

Madeira – Levada do Caniçal Walk

Everybody knows that Madeira is an island that offers relaxation. However, relaxation is not always and not for everyone associated with lying on the beach. For some, relaxation means a walk during which they are admiring beautiful landscapes. And for those people, I am sharing a description of one of the most beautiful tourist trails in Madeira, which I have personally walked.



Photography: Krzysztof Tęcza

The suggested route follows Levada do Caniçal, leading to the Ribeira Seca Valley. After going down from the levada, we come up to Bosco do Risco, located 360 meters above the ocean. The trail then leads along the well-trodden path running along the slope 300 meters above the water. We end the walk in Porto da Cruz. The entire route is only 12 kilometers long and has around 600 meters of elevation gain. The only nuisance here is the lack of places along the way where we could replenish our supplies. However, there is no need to be too discouraged, because many trees which ripe delicious fruits are grown along the way.

The starting point of the route is the Machico António da Serra bus stop. Immediately, we see beautiful trees with unusual fruits. Of course, we are going along the levada, which has been used from the beginning as a canal for supplying water. The path runs alongside the canal—once is wide, then narrow, and sometimes wet. As we leave the town, a magnificent landscape emerges before us with a view of the ocean and the buildings that are in the valley. So it was not too monotonous, the locals decorate their properties with various, sometimes peculiar, objects. This time, we come across a staircase leading to a house situated higher up. The steps are lined with toilet bowls of different shapes, in which plants are planted. Well, why not! A bit further, in a garden, someone has placed a sculpture of Cristiano Ronaldo, which was made of a painted tree trunk. On the island are several monuments of this footballer, but you won't find one like this anywhere else.

As we carry on, we came across people planting potatoes. As we've already got to know, Madeira is almost entirely mountainous, so flat land is extremely scarce. Every patch of flat land, even the smallest bit, is used for cultivation. Here, we saw a very familiar scene. Two people are working, and the other two are debating.



Photography: Krzysztof Tęcza

We are enjoying the views, but we have to be careful not to slip or fall off the path into the valley below the levada. Sometimes the path is very narrow or disappears entirely. Finally, we reach the Ribeira Seca Valley and we leave our levada.

We continue to proceed toward Boca do Risco, which rises 433 meters above the ocean. The entire time, we walk in single file, because there is no other way. Eventually, the path leads us to the pass, where we can have a break. But not really, because the views here do not let us just sit still. Everyone wants to snap a beautiful photo and to gaze their fill in the stunning scenery. Finally, nature wins, and we move forward. We can't long rest in a place where there are blowing winds that carry away everything that is not non-detachable.

Now we follow the Vereda do Larano trail along a slope that drops almost vertically into the ocean. The views are incredible and the feelings too; however, we have to be very careful to not slide down, where the waves crashing against the coastal rocks are seen.

It's amazing how we, now and then, come across huge plants that, back home, we only grow in pots. Every moment we keep stopping to admire the rock formations. If it weren't for the fact that a minibus is waiting for us on the other side, we'd probably stay here until evening. Fortunately, our guide was a realist and didn't let us indulge in such whims.

Soon, we reached the first buildings. What caught our attention there was a lift system crossing the path, leading to a small, flattened plot of land located several dozen meters below. It turned out that this lift was built to safely access the area closer to the ocean shoreline.

As we go down, we get the chance to see what bunches of bananas look like as they ripen in the sun. On some trees are fruits, while others still have flowers. Beautiful flowers appear, but we don't even try to guess their names. We have to be careful not to brush our hands against the spines of prickly pear that grow on the roadside.



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We reach the hamlet of Lorano to meet our target-Porto da Cruz. This small port town is now known for its rum distillery (Destilaria Engenhos do Norte). In the distillery's shop, it's possible to taste this alcoholic beverage to decide which one to take home. We can see here old machinery used in the production process. But the most striking impression comes from the sea caves beneath the coastal cliffs, where ocean waves crash in and, from time to time, are powerfully ejected upward, forming a fountain that shoots several meters into the air. The hiss that accompanies the burst of water makes the experience more dramatic. In this town, there's also a small church with modern equipment. Inside, there is silence and a pleasant coolness. Sometimes it's worth visiting church, especially on a hot day. Of course, it's possible to use a swimming pool near the ocean, but it's not always available.

I believe the route that I've suggested will offer enough emotions to leave everyone satisfied. However, when choosing it, one should keep in mind that although it's not very long, it can be tiring. So, there's no need to rush. It's better to walk slowly, take short breaks, and enjoy the incredible views.

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