

WALKING ON MADEIRA



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Other Cicerone guides by the author

Glyndwr's Way
Mountain Walking in Mallorca
The Cleveland Way and the Yorkshire Wolds Way
The GR5 Trail
The GR20 Corsica
The Great Glen Way
The Irish Coast to Coast Walk
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The National Trails
The North York Moors
The Pennine Way
The Reivers Way
The South West Coast Path
The Teesdale Way (Martin Collins; updated by Paddy Dillon)
The Wales Coast Path
Trekking in Greenland
Trekking in Mallorca

Trekking in the Alps (contributing author)
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Walking on Arran
Walking on Gran Canaria
Walking on Guernsey
Walking on Jersey
Walking on La Gomera and El Hierro
Walking on Lanzarote and Fuerteventura
Walking on La Palma
Walking on Malta
Walking on Tenerife

WALKING ON MADEIRA

60 MOUNTAIN AND LEVADA ROUTES ON MADEIRA AND PORTO SANTO

by Paddy Dillon

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Third edition 2018
ISBN: 978 1 85284 855 2

Second edition 2009
First edition 2002

Printed in China on behalf of Latitude Press Ltd
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.
All photographs are by the author unless otherwise stated.

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Front cover: Madeira's highest mountains as seen from Eira do Ribeiro (Walk 37)

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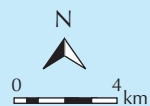
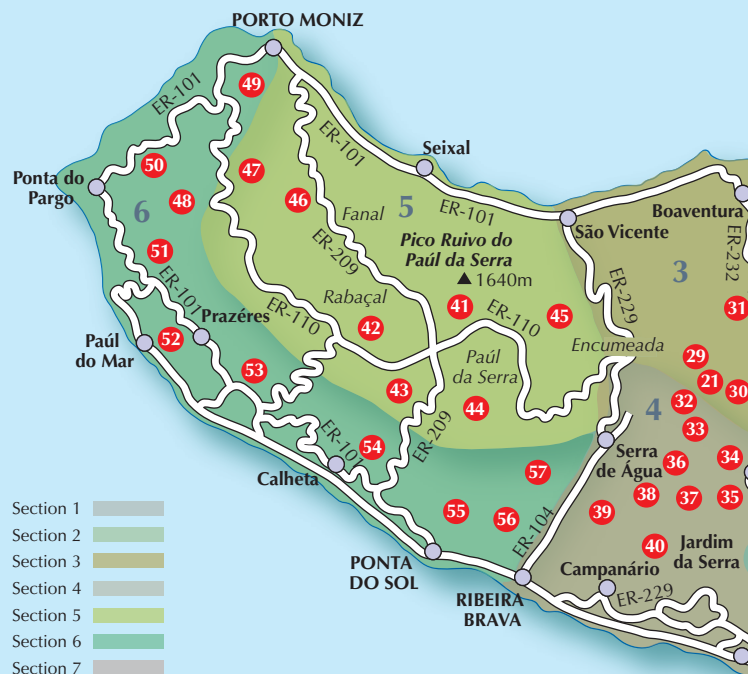
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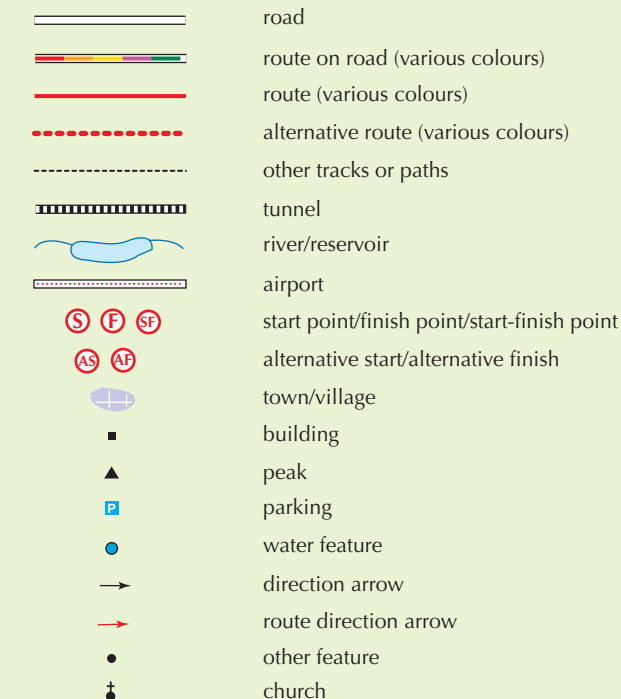
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MADEIRA and PORTO SANTO

Location of routes and sections



Map key



0 1 2 3 km

The above scale applies to all the routes in the book.

Contour Key

| | |
|-----------|------------|
| 800-1000m | 1800-2000m |
| 600-800m | 1600-1800m |
| 400-600m | 1400-1600m |
| 200-400m | 1200-1400m |
| 0-200m | 1000-1200m |

PREFACE

Madeira has undergone many changes since the first publication of *Walking in Madeira* and most are for the good. A tortuous road system once made it difficult to reach the start of many walks, but now a splendid network of road tunnels enables quick and easy access to many formerly remote places. Bus companies have adapted and altered their schedules, with more frequent services, more destinations and rapid access through the new tunnels.

While a handful of bars and restaurants have closed, many more have opened and there are more places offering accommodation around the islands in places that are popular with walkers. No longer should anyone feel confined to Funchal or the 'Hotel Zone', as they can walk from one hotel to another on long-distance routes. Walkers have not been forgotten as the island authorities have waymarked and signposted some splendid walking routes, improved and

restored others, provided safety fencing and opened completely new trails.

All these changes meant that *Walking in Madeira* was ready for a complete overhaul. For the second edition, all the routes were walked again and the route descriptions brought up to date. New routes were added and all the relevant facilities were checked. More and more walkers are seeking longer and more sustained routes across Madeira. Some routes are now structured so that they serve as day walks, and can also be linked end-to-end to create splendid long-distance walks. Improved full-colour mapping, more information and more photographs should allow walkers to get more enjoyment out of their visit to Madeira. For the third edition, following severe flood and fire damage, repair work was inspected, routes and facilities were checked, and changes were made where necessary.

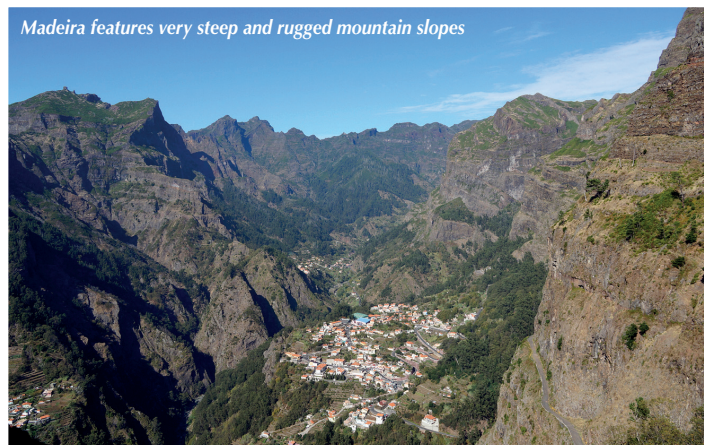
Paddy Dillon



Looking towards Pico Ruivo from Cabeço Furado (Walk 13)

INTRODUCTION

Madeira features very steep and rugged mountain slopes



Madeira and Porto Santo rise steep, rocky and remote in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Europe and Africa. The nearest island groups are the distant Azores and Canary Islands. All these islands enjoy a subtropical climate that many walkers find acceptable throughout the year. A compact and mountainous island, Madeira is criss-crossed by old paths and tracks, and is remarkably scenic and accessible. Water is conveyed round the island in charming flower-fringed channels called *levadas*, which offer anything from gentle strolls to extremely exposed cliff walks. Richly wooded valleys, rocky slopes, cultivated terraces and impressive cliff coasts can be explored, along with one of the best *laurisilva* forests in the world. This book describes a rich and varied selection of 60 walks to suit all abilities, covering

the whole of Madeira and Porto Santo, as well as a cruise to the Ilhas Desertas.

LOCATION

Madeira is a small island of 750km² (290 square miles). It lies at 32°46'N/17°03'W in the subtropical Atlantic Ocean, about 600km (370 miles) from Morocco in North Africa, and about 950km (590 miles) from Portugal, to which it belongs. Its closest neighbours are Porto Santo, about 40km (25 miles) away to the north-east, and the Ilhas Desertas, about 20km (12½ miles) south-east of Madeira at their closest point. Madeira is loosely associated with the Azores and Canaries, since they all lie along the same huge complex of fracture zones in the Earth's crust, but they are far from view.

GEOLOGY

Madeira is essentially a volcanic island, although volcanic activity has long ceased. Basalt from deep within the earth spewed onto the ocean floor around 130 million years ago. Gradually, enough material built up for land to appear above the water, so that Madeira raised itself from the ocean about 2.5 million years ago. Some corals established themselves round the fringe of the island as it grew, and these are preserved as fossils in very limited areas.

The overwhelming bulk of the island is made up of ash and basalt lava flows shot through with dolerite dykes. It is thought that volcanic activity ceased around 25,000 years ago and the rock is now heavily weathered. Porto



Thick layers of volcanic ash and lava flows criss-crossed with basalt dykes on Porto Santo (Walk 60)

Santo is older and more weathered than Madeira. Although mostly basalt, Porto Santo features a central band of calcareous sandstone that produces a fertile soil in the middle of the island that has eroded to form a magnificent golden beach.

HISTORY

The true story of Madeira's 'discovery' may never be known, but early records agree it was a densely-wooded uninhabited island. The many fanciful tales of Madeira's discovery don't tie in easily with historical documentation. Some early maps show the island and there is a suspicion that the Phoenicians may have been the first to set eyes on Madeira, whereas others say the Genoans discovered it. Some records state that the Spanish were in the habit of stopping off at Porto Santo on trips between Spain and the Canary Islands. A strange story relates how an Englishman, Walter Machim, along with his wife and a companion, were marooned on Madeira and thus became the first temporary settlers.

Reliable records date from 1418, when Prince Henry 'The Navigator' of Portugal patronised voyages to seek new territories. João Gonçalves Zarco and Tristão Vaz Teixeira were leading one of these voyages around Africa in 1419, when they were blown off-course onto Porto Santo. While checking out possibilities for settling the island, they also discovered Madeira. In 1425 great fires were started to clear Madeira's native woodlands and open up sunny slopes for settlement and cultivation. In 1452 slaves were drafted in to work the land and dig a network of irrigation channels,



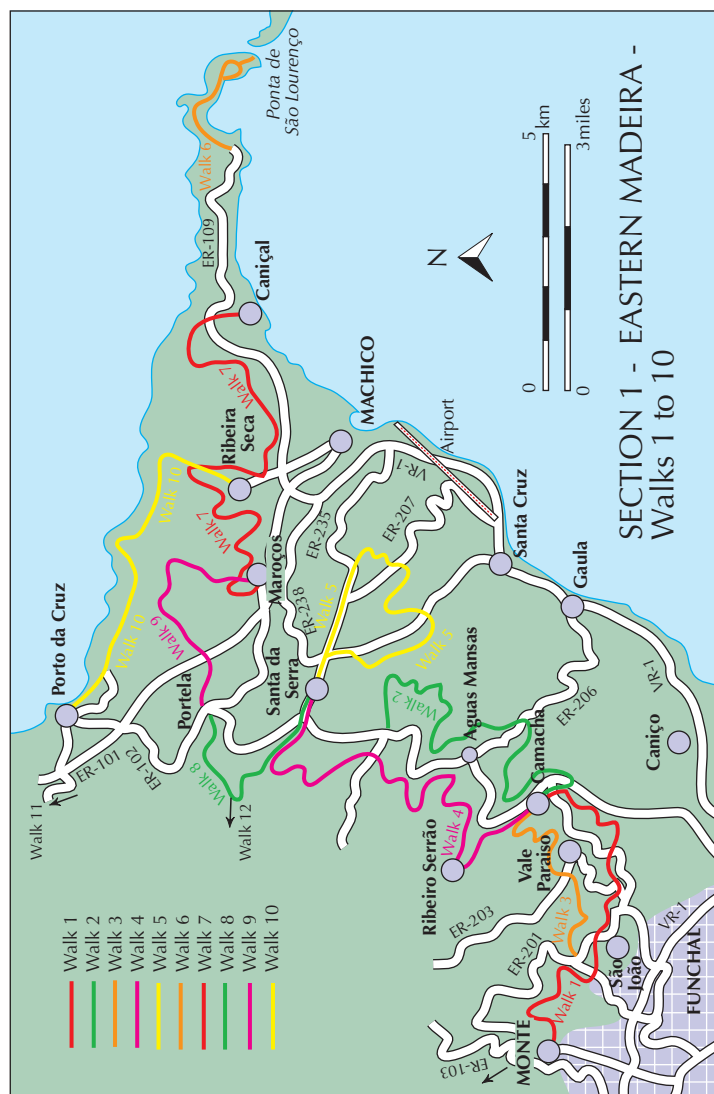
Charming thatched houses at Queimadas (Walk 25)

or levadas. Christopher Columbus is said to have visited Madeira and Porto Santo in 1478, convinced that by sailing ever-westwards he would find India.

Madeira and Porto Santo, being remote from Portugal, were open to attack by pirates from Europe and Africa. The islands suffered several raids, resulting in the destruction of property, looting and the capture and killing of inhabitants. Fortifications were constructed, including a wall around Funchal in 1542, but most island communities were unprotected. In calmer times good trade links were developed, along with agriculture, and Madeira became known for producing fine wines. By 1662, following a marriage between Charles II of England and Catherine of Braganza, English merchants settled on Madeira and took key positions in the wine

trade. English troops were stationed in Madeira in 1807 as Napoleon conquered more and more territory. In more settled times, during the 1850s, cholera wiped out thousands of islanders, while disease destroyed their vines. Banana cultivation developed, with the 'dwarf banana' proving the most suitable type for Madeira's climate.

Tourism has developed since 1890, with the climate making it a favourite winter destination for rich Europeans. Although Portugal was neutral in the War years, it suffered under a dictatorship and many Madeirans emigrated to other parts of Europe, or to Angola, Brazil and Venezuela. Madeira has been an autonomous region since 1976 and, following Portugal's entry into the EU, vast sums of money were applied to its infrastructure. As elsewhere in Europe,



WALK 1

Levada dos Tornos: Monte to Camacha

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Start | Monte, above Funchal |
| Finish | Camacha |
| Distance | 15.5km (9¾ miles) |
| Total ascent | 330m (1080ft) |
| Total descent | 130m (425ft) |
| Time | 5hr |
| Terrain | Apart from short ascents and descents at the start and finish, mostly level walking on wooded or cultivated slopes, with one avoidable tunnel. |
| Maps | Carta Militar 9 |
| Refreshments | Snack bars and/or cafés at Monte and Babosas, around Lombo da Quinta and Nogueira. Plenty of choice at Camacha. |
| Transport | Urban buses 20, 21 and 48 serve Monte. Teleférico from Funchal to Monte. Urban bus 22 serves Babosas. Teleférico from Jardim Botânico to Babosas. Urban bus 29 serves Curral Romeiros. Urban bus 47 serves Hortensia Gardens and Jasmin Tea House. Interurban bus 110 serves Nogueira. Interurban bus 129, 77, 85 and 110 serve Camacha. Taxis at Monte and Camacha. |

The popular Levada dos Tornos carries water from north to south through Madeira. The northern parts are largely confined to tunnels, but the southern part runs in the open and the general altitude is around 600m (1970ft). The levada path is about 27km (16¾ miles) long. Strong walkers could cover it in a day, but most take two days, detouring into the basket-making centre of Camacha. There are two options between Babosas and Curral dos Romeiros – left and right. Left is only for those who are sure-footed and have a very good head for heights.

Start at the bus stop at **Monte** where a cobbled square at 550m (1805ft) is shaded by tall plane trees. ▶ Head for a candle-lit shrine and a drinking fountain dating from the 16th century. Climb 172 steps built from small stones to reach the imposing church of **Nossa Senhora do Monte**. Enjoy views over Funchal then walk straight down steps to the Belomonte

Restaurant, café,
souvenir stalls
and toilets.

A wide, long staircase made of dark, weathered stone steps leads up to a white church. The church has two bell towers on either side of a central entrance, each topped with a cross. A statue of a figure is visible in a niche above the central entrance. The sky is clear and blue.

Restaurante Snack Bar. Wicker 'toboggans' are stacked ready to whisk people down to Funchal. Follow a level, cobbled road, Largo das Babosas,

signposted for Babosas. Pass the Jardim Tropical Monte Palace (montepalace.com) and continue past a teleférico station. ▶

Walk gently down to **Babosas**, reaching the Pátio

Café do Monte
and toilets.

The route from the teleférico to Curral dos Romeiros was closed at the time of printing, but is due to re-open.

Views stretch across the valley to Babosas and down to the harbour at Funchal.

Urban bus 29.

Infrequent urban bus 94.

das Babosas café, urban bus 22 and a ticket kiosk for another teleférico to the Jardim Botânico da Madeira. This shady spot has tall plane trees and views over a steep, wooded valley. Follow a cobbled track, the Caminho Rev Padre Eugénio Borgonovo, down towards the teleférico station, but pass below it. ◀ The valley ahead was devastated by a forest fire in 2016 and the track was repaired in 2017–18. Stop at a junction and either turn left up a path for the **Levada dos Tornos**, or turn right to continue down the track instead. Both routes re-join at **Curral dos Romeiros**.

The left-hand (exposed) option

The rugged path on the left is awkward as it climbs beside a rocky cutting. Eventually, the Levada dos Tornos emerges from a tunnel. Follow the water downstream to pass a stone arch. The levada has a narrow parapet and exposed, unfenced stretches, and needs great care. ◀ Houses are reached at **Curral dos Romeiros** clinging to a steep slope, where it is necessary to go down steps to reach a crossroads in the village.

The right-hand (easy) option

The easy track on the right zigzags downhill and crosses an arched bridge over a bouldery river. It then climbs a slope zigzagging past regenerating trees to reach **Curral dos Romeiros**. Walk up a road and go straight through a crossroads. ◀

The road gives way to a stone-paved path, then watch for a sign pointing left up a flight of concrete steps. Walk up these and turn right along the Levada dos Tornos. The levada is covered at first, but the water channel is soon revealed. After leaving the village, the next valley is wooded, while agapanthus flanks the path. Following a forest fire, eucalyptus is dominant, as well as mimosa.

After looping round small valleys, the levada passes beneath a road and enters the **Choupana Hills** resort. Stay on the path as the facilities are private. Some houses were destroyed by fire, along with the resort's hotel and bar/restaurant. Go through a gate in a fence and cross a steep road near Quinta do Pomar, then pass a couple of houses and a water intake. ◀



Walkers follow the Levada dos Tornos from Choupana towards the popular Hortensia Tea Gardens

Cross another steep road later, pass eucalyptus and a small farm, then make tight turns to cross a couple of streams. The path later runs beneath a road. ▶ Then a concrete road is reached near the delightful **Hortensia Gardens** tea house. Follow the levada further with views of Funchal and the Ilhas Desertas. Walk through woods and cross the **ER-201** road on a bend at Lombo da Quinta. Eucalyptus and pines flank the path. There is access to the Jasmin Tea House if required, then there is a break in the trees. Walk into a quiet wooded valley, then out of it, and later the levada reaches a bend on the busy **ER-102** road, so cross carefully. ▶

Pass a water intake and keep left of a large workshop building. Cross a road and turn left to continue along the

Urban bus 47.

Urban bus 36A.



A water regulating building on the Levada dos Tornos

The Bar 1 Maio is uphill.

Urban bus 37 and Bar Levada dos Tornos.

levada. ◀ Apple trees give way to dense eucalyptus and mimosa.

You will reach a tunnel entrance – either walk through it or over it. To go through, use a torch, noting that the path is narrow and the roof is low. The latter half drips and is wet before the tunnel exit. To go over, climb earth steps and cross a wooded slope. Follow a concrete road to a tarmac road at **Pinheirinho**. ◀ Turn left up the road, then right down the Estrada do Pinheirinho. Turn left along a narrow concrete access path to reach a house set back from the road. Walk down concrete steps and turn left down a steep path on a wooded slope to reach the levada near the tunnel exit.

Continue through woods to a road called the Rua do Pomar and turn right. The levada almost immediately drifts away to the left and is less wooded. Chestnut and oak are seen while traversing the valley, and there is a knot of canes and a footbridge at the valley head. Cross the Vereda da Nogueira, then as the levada passes houses at **Nogueira**, the channel is covered in slabs. Don't follow it far beyond the village, as there is a tunnel too low for comfort. Instead, walk up a concrete track from the tunnel, and a dirt road leads up to gates. Turn right up a tarmac road, passing the Pastelaria Candeeiro snack bar.

Walk straight up through a housing estate, avoiding turnings to right and left. ▶ There are bus stops, if an early finish is needed; otherwise walk to a road junction facing the large disused industrial building. Turn left up the **ER-205** road, then right along the Travessa João Claudio Nobrega. Walk straight downhill from a crossroads along the Caminho Fonte Concelos. The road winds down through **Ribeirinha**, passing a number of houses and passing beneath an elevated main road. Follow the minor road uphill, and note a sign on the right marking the continuation of the Levada dos Tornos. Take this turn if continuing directly with Walk 2, otherwise stay on the road.

The road climbs over a wooded rise. Turn left to along the Caminho Fonte Concelos, which later swings left and climbs steeply among tall trees. Cross a busy road and climb straight past a modern church to reach a fine square in the centre of **Camacha**.

Interurban bus 110.

CAMACHA

A monument on the square declares that the first game of football played on Portuguese territory took place here in 1875. Just off the square is a fine basket factory well worth a visit. There is accommodation, as well as shops, bars, restaurants and a bank with ATM. Interurban buses 129, 85 and 110 link Camacha with Funchal while bus 77 links with Funchal and Santo da Serra.



If the Levada da Serra is broken at Camacha, have a look inside the basket-making factory in the village