

Madeira – 25 Fontes Falls and Risco waterfall

Suggestion for another walk, although a very wet one, that is worth going on. During this walk we will see such famous places as Cascada do Risco and 25 Fontes Falls. At the end we will go through an over 800 meter long tunnel.



Risco waterfall. Photo: Krzysztof Tęcza

We start our hike from the parking lot near the town of Rabaçal. First, we have to go down the levada to Risco. All in all, it's quite a pleasant walk, albeit monotonous one. Although after a while, laurel forests appear that aren't particularly beautiful, which aroused our curiosity. The berry bushes that grow up to 2 meters high here may come as a surprise. Other interesting plants that can be found here are liverworts that grow on entire slopes. Tourists often confuse these plants with mosses. The difference between them is primarily that mosses reproduce thanks to the air that carries their spores throughout the area. Unfortunately, liverwort spores are much larger, and therefore heavier. For that reason, the air is not able to transport them. This causes these plants to grow in very humid places, where flowing water is able to carry their spores away like small ships to distant places.

After a leisurely walk, we finally reach the Risco waterfall, which is almost 100 meters high. It may not carry much water, but standing right under it makes quite an impression on us. Especially since when looking up we can see people walking there. It turns out that another levada leads above the waterfall and it is possible to see it from above.

Keeping in mind the words of the guide about another point of interest, we return to the trail to reach the place where we can turn off to the levada of 25 Fontes. Unfortunately, to get there we have to cross a substantial part of the path that leads up a very winding and steep stairs. It is very important not to slip here on the wet stones. In addition, we have to watch out for the forest which is hostile towards us as many trees that grow here are preying upon passing tourist. And I will say that meeting such a tree is not a pleasure, and it

certainly hurts, a lot. These trees have twisted branches so twisted that they go over the path and we, walking along it and looking down a tour feet, often do not notice such a branch lurking for us. An interesting fact here is that at one point, due to how narrow the path, it is led as a one-way one. Another interesting thing are the fish that swim in the canal. One must admit that they are very determined when swimming against the current.



25 Fontes Falls. Photo: Krzysztof Tęcza

When we finally reach the 25 Fontes Falls, we see a large valley with one main waterfall and many smaller streams falling down the slopes. Supposedly, it is thanks to their number this place owns its name – 25 Fontes (25 Springs). In reality, there are many more springs here.

Once we had our fill of the sight of the water streaming down from above, it is time to set off on the return journey. Now we face the arduous ascent of twists and turns with steep stone stairs placed on them. We will definitely feel this ascent. However, these difficulties will be rewarded with the view we will see at the top and later when coming down. The trees growing here have fanciful shapes that are impossible not to notice them.

Finally we reach Paul de Serra, a truly extraordinary place. Because who among us would expect to see that the builders of the levada had dug through the mountain with an 800-meter-long tunnel to lay a water pipe in it. Entrance to the tunnel was walled with stone blocks, a shrine was placed there, in which candles brought by people burn. I won't say whether it was unpleasant or surprising, because each participant of the walk assessed it differently. It turned out that the tunnel, despite running on even ground, is not completely flat. And in some large sections, the level of water at the bottom of it was enough to soak shoes. I didn't have any problems with that because the mountain sandals I wore allowed me to not worry about having wet shoes. After leaving the tunnel, the water leaked out and the sandals, exposed to the warm rays of the sun, dried quickly.



Tunnel near Paul da Serra. Photo: Krzysztof Tęcza

Because we deserved some compensation for the hardships of today's walk, after leaving the tunnel we saw a beautiful, after leaving the tunnel we saw a very beautiful, clear rainbow in the sky. Now all we had to do was walk to the parking lot where our bus was waiting. Before we left, we admired the interesting mosaics made out of colourful tiles. It turns out that they were placed here in 2023 and they symbolize the first settlers building lavedas, sugar cane production and tourists coming here. These are representations of what Madeira is famous for, namely lavedas, sugar cane processing and tourism industry. To supplement our knowledge in this regard, the driver brought sugar cane with him, which he peeled and cut into pieces and gave us to have a taste. It was indeed very, very sweet, as well as very juicy.

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