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The European Destination That Is Garnering A Lot Of Buzz



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Steep cliffs on the north coast of the Portuguese island of Madeira. LIGHTROCKET VIA GETTY IMAGES

If it seems like everyone is suddenly talking about Madeira, Portugal, it's because they are. A big part of the buzz is the fact that there is now a direct

flight from New York's JFK airport to Funchal (FNC) in Madeira. It's on SATA Azores Air.

The Islands of Madeira have long been a favorite destination for seasoned travelers, but the new direct flights will be opening the market to many Americans who may not be familiar with the destination. Direct flights play a large part in making a destination transition from something armchair travelers dream about to actual travelers booking a trip.

Covid Protocols

It's been tricky for travelers to figure out what testing they need for various destinations. The rules are constantly changing and it can add additional pre-trip stress. Madeira has lifted their entry requirements, so no testing is needed (and both vaccinated and unvaccinated travelers are allowed to travel to the island). Masks are required, so be sure to pack that. Also, each facility (restaurants, activities, hotels) can use its own discretion on whether to require proof of vaccination or a note about post-covid recovery. It's recommended for travelers to bring (just in case).

Where to Stay

The island has a variety of accommodations including the Savoy Palace, a member of the Leading Hotels of the World. The property is a popular place for Americans and has an ideal location just a short walk from the Old Town of Funchal with its charming restaurants and shops. Many rooms have balconies that overlook the water and the rooftop lounge is a popular spot for cocktails. There are several pools including the popular infinity pool as well as a dedicated family pool, which is great for those traveling with young kids. There's also an on-site spa.

Other accommodations include the Cliff Bay Hotel which is located near the beach as well as near the Madeira Museum, the casino, the Santa Clara Monastery, and the Funchal Marina. This property is popular with

Europeans and has a boutique feel. It also has several pools, restaurants and an on-site spa.

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The Reid's Palace is another popular accommodation and has been a favorite spot for travelers for over 130 years. There are plenty of activities for families (and many room and food and beverage discounts when traveling with kids). Foodies will enjoy the Michelin-starred William restaurant, which focuses on seasonal ingredients and local Madeira cuisine. The property's spa is also utilized by many travelers.

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What to Do

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Madeira is an outdoor lover's mecca. No matter what the activity, you can find it here. Surfers will love the island's topography, where waves are ideal year-round. Scuba diving and snorkeling are also very popular in Madeira due to the visibility and warm water. For those who like to stay on the land, there are plenty of hiking and mountain trails worth exploring. For adventure enthusiasts, there's canyoning, climbing and jeep tours. Or for something different try Coasteering—which combines rappel, climbing and jumping into the sea, a popular excursion performed on the coast at the Nature Reserve of Ponta de São Lourenço. You'll be able to see the stunning views of Baía d'Abra.

Madeira also has natural pools including Piscinas Naturais do Porto Moniz and Piscinas Naturais do Cachalote.

If black sand beaches are what you're looking for, head to Alagoa Beach in Porto da Cruz, or Praia do Areeiro

Where to Eat

Food and Wine connoisseurs will find quite a variety. The Wanderer by Selim Latrous considers itself a secret place for wanderers and gourmets and offers a bespoke, private dining experience. The Restaurant of Quinta do Furão has amazing views as well as an extensive menu and wine selection. The Restaurant of Fajã dos Padres is unique in that it's only accessible by cable car or boat.

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