

# Wanderlust

**WIN A TRIP TO ARGENTINA AND CHILE** **WORTH £5,500**

# Wanderlust

THE ORIGINAL TRAVEL MAGAZINE

## The 25 Best European RAIL JOURNEYS

All aboard for the continent's greatest peaks, valleys and scenery

**SPECIAL INTEREST MAGAZINE OF THE YEAR WINNER 2019**

**Texas Trip Planner**  
Get a **BIG** surprise in the Lone Star State

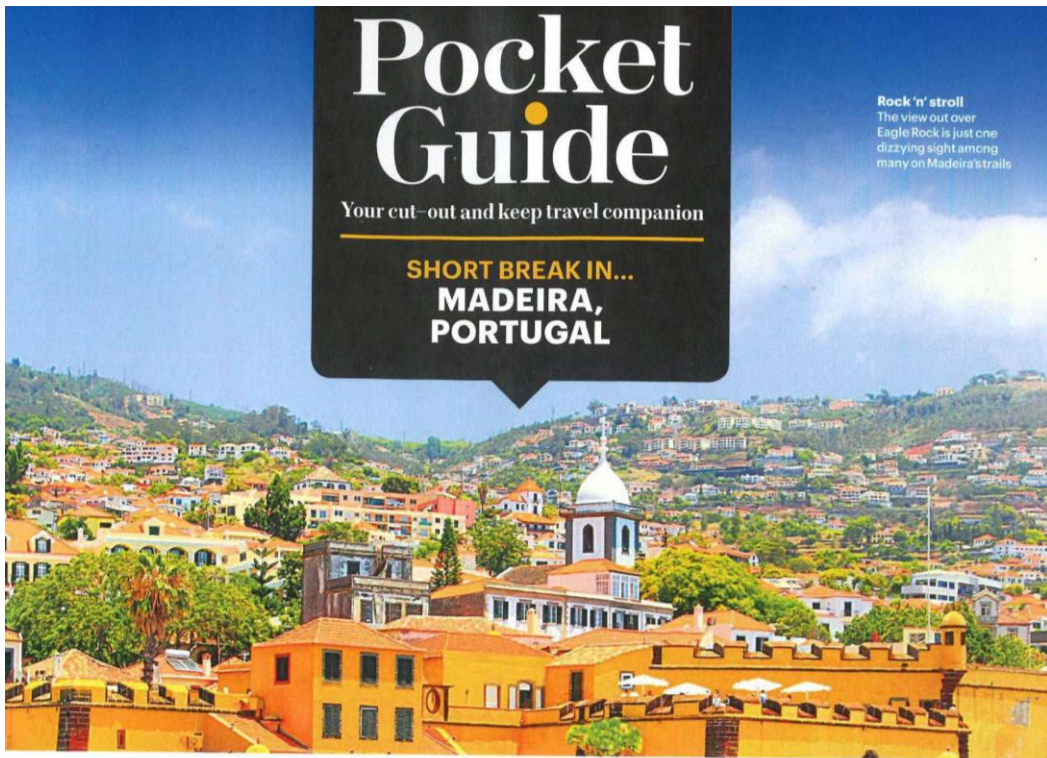
**Walk with painted wolves in Zimbabwe**

**Inside: Guatemala + The Isles of Scilly + China + Madeira + Whale-watching**



September 2019 wanderlust.co.uk £4.95  
0.9 >  
9 7713 311473 126

# Wanderlust



Six centuries on from its discovery, Portugal's sleepy, mountainous outpost is quietly building a buzzing reputation as an adventure playground, discovers **Sarah Baxter**

**H**appy Birthday Madeira, 600 years young! This volcanic Atlantic island, closer to Africa than Europe, was discovered by Portuguese explorers in 1419, and is marking its sixcentenary. Yet, while it has built a reputation for being a bit fusty over the centuries, it is anything but – and certainly not when it comes to its terrain.

There's barely a flat bit of land (and few beaches) here. Every inch is ravine-riven, dense with ancient woodland or plunging with knee-wobbling sheerness. This is evident as you fly over the crumpled interior to land on a runway that teeters above the ocean on stilts – said to be one of the world's toughest landings.

Despite its challenging terrain, Madeira was quickly colonised; by the end of the 15th century it was already a key producer of sugar cane. This crop was made possible by the system of *levadas* (manmade channels) that convey water from the absorbent laurel forests to the farmers' fields; more than 2,000km of levadas now trickle across the island.

Relatively little cane is grown for export here now – “We keep it for ourselves to make our own rum,” local guide Daniel told me. However, the levadas remain essential to island life, both for irrigating the banana plantations, vineyards, fruit trees and veg plots, and for attracting active visitors – the paths beside them make excellent hiking trails.

While levada walking has long been well publicised, the array of other activities the island has to offer is perhaps less known. For instance, in the past five years, the trail-running scene has begun to boom, drawing a younger crowd to the island's incredible off-road routes.

Also growing in popularity here are a number of adventure sports, such as canyoning and coasteering, kayaking and SUPing, and paragliding and surfing (some even call Madeira the “Hawaii of the Atlantic”). You don't have to be hardcore to come here, but neither do you have to be over the hill. Madeira, at the ripe old age of 600, has the history, the topography and the variety to suit all comers. ▶

## ASK A LOCAL

“Levada dos Cedros is a lesser-known walking path, located deep in the valley of Ribeira da Janela. It captures the best of Madeira's levadas: flat, lush and green, with endemic fauna and flora everywhere you look.”

Daniel Ferreira,  
[gotrailmadeira.com](http://gotrailmadeira.com)



# Wanderlust

## POCKET GUIDES SHORT BREAK

### Need to know

**Population:** 250,000  
**Time zone:** GMT (GMT+1 Apr-Oct)  
**Currency:** Euro (€), currently €1.12 to the UK£  
**When to go:** Year round. Madeira has warm, dry summers and mild winters, but microclimates lead to wildly varying conditions, so pack for hot, cool and wet.  
**Top tip:** Roads can be steep and hazardous – only the confident should hire a car. Public transport is possible, with bus timetables found at [horariosdofunchal.pt](http://horariosdofunchal.pt).  
**Further information:** [madeiraallyear.com](http://madeiraallyear.com)



### Day 1

Find your feet in **Funchal** (pictured). From the harbour hit the **Municipal Gardens**, then visit **Blandy's Wine Lodge** ([blandyswinelodge.com](http://blandyswinelodge.com)) for a tour (€9.50/£8.50) of Madeiran viticulture in historic surrounds.

Continue north to admire the old **Santa Clara Convent**, then return south for the **Sé**, Funchal's ornately decorated 16th-century cathedral. Walk, via Praça do Colombo, to

**Mercado dos Lavradores**, the art deco market; grab a pastry at **A Confeitaria** (Avenida do Infante 28) and walk the alleyways of the Old Town to yellow-washed **São Tiago Fort**. Next, soar the rooftops on the **cable car** to Monte (€16/£14 return). Here, explore the tumbling **Monte Palace Tropical Gardens** ([montepalacemadeira.com](http://montepalacemadeira.com); €12.50/£11) to breathe in the blooms and

see the history of Portugal told through its tiles. Return downtown by foot, cable car or Funchal's infamous street toboggans.

Sleep at **Allegro** ([barcelo.com](http://barcelo.com); from €73/£65), a tower block that's been converted into a smart adult-only hotel, with a panoramic rooftop bar. Juicy steakhouse **La Vaca Negra** (Rua Velha da Ajuda 12) is just a short walk away.



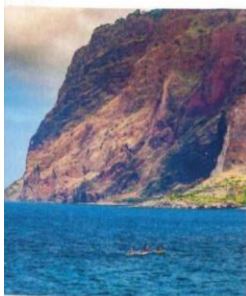
### Day 2

Make for **Machico**, the sandy spot east of Funchal where those first explorers landed 600 years ago. For the most dramatic entrance, take a tour ([gotrailmadeira](http://gotrailmadeira)) or bus ([sam.pt](http://sam.pt)) to **Porto da Cruz** and hike along the **Vereda do Laranjo**, a spectacular cliff-hugging path that ends, 12km later, in Machico.

Grab a snack at **O Casco** (Rua do Ribeirinho 2) on Machico's seafront, then visit **Canical**, a former whaling base now home to the **Museu da**

**Baleia** ([museudabaleia.org](http://museudabaleia.org); €10/£9) and **Ponta de São Lourenço**, the island's easternmost point.

A good option for the time-poor is a tour with **Mountain Expedition** ([mountainexpedition.pt](http://mountainexpedition.pt); full day from €45/£40), which offers set and tailor-made high-revving 4WD rides. Itineraries might include ascending **Pico Arieiro** (pictured), bombing down the seemingly undrivable valleys and visiting towns such as pretty Santana.



### Day 3

To turn ocean explorer, take a catamaran to the **Desertas Islands** ([seabookings.com](http://seabookings.com); €80/£72). Day trips leave Funchal in the morning for the uninhabited archipelago, with optional snorkelling and SUPing trips, plus a chance to spot whales, dolphins and seabirds.

Alternatively, **Madeira Outdoor** ([madeiraoutdoor.com](http://madeiraoutdoor.com)) organises a range of active excursions – from climbing and coastering to levada walks and kayaking (pictured) – that put pay to the idea of 'boring

Madeira'. The beginner-level canyoning (€60/£54) is a good way to explore the local geology: spend half a day swimming, scrambling and waterfall-leaping along Ribeira das Cales, in the **Ecological Park of Funchal**.

On your final evening, take a taxi or bus ([rodoeste.com.pt](http://rodoeste.com.pt)) west along the coast from Funchal to Câmara de Lobos, a fishing village loved by Winston Churchill, where **Vila do Peixe** ([viladopeixe.com](http://viladopeixe.com)) serves excellent seafood. ☺



## 4 THINGS TO DO IN MADEIRA

### 1 Find ancient forests

The high plateau of Fanal is home to some of Madeira's finest, UNESCO-listed laurisilva, the primary laurel forest that cloaked much of southern Europe 40 million years ago but is exceptionally rare. A great place for fairytale walks among crooked, beardy trees.

### 2 Eat & drink local

Must-tries include *espada* (an ugly scabbard fish), *espetada* (beef skewers) and *bolo de caco*, traditional muffin-like breads typically smothered in garlic butter. To wash it down, order Madeiran wine or a super-sweet *poncha*, a cocktail of *aguardente de cana* brandy, honey, sugar and lemon juice.

### 3 Hike a levada

The paths alongside Madeira's irrigation channels provide fantastic hiking routes (pictured top). Pick up a copy of *Madeira Walks* (Trailblazer, 2018), which lists 37 good strolls for all abilities, including details of how to get to and from each one by car or bus.

### 4 Get high & holy

Just west of Câmara de Lobos, at Cabo Girão, Madeira's highest sea cliffs soar 580m above the thrashing Atlantic. Step out onto the glass-bottomed, precipice-jutting viewing platform if you dare. The Chapel of Nossa Senhora de Fátima, one of the island's key pilgrimage sites, is nearby.