Estradas, where the ER202 joins the ER110. Travelling by car, head west towards Poiso and park by the levada after 0.5km (Car tours 2,



Touring

If you find parts of our car tours 'slow going', you can always cut them short by picking up one of the fast roads. You won't see a thing inside the endless tunnels, but the old roads are less attractive than they once were because they are so built up nowadays. Be prepared for roadworks wherever you are!

Drive *patiently*; off the expressways you are unlikely to average more than 20-30km/h. On the older roads *beware of potholes and, sometimes, very deep ditches (some of which double as levadas) at the sides, remembering that your hire car insurance may not cover damage to tyres*. Plan leisurely excursions if possible, with walking breaks to stretch your legs. **The best one-day excursion is Car tour 1; Car tours 4 and 5 make an ideal two-day programme.**

In the touring and walking notes we often refer to **road numbers**. *This is to help you with orientation when using our maps*, since older roads are not always numbered on the ground. However, we found road numbering and signposting had improved beyond all measure on our latest research trip. We think you need a good map to get around; we photoenlarge our own touring map and use it with our detailed walking maps and Google maps on our smartphones (surprisingly, however, Google misidentifies some road numbers!).

Our touring notes are brief: they include little history or information that can be found in general guides. We concentrate instead on distances, road conditions, getting to viewpoints at the best time of day, etc. Most of all, we emphasise **walking** and **picnicking**. We hope you will find the 🚗 symbols on the walking maps useful: these alert you to places where you can park near a walk. The walking maps contain far more information than the small-scale touring map.

The fold-out touring map is designed to be held out opposite the touring notes. City exits correspond to those on the Funchal plan on pages 10-11. **Symbols** used in the text are explained in the map key; note that only *isolated* hotels and restaurants are highlighted: you will find them (as well as medical centres) in all major villages.

Allow ample time for stops: our times include only short breaks at viewpoints labelled 📍 in the notes. Calculate time for **detours** as well: villages, picnics and walks shown in () at the top of the tours are only accessible via *detours*.


Right: not all our touring routes are as wiggly as this road into Curral.



Car tour 1: MADEIRA NORTH AND SOUTH

Funchal • Encumeada • São Vicente • (Porto Moniz) • Boaventura • Santana • Faial • Ribeiro Frio • Poiso • (Pico do Arieiro) • Monte • Funchal



113km/70mi; 5-6 hours' driving without detours (add about 30km/19mi; 1h for the detour to Porto Moniz and 14km/9mi; 1h for the detour to Pico do Arieiro); take the nearest expressway exit from Funchal.




On route:  around Vinháticos, Encumeada, Chão dos Louros, above Rosário, Feiteiras, Ponta




Delgada, Boaventura, São Jorge, ER103 around Ribeiro Frio, Poiso, Pico do Arieiro; Picnics (see **P** symbol on the walking map and pages 12-18): (2), 18, (19, 22), 25, 26, 27, 32, (42); Walks (2), 5, (7), 8, 10, 18, 20, 21, 22, (23, 24), 25, 26, 27, (28, 29), 31, 32, (42)

If you have only one day to tour the island, then this is the circuit to do, including the detours to Porto Moniz and Pico do Arieiro. *Leave Funchal at the crack of dawn*; we've planned the tour so that you have the best views west in the morning and east in the afternoon. If, however, you have a car for several days, then do Car tours 4 and 5 *instead* of this long expedition. The roads are good, but always be prepared for roadworks (often unannounced!).

From Funchal take the expressway west (Via Rápida; VR1), quickly whizzing across the lovely 'winged' bridge over the Socorridos. Not far beyond the exit for Cabo Girão/Quinta Grande the road dives beneath Campanário's church in a tunnel and soon describes a breathtaking arc out over the coast on a long bridge. After Exit 2 for Campanário and a short tunnel you enter the final, long tunnel: keep in the *left-hand* lane as you near the end of it, to follow signposting for 'SÃO VICENTE' (17km).

After a fairly straight run along a narrow canyon at the left of the river, you come to a fork: keep left for 'SÃO VICENTE VIA ENCUMEADA' (22km). Now the road begins its winding ascent in earnest. Beyond **Serra de Água** you pass some viewpoints () and then the Pousada dos Vinháticos (; closed at press date), so well sited below a ridge — the aptly named **Crista de Galo** ('Cock's Comb').

Some 2.5km further uphill (past the Hotel Encumeada ) Walk 4 comes in along a track on the right. The snaking ascent ends at **Encumeada**★, just at the centre of the island (1004m/3293ft; 28km ). Park on the left at the far side of this pass () from where there are spectacular views down to the north coast and up to the Paúl da Serra in the west and the high peaks to the east. Walk 31 can begin here; Walk 20 ends on the other side of the road. While you are here, *do* take the opportunity to see the great Levada do Norte, described on page 150 (Walk 32 and Picnic 32); the steps are on the south side of the pass, opposite the restaurant.

Then descend into São Vicente's welcoming valley () past **Chão dos Louros**, a lovely laurel grove ( with fireplaces). Soon you'll have good views () over Rosário's church and stream: in high summer the hayricks weave

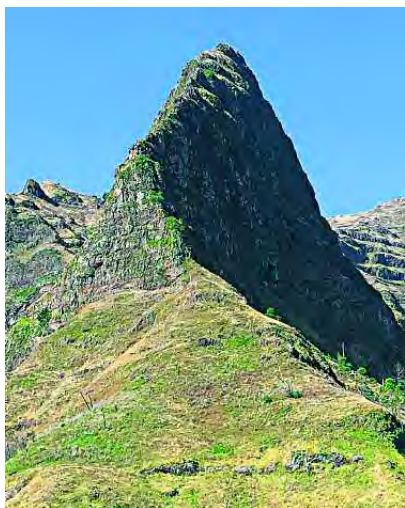


We do hope that the Pousada dos Vinháticos will reopen! This has always been our favourite place to stay, where we can look out to the peak of Crista do Galo — not really a peak, but the eastern end of a ridge (the western end is shown on page 158).

ribbons of gold into the tapestry of this emerald landscape. Beyond **Rosário**'s church, you join the VE4 at a T-junction. Turn right (🚗) and, at the roundabout, take the second exit ('S VICENTE VIA ER104'), to stay on the old road. At **Feteiras** you pass the ER208 to 'GINJAS' and 'LANÇO'. Walk 29 begins and ends 5km up this road, at the Levada da Fajã do Rodrigues.

There is ample parking to the right of the carefully restored nucleus of **São Vicente** (39km 🚗), a good place to take a break for morning coffee ... and to make a decision: are you going to try to fit in a detour to Porto Moniz? If it's now later than 10.00, you really don't have the time. If you *do* have time, use the notes for Car tour 5 on page 38.

At the roundabout as you leave São Vicente, take the *second exit*, passing to the right of the petrol station (🚗) and heading straight on towards the chapel (🚗) built



into a hollowed-out rock south of the graceful modern bridge. Then either turn left towards Porto Moniz or follow the main tour: turn right on the coastal ER211. Before passing through a short tunnel, your attention will be drawn to the chequered pattern made by the heath tree hedges protecting the terraces from the fierce northerly winds. Most of the fields are planted with vines for table wine; the vines which yield the grapes for the fortified Madeira

24 Landscapes of Madeira

wines are grown in the south, near Estreito de Câmara de Lobos.

Beyond the Naval Club, you have to leave the old coast road* at **Fajã da Areia**, going into a tunnel on the VE1 ('SANTANA/PONTA DELGADA'). Coming to a roundabout once out of the tunnel, you have to leave the coast road again, avoiding a short stretch of cobbles in the shadow of menacing cliffs and a narrow tunnel (in days gone by, travelling around the island was a bone-rattling experience!). So keep straight on into another tunnel for 'BOAVENTURA/SANTANA' — or first detour left to **Ponta Delgada** on its lava-fertile promontory (46km 🚗).

Beyond this tunnel, the road turns inland, leaving the awesome coast for the green-gold gentleness of the great **Boaventura** (49km) valley. Walk 27a ends at the village church; Walk 27b begins there. Not far outside Boaventura there is a good viewpoint (🏞️) on the left. At the head of the valley (🚗) a road may one day be built to Curral das Freiras, via Falca.

As the road returns to the coastal cliffs, the Snack Bar/Restaurante O Arco (Picnic 27), on the left, marks the end of spectacular Walk 27b. You pass above the seaside centre of **Arco de São Jorge** (56km) on a road decked out with vines and hedgerows and rainbows of flowers. The hillsides are cultivated almost down to the sea, along the sweeping curve (*arco*) of the bay. Climb past mossy cliffs and dark pines brightened by banks of agapanthus, to another *miradouro* (🏞️) with fine views back to

*You may be able to follow the coast road to Boaventura and Santana; we describe the route as it was on our update trip for this 15th edition.

Ponta Delgada. Adjacent to this are the beautifully landscaped Cabanas rondavels (🏡 ✂️).

Soon turn left for 'VIGIA'. Take the short detour left to the *vigia* (🏠), an old whalers' look-out. Then return and take the first left, to continue into **São Jorge** (🏰). Ignoring left the turn to the lighthouse (*Farol*), follow the bus route with its yellow signs, going straight over a roundabout and turning right at the T-junction, to pass the richest baroque church outside Funchal on your right. If the ER211 just ahead is closed to Santana, go back to the last roundabout and turn right for 'SANTANA' on the VE1, going into a long, curving tunnel.

Briefly escaping into the open air, you emerge at another roundabout where the Calhau lido (✂️; Picnic 18, Walk 18) is to the left and Ilha, where Walk 28 ends, up to the right on the ER219. Beyond a couple of adjacent tunnels, at a roundabout, turn right into **Santana**★ (75km 🚗 🏰; Picnic 26), a market garden centre with a theme park of island culture. Walk 26 is a lovely countryside circuit around the village.

From Santana we take the *old road* (ER213) to **Faial** and then the ER103 as far as Poiso; use the notes on pages 36 and 37 from just after the 93km-point (Car tour 4). It's about two hours from Santana to Funchal and, hopefully, you will have time to walk to Balcões from **Ribeiro Frio** (Short walk 25) and drive to Arieiro from Poiso.

Past **Poiso** (✂️ Δ; 100km *excluding* the detour to Arieiro), continue south to the signposted car park for **Monte**★ (108km 🏰 🏰), 300m above the village. Walk above the pretty gardens to the church of Our Lady of the



OLD ROADS

Madeira's old north coast road (Antiga 101) has long been considered one of the top road trips in the world ... for confident drivers. As more and more tourists visited the island, the authorities wanted to make travelling around easier — and safer.

On our last updating visit, many more roads were closed and replaced by tunnels. Often, there was a signpost for the 'Antiga ...', but after just a few metres a cul-de-sac sign. By all means explore these culs-de-sac, as well as any roads signed 'acceso local'. These lead to isolated houses or even entire hamlets cut off by tunnels.

Some years ago the old ER101 between São Vicente and Porto Moniz allowed drivers one-way access (east to west) on remnants of the old road. Then rockfall



caused them to be closed. Now the council at Porto Moniz have spent 70,000 euros to open three of the seven remnants between the two villages. Nevertheless, we have shown them as 'no entry' on our maps, in case they are closed again.

Mount, where you can see the tiny poignant statue to Madeira's patron saint. From the bottom of the church steps (departure point for the famous toboggan rides), you could follow the agapanthus-banked lane to the left (past the Monte Palace Gardens ☼ and Funchal cable car terminus; 🚡), to Babosas Balcony (15 minutes return on foot; 📶 📶). Here you'll find a fine viewpoint over the impressive bowl of Curral dos

Romeiros in the João Gomes River valley, and there is another cable car down to the Jardim Botânico. Walk 8 could begin here.

Now it's just 5km back to Funchal (113km).

Photos: approaching Seixal from the east there's a large layby on the right and adjacent to it is one of the cleared old roads. But most north coast roads — whether here in the west or in the east — are not maintained. The smashed yellow sign warns of rockfall ... and don't you love the 40km sign?!

Walk 37: RABAÇAL'S LEVADAS

See also photo on page 170

Note: €1 payable only online (QR code)

Distance: see Shorter walks below

Grade: see 'The entire length' and Shorter walks below

Equipment: stout shoes (boots preferable), fleece, long trousers, sunhat, windproof, whistle, rainhat, picnic, water bottle/water purifying tablets

Transport: 🚗 car or taxi to/from the large parking area on the ER105 above Rabaçal (32° 45.261'N, 17° 8.000'W; Car tour 5), or taxi from the Recta das Canhas; see Walk 35, page 166. Then 8-seater shuttle 🚌 to/from Rabaçal (the road is closed to private cars): runs about every 20min from 09.30-20.00 in summer, from 09.30-18.00 rest of the year, lunch break between 12.00-13.00; one way €3, return €5. Or walk the 2km down

and back up (*tiring!*). Or park as for Alternative walk 1.

The entire length: ●🚶 11.2km/7mi; 4h. Strenuous, with descents/re-ascents of 320m/1050ft; you must be sure-footed and have a head for heights (*danger of vertigo*)

Shorter walks

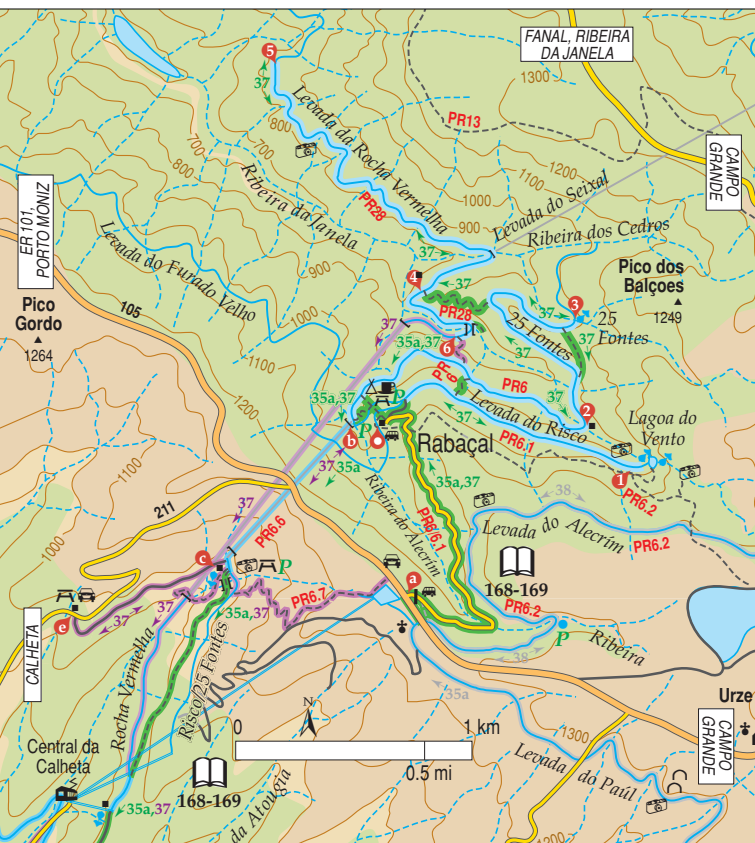
1 Rabaçal — Risco — Rabaçal.

●🚶 2.5km/1.6mi; 50min. Easy (PR6.1). Access as above. Just walk to Risco (1) and back.

2 Rabaçal — 25 Fontes —

Rabaçal. ●🚶 6.4km/4mi; 1h40min. Easy, with descents/re-ascents of 100m/330ft, but you must be sure-footed with a head for heights (*danger of vertigo*).

Access as above. Follow the main walk for 9min, then turn left down the PR6 path to the Levada das 25 Fontes. Go direct to 25 Fontes (3) and back to Rabaçal.



Alternative walks

1 Rabaçal tunnel — Rabaçal levadas — Rabaçal tunnel. ●🚰
16km/10mi; 5h15min. Grade and equipment as ‘The entire length’; take a *torch* as well. Access by 🚗. You may prefer this approach to Rabaçal if you don’t want to wait for the shuttle bus or endure the tiring climb back up to the main road at the end of your walk. From the ER105 drive south on the ER211 (cobbed at first) and park about 2km downhill at a barbecue building on the right (📍; 32° 45.240’N, 17° 8.966’W). From there follow the dirt track on the opposite side of the road to the **Rabaçal TUNNEL** (📍; Picnic 37c; 10min) and go through it (20min). You emerge at a sun-trap on the **Levada das 25 Fontes** (Picnic 37b). Follow the levada for a minute, then turn right up steps (📍) to the **Risco levada** and **Rabaçal** (📍). Do the main walk,

but don’t climb back up to Rabaçal; return to the sun-trap and go through the tunnel, to your car.
2 Rabaçal levadas — Rocha Vermelha tunnel — Arco da Calheta. ●🚰 18.7km/11.6mi; about 6h. *The map continues on pages 168-169.* Grade and equipment as ‘The entire length’; take a *torch* as well. Access by 🚗 taxi (see Walk 35, page 166), then shuttle bus down to Rabaçal (see ‘Transport’ opposite); return on 🚗 80, 115 or 142 from Arco da Calheta. Follow ‘The entire length’ (the main walk) to the 3h20min-point just before 📍; then, instead of climbing up to Rabaçal, continue through the **Rocha Vermelha TUNNEL** (20min), coming out in the **Calheta Valley**. Follow the levada to its tiny reservoir, then descend to pick up Walk 35a at 📍 and continue to Arco (📍; see page 170, just after the 3h25min-point).

Rabaçal is an enchanted fairyland of singing waterfalls, a favourite excursion spot for the islanders. Here at the head of Madeira’s greatest valley, the Rabaçal houses lie dwarfed beneath emerald mountains. Three levadas converge here; each has its own ‘personality’, and this walk lets you make friends with all three.

Some words of warning: arrive at the crack of dawn! Rabaçal has become so popular with walkers that you will have to fight the crowds to peek at Risco, and the 25 Fontes levada is so busy that the authorities have had to create a one-way system and introduce a €1 charge. The Levada da Rocha Vermelha was a haven of peace and quiet in the past, but has now been upgraded and even has its own PR number ...

The walk begins at the **Rabaçal** houses (📍; Picnic 37a): follow signs to ‘PR6.1, RISCO’ and ‘PR 6, 25 FONTES’, descending to the highest levada (1030m/3380ft), the **Levada do Risco**. Pass a fork to the Levada das 25 Fontes in **9min** and in **15min** ford a spillway created by a waterfall on the right.

Around here the levada is flanked by an exceedingly beautiful mossy ‘carpet’, and the banks are built up high to cope with a great flow. At a fork, keep straight on to a viewpoint in a typical *caldeirão*, where the **Risco WATERFALL** (📍; **25min**) cascades into a pool from a height of 100m/325ft. From here you can



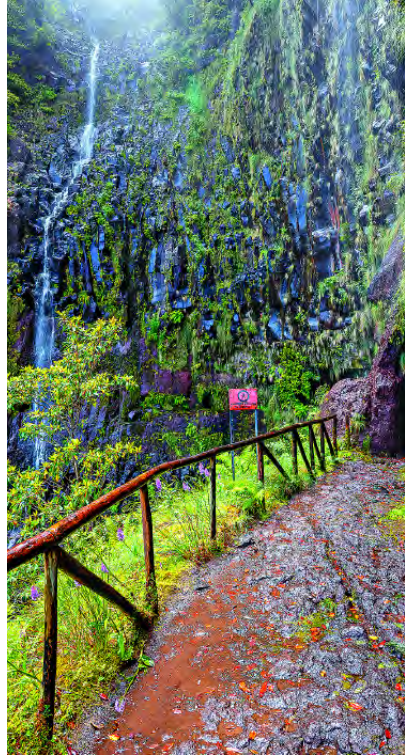
see the levada continue around the head of the gorge to its source, but this dangerous route is closed to walkers. Look below, across the valley, to see a second channel cut into the mountainside: this is the 'middle' levada, leading to 25 Fontes ('25 Springs').

Now retrace your steps to the fork to 25 Fontes (**25min**). Turn right and descend stone steps to reach the **Levada das 25 Fontes** (altitude 960m/3150ft). Turn right and you will see the Risco waterfall again, from a lower level: in **55min** you come to the head of the gorge where it dives down. Then cross the bed of the **Ribeira Grande** (🔴), to meet a tiny **WATERHOUSE**: water is often

gushing out of its front door...

From here on the levada channel is only 30cm/1ft wide in places, and there are drops at the left of up to 30m/100ft. But even without the railings now in place, we never found this levada very vertiginous because, unlike most others, it is usually built up off the path, not sunk into it. The concrete edge of the levada is at waist level, and you can hold on to it for moral support if the drops worry you. It's cooling to run your hands in the water on a hot day.

After passing to the left of the one-way system for the return to Rabaçal (used in Shorter walk 2 but not in the main walk), in **1h15min** you come to the PR28



Left: the Levada das 25 Fontes in one of its many shady moods. Above: the Risco waterfall and a path edged by pink pyramidal orchids; the sign warns walkers not to go beyond this point.

path down left to the Levada da Rocha Vermelha. Ignore it for now. In about **1h25min**, in a tributary of the Cedros River, you reach a path leading up right (by a sluice), and at once you see the ‘**Vinte e Cinco**’ (25) Fontes — a semi-circular bowl into which tumble down many sparkling, tiny waterfalls (but, alas, no longer 25). It’s a lovely place to paddle under ferns (3) — but expect plenty of company.

Now return to the path passed 10 minutes earlier and turn down steeply right to the **Levada da Rocha Vermelha** (4; **1h50min**), at 850m/2790ft, the lowest of the Rabaçal levadas. A keepers’ house sits below on your right. This

levada is the newest of the three. Follow it to the right, back up into the valley of the **Ribeira dos Cedros**. There are waterfalls left, right and centre! Take in the negative ions, then only continue if you are *absolutely sure-footed and vertigo-free*. (When we were last there, protective railings were not in place at all exposed points.) You cross the Cedros ravine on the levada channel (covered with concrete slabs), and find a **TUNNEL** on your right: water is flowing in from mountains on the east side of the Seixal River, some 4km/2.5mi away.

Turn left on the levada and follow it round the valley. Soon you’re just opposite the **KEEPERS’**



Levada da Rocha Vermelha

HOUSE; some 200m/650ft directly above it you see Rabaçal. Notice how the levada narrows beyond each tributary, as you head towards its source. In **2h25min** you might like to take a break at a grassy promontory, from where there is a magnificent view of the Ribeira da Janela 200m/650ft below.

Time constraints will limit the distance you can walk on this levada; we stop after **2h40min**, where the thick blue line ends on the map (5). (About 15 minutes further on, you would find steps similar to those in the photo on page 167 — but about 300 of them ... and slippery! *Experts* could climb them and pursue the levada to its source or link up with PR13 to Fanal; *not* shown on the map.)

From here return the same way, enjoying grassy verges and the aroma of wild mint, open views and shady heath-tree bowers. You'll be back at the **KEEPERS' COTTAGE** in **3h10min**. Stay on the levada, passing the path where you came down to it, and turning up into the **Ribeira Grande**. The Risco falls and the 25 Fontes levada are visible up ahead. Across this wild gully yawns the **Rocha**

Vermelha TUNNEL (Alternative walk 2); it discharges in the Calheta Valley near Walk 35a.

A bridge crosses the river, to the tunnel, but carry on past it (if you can do so safely), to the sluices and rock pools (**3h20min**), where you can take a break below the roaring (Risco) falls. Then walk back, cross the bridge, and make a choice: *experts* could turn *sharp left* up a **STONE-LAID PATH** (6), to start back to Rabaçal. This path, broken by landslides for some years, is *very difficult*, but *experts* are using it again. It leads in 15 minutes to the **Levada das 25 Fontes**, where you turn right. Ten minutes later, just before the high Rabaçal tunnel (Walk 35a), steps on the left take you up to **Rabaçal** (7; **4h**). Another option is to go through the **Rocha Vermelha TUNNEL** and at its exit turn hard right up steps and a path to 8, the **Rabaçal TUNNEL**. From here either walk to your car on the ER211 at 9, go through the tunnel and back up to **Rabaçal** (**4h**), or take PR6.7 back to 4. If these options don't appeal, you will have to return via the descent path at 4 (add 35-45min).

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