

Title:

Funchal Is Simple Sophistication

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659

Summary:

Not many places on earth get the opportunity to be discovered twice, but the islands of Madeira and Porto Santo have. These two islands together with Las Desertas and Las Selvagens islands make up what is called the Archipelago of Madeira. They are found 1000 kilometers southwest of Lisbon, Portugal and half that distance from the African continent. Since their discovery around 1419 and founded in 1425 by Joao Goncalves Zarco, little was known about these islands but in the 1...

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Article Body:

Not many places on earth get the opportunity to be discovered twice, but the islands of Madeira and Porto Santo have. These two islands together with Las Desertas and Las Selvagens islands make up what is called the Archipelago of Madeira. They are found 1000 kilometers southwest of Lisbon, Portugal and half that distance from the African continent. Since their discovery around 1419 and founded in 1425 by Joao Goncalves Zarco, little was known about these islands but in the last decade have quickly become the major tourist attractions in the Atlantic Ocean. Joao Goncalves, with a special permission from the Portuguese government, used prisoners from the prisons and enticed settlers from the poorest regiones like El Algarve to colonize Madeira. The airport on Madeira in the town of Santa Cruz on the east side is just an hour flight from Lisbon and also serves the other island of Porto Santo with smaller planes. This archipelago is really something special to enjoy.

Funchal was named the capital of Madeira in 1425 and is located on the south side. Under the rule of Joao Goncalves, Funchal prospered into being a very important sugar cane producer and by the year 1508, it changed its position from town to city and sugar canes were carved onto the coats of arms as its main symbol. Being as ocean travel was becoming more popular, especially among the greedy and pirates, Funchal was attacked and robbed. This fact made this enticing stopover react and built its city in a semi-circular way so that all the building would be looking and watching the sea. Even today there are houses

and buildings that face the waterfront ' just to keep on eye on things'.

Animated Funchal All year Round

Whatever season you decide on, you will be guaranteed a warm, mild climate with temperatures between 17 to 26 degrees. One would think that the busiest season for tourism would late spring to early fall, but Christmas is actually one of the hottest and most lively times on these paradisiac islands. With visitors from the colder countries and very much into the Christmas spirit, Madeira dresses its port streets with the best lighting decorations and the most colourful fireworks on New Year's Eve. July and August are usually very muggy and with the highest humidity and temperatures, but quite welcomed after a long cold winter.

The city of Funchal is chock full of history and architecture as you visit churches going back to the 17th century as is the Church of Colegio Sao Joao Evangelist or the Se which is cathedral in Portuguese. Being as Madeira means wood in Portuguese, the inside of the cathedral is done up in marble and cedar wood. One of the most impressive buildings is called Pacos do Concelho (18th c.) with black volcanic stone counteracting with the white front facing and doorways. There are museums dedicated to religious art, the Museum of Natural History housed in the Palace of Sao Pedro where you can get a closer look at the marine life of these islands and a museum which holds many pieces left behind by all the different cultures that frequented the islands like Chinese porcelain and figures carved from the ivory tusks from the captured whales. Around this museum there are also interesting pieces of art accompanied by the aroma of fresh orquids.

Bon Appetite in Funchal But man does not live on beauty alone and therefore must feed its physical spirit too. Tunafish and codfish are main dishes done in so many different ways: baked, fried, stewed with home-grown green beans and potatoes. Tropical fruits are abundant such as maracuyas, mangos and bananas to mention a few. And of course, the famous Madeira wine. And in order to sleep well, there are luxurious hotels or simple rural homes on the hillsides so that everyone can feel as though they are at home, amongst a paradise of lush green vegetation in the city of Funchal on Madeira, Portugal.