Madeira
25th August - 1st September 2017
Small island in the Atlantic Ocean

Ribeiro Frio (Balcoes)

Ponta de Sao Lourenco

Ilhas Desertas
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Introduction This journey was a middle-term holiday with my girlfriend, Ildi, so it was not a "hardcore" birding trip but an easy one with hiking, sight-seeing, sunbathing and other typical tourists’ activities. Madeira is a perfect choice for these activities, we can recommend it to every couple 😊. We had bought the airplane ticket in April, so we had enough time to prepare every detail of the journey, however we had not planned everything, but it was perfect this way. This is a small island therefore you have don’t need much time to explore it all, especially if you hire a car. We did it, we drove about 500 kilometres and we could visit the most important birdwatching places, and fortunately these were also good places for hiking, to admire the landscape, to sunbathing, etc. All in all enjoyable for a girlfriend too 😊. The most memorable event was the seewatching in Porto Moniz, as I had read it before, it is one of the best seewatching place in Europe. Seabirds were flying relatively close to the shore, so the identification was quite easy. Here I saw 10 seabirds including four shearwaters, three skuas, two terns and one petrel. The Zino's petrel tour to Pico do Areiêro was amazing, the sky was full of stars, and the birds’ drawn-out mournful and deeply howling sound was creepy. Laurel forest - especially around Pico Ruivo de Santana - was breathtaking: laurels, humid forest, butterflies, birds, etc. All in all during the entire trip we saw 48 bird species (including all endemics and two introduced), 3 mammal species, 1 endemic lizard and 9 butterfly species. The total cost of the trip was 1.200€/person.

Airplane ticket and visa We bought the tickets via www.skyscanner.hu. There is no direct flight from Budapest to Funchal, we chose TAP Portugal with Lisbon transfer. It was a very bad choice, this was one of our worst airline we have ever flown with:

1. When we departed from Budapest, the ticket officer said that our ticket didn't include the luggage, so we had to pay for them. This was a very annoying thing because before our flight we had called the airline office but they hadn’t pick up the telephone and the webpage wasn't clear, it seemed we didn’t have to pay for luggages.
2. Food was poor and neutral.
3. Both times the table in front of us was dirty (somebody doused with coffee).
4. Onboardings were chaotic, theoretically there were three rows, but practically not.
5. Our 60 liters rucksack was considered oversized such a baby buggy 😊. Fortunately we didn’t have to pay for it.
The flight lasted about four hours between Budapest and Lisbon, while it lasted about two hours between Lisbon and Funchal. Backwards we had to wait eight hours so we went out to the city center of Lisbon. The cost of the return airplane ticket was 380€/person. Visa is not obligatory in Madeira.

**Vaccination** Vaccination is not necessary in Madeira.

**Money** The currency of Madeira is Euro (€). Usually we used our debit cards, especially in petrol stations and in shops. There are many bank automatics, so you can withdraw money in any town or small village.

**Electricity** Plugs encounters were type C and F. Read more at the [Worldstandards website](https://www.worldstandards.com).

**Transport** We rented a car from Keddy By Europcar via [rentalcars.com](https://www.rentalcars.com) and paid 288€ for 8 days (Collision Damage Waiver and Theft Protection included, unlimited free kilometers), airport pick-up and drop-off. At the airport we got the car, a Reanult Clio. It was very confident for us. The roads are in very good condition, there are numerous new tunnels. Some of the roads are very narrow and steep, so you handily could maneuver. It can be dangerous if you are not a proficient driver. In spite of that the island is very small, don't underestimate the distances. For example, from Machico to Porto Moniz the trip lasted more than 1,5 hours. The highways are free. There are many petrol stations beside the roads and in the settlements, but we had to refill the tank only once during our trip. We used GPS on our mobile phones (Offline Maps & Navigation).

**Weather and birding season** We chose this season because this is the best time to see great shearwaters and other seabirds, and there is a small chance to see Zino's petrel too. And this worked. The weather was diverse. Higher mountains were cloudy and misty with some drizzle, while the lower region was sunny and warm with 20-25°C. The region of Ponta de Sao Lourenco seemed to be a desert with high temperature, the grass was short and blighted, etc. At night in Pico do Areeiro was quite cool with ca. 5°C. The sun has risen about 7.00am and has set about 8.30pm. Target birds were quite easy, however before the trip I hadn't thought this. Maybe the most difficult species were Barolo- and sooty shearwater. As we expected, we didn't see any storm petrel.
Trip reports
1. Oosten H. 2009.07.29.-08.07. Madeira
2. Spek V. 2009.08.10.-17. Madeira
3. Berlijn M. 2009.08.24.-09.04. Madeira
4. Lange M. 2009.08.31.-09.09. Porto Moniz
6. Lendvai Cs. 2012.08.02.-11. Száraz pusztaság és vulkanikus madárvilág (Dél-Portugália és Madeira augusztusban)
7. Albas E. J. 2012.08.26.-31. Madeira
9. Bowler J. 2015.02.24.-03.10. Winter trip to Madeira
10. Ranner A. 2015.08.02.-13. Madeira
11. Karr D. 2016.08.21.-27. Madeira - Island Endemics and Pelagic Birding Tour

Books

Useful links
1. Madeira birdwatching www.madeirabirds.com
2. Birding Madeira http://madeira.seawatching.net/

Map Madeira, Reise, 1:45 000

Accommodation
We spent eight nights at "Pérola de Machico" (link) in Machico for 320€/2 person. This was a simple two-star hotel with about ten rooms, however we were almost alone in the whole house for several days. It was clean but in the last three days we two times saw a big cockroach. Wi-Fi
is free of course without password. There was a parking lot in front of the house. We ate the same continental breakfast every day, it was very boring: different bread, jam, butter, honey, yoghurt and fruits. In spite of Machico is the second or third biggest settlement in Madeira, it was a calm town, there were no crowd in the evening. There are several supermarkets and restaurants, and almost everyone speaks English well. We reserved the accommodation via www.booking.com without deposit.

Food
We tried the typical Portuguese food, espatada (chicken and pork, but they also served it from beef). As other islands, they have a rich variety of seafood. We tried pasta with prawn, octopus, squid and seeshell. The prices were relatively high, about 30-40€/2 person with drink. We tried the typical Portuguese beer called Coral. Well, we have tried better beer so far.

Guides, programmes
We booked three programmes in advance via Madeira Wind Birds (www.madeirabirds.com):

1. Zino's Petrel Night Expedition (link).
   Highly recommended. Almost the only chance to observe this endangered species. Beautiful landscape, sky with full of stars, etc. Be careful because the weather could be very cool. Best tactic if you lay down on the ground and look for the bird's silhouette.

2. Bird, dolphin & whale watching trip (link)
   Recommended however this year was not so good for whales. We saw two dolphin species however before the tour we had hoped to see sperm whale too. We recommend if you want to see sperm- or other larger whale species, try to contact more companies, maybe one of them could guarantee. We think most of the companies concentrate to smaller, so-called "cute" dolphins and whales, which the tourist usually like. Because Catarina and Hugo are great birdwatchers, during the trip we saw some speciel seabirds, such as Desertas petrel. Moreover in Canical we saw some migratory and/or vagrant shorebirds, such as red knot or little stint.

3. Desertas Islands Cruise (link).
   Recommended. The trip lasted about 2,5 hours one way. The ocean was calm but on the way back, the ocean was a bit wavy. We got to our neck... but the main problem was the camera, it don't like saltwater. We didn’t see many seabirds, jut the three most common ones. On the way back we observed an Atlantic spotted dolphin school, it was a great experience. We were looking for Mediterranean monk seal, but unfortunately we didn't find it. It seemed that nobody was interested in this animal except us... On the island there
is a small nature trail with about ten stations. The leader narrated many interesting facts about the island and its wildlife, and he showed us a Bulwer's petrel chick. There is a very interesting fact: 70% of the wildlife of this island is located in a little valley on the top of the island. The valley practically inaccessible except you don't feared your life, because there is a steep path up to the top.

**Itinerary and brief diary**

24th August.: Three and half hours flight from Budapest to Lisbon, waiting in Lisbon, then two hours flight from Lisbon to Funchal. Arrived 11pm at the airport. We got the car and we went to Machico. Arrived our hotel at midnight. We observed a hunting western barn owl, what a fantastic start of the tour!

25th August: Early start, we went to Ribeiro Frio (Balcoes). Short hiking to the viewpoint where we saw two trocaz pigeons. The area is good for plants, butterflies and birds too, and the landscape is beautiful. Lots of tourists, so you should start at early in the morning. We spent the rest of the day in Funchal. Firstly we visited the botanical garden which is good for butterflies. Secondly we went to the market which is famous, and we bought some special fruits. Thirdly, we went to the harbour to check the terns. Roseate tern was quite easy, and we saw a very tame ruff.

26th August: Early morning we checked the harbour area in Canical. Nothing special. Shortly we run to Ponta de Sao Lourenco till we reached the parking lot. Because we had a fix snorkelling program, we didn’t have much time before going to the meeting place. The snorkelling lasted about two hours, it was great with a lot of colourful fish species. After this we looked around Prainha and took some good landscape photos. Zino's petrel tour in the evening, from 8pm to 1am, including travel. Great experience!

27th August: Started with a short bird and whale watching trip from Machico harbour. Two dolphin species, but not sperm whale. The Atlantic Ocean was quite calm, in spite of this we saw some seabirds with great photo opportunity. In the afternoon we did a long trip in Ponta de Sao Lourenco about four hours. Beautiful landscape, good light conditions and some special birds in the island, such as rock sparrow or Berthelot's pipit.

28th August: Today we climbed up to the Pico Ruivo de Santana. Before the parking lot we stopped at a viewpoint, where we saw five trocaz pigeons and other forest specialities. At an early stage the weather was more or less with sunny, but later it was cloudy with rain. Unfortunately the top was cloudy, and on our way back it started to rain as well. In the afternoon the program was relaxation, walking in Funchal, and shopping 😊.

29th August: Full day Desertas cruise.
30th August: We started the day in Porto Moniz where I could watch the seabirds from the shore parade between 9am-10.30am. A medium strength rain arrived, so we decided to go to Ponta do Pargo. It was a good idea, on the way we travelled through a beautiful laurel forest, and from Ponta do Pargo the view was fantastic. Of course, we saw special species here such as common linnet. We observed a barbary falcon, which is a rare visitor in the island. After lunch we went back to Porto Moniz, visited the aquarium. Between 3pm and 5pm I did seawatching again with numerous very good species. The birds were quite close to the shore, so the identification wasn't a problem. On the way back we stopped at Lugar de Baixo but we didn't see any special birds.

31st August: Relaxing all day in the Prainha beach 😊. Interestingly, near here we saw two whimbrels and one Eurasian hoopoe.

1th September: Three and half hours flight from Lisbon to Budapest. We had 8 hours, so we decided to go to the city centre. Two hours flight from Lisbon to Budapest.

Visited sites
1. Machico
2. Ribeiro Frio (Balcoes)
3. Funchal (harbour)
4. Funchal (botanical garden)
5. Canical
6. Ponta de Sao Lourenco
7. Pico do Areeiro
8. Pico Ruivo de Santana
9. Ilhas Desertas
10. Porto Moniz
11. Ponta do Pargo
12. Lugar de Baixo

Birds (by Svensson, Mullarney, Zetterström and IOC 7.2; H - heard)

1. Mallard (Anas platyrhynchos) 12
   *30th August Lugar de Baixo. One female was seen on the lagoon. It was sitting on the grass, about here: 32°40'45.5"N 17°05'18.2"W.
2. Cory's shearwater (Calonectris borealis) 1,5,9,10
3. Great shearwater (Ardenna gravis) 10
*30th August Porto Moniz. We counted 30 individuals in the afternoon from behind the Aquarium, about here: 32°52'02.7"N 17°09'55.0"W. Interestingly, we saw the species just in the afternoon. The birds flew from east, northeast to west, usually single individuals, sometimes two.

4. Barolo shearwater (Puffinus baroli) 10  
   *30th August Porto Moniz. Two individuals were seen in the afternoon from behind the Aquarium, about here: 32°52'02.7"N 17°09'55.0"W. The birds flew from east, northeast to west. One bird joined manx shearwaters, one bird flew alone. Difficult species, difficult to identify.

5. Manx shearwater (Puffinus puffinus) 10  
   *30th August Porto Moniz. We counted 62 individuals in the afternoon from behind the Aquarium, about here: 32°52'02.7"N 17°09'55.0"W. Interestingly, we saw the species just in the afternoon. The birds flew from east, northeast to west, usually smaller flocks with 2-3 individuals (maximum 7).

6. Sooty shearwater (Ardenna grisea) 10  
   *30th August Porto Moniz. One individual was seen in the morning from the shore parade, about here: 32°52'08.1"N 17°10'15.3"W. There was a smaller storm with strong northwest direction wind, and the bird appeared relatively close to the coast, however we saw it just for some seconds.

7. Bulwer's petrel (Bulweria bulwerii) 1,9,10

8. Desertas petrel (Pterodroma deserta) 1,9

9. Zino's petrel (Pterodroma madeira) 7  
   *26th August Pico do Areeiro. The end of August isn't the best time to see this species, however we tried it. This was the last tour in this season. The bird started to call about 10.30pm, but not so intensively. We saw one individual for a very short time, but the view was very poor. In spite of this, the experience and the landscape was fantastic, the sky was full of stars, and we saw the clouds below us. The best tactic if you lay down on the ground and look for the bird's silhouette.

10. Little egret (Egretta garzetta) 9

11. Common buzzard (Buteo buteo harterti) 1,11

12. Eurasian sparrowhawk (Accipiter nisus granti) 11

13. Common kestrel (Falco tinnunculus canariensis) 1,3,4,5,6,10,11

14. Barbary falcon (Falco pelegrinoides) 11  
   *30th August Ponta do Pargo. Very rare species in Madeira. We saw one individual above the lighthouse, however it disappeared very quickly.

15. Eurasian coot (Fulica atra) 12

16. Common ringed plover (Charadrius hiaticula) 5  
   *27th August Canical. We saw one juvenile individual. We saw the bird from the boat, in the edge of the harbour (it could be only seen from the boat), about here: 32°44'05.6"N 16°43'55.6"W.

17. Red knot (Calidris canutus) 5  
   *27th August Canical. We saw two individuals with almost full breeding plumage. We saw the birds from the boat, in the edge of the harbour (it could be only seen from the boat), about here: 32°44'05.6"N 16°43'55.6"W.

18. Sanderling (Calidris alba) 5
*27th August Canical. We saw three individuals with moulted plumage. We saw the birds from the boat, in the edge of the harbour (it could be only seen from the boat), about here: 32°44'05.6"N 16°43'55.6"W.

19. Ruddy turnstone ( Arenaria interpres ) 1,3,5,9,10

20. Little stint ( Calidris minuta ) 5

*27th August Canical. We saw one individual. We saw the bird from the boat, in the edge of the harbour (it could be only seen from the boat), about here: 32°44'05.6"N 16°43'55.6"W. Rare vagrant in Madeira.

21. Whimbrel ( Numenius phaeopus ) 6

*31st August Ponta de Sao Lourenco. Two birds were seen near the Prainha, about here: 32°44'42.3"N 16°42'53.5"W. They were feeding on a short grass, and they were timid.

22. Ruff ( Calidris pugnax ) 3

*25th August Funchal (harbour). One individual was feeding among a feral pigeon flock, on a short grassland near the harbour. It was a tame bird, we think it has never seen human.

23. Great skua ( Stercorarius skua ) 10

*30th August Porto Moniz. One adult was seen in the mooring from the shore parade, about here: 32°52'08.1"N 17°10'15.3"W. It was flying north.

24. Pomarine jaeger ( Stercorarius pomarinus ) 10

*30th August Porto Moniz. We observed two different flocks with 4 and 7 individuals in the afternoon from behind the Aquarium, about here: 32°52'02.7"N 17°09'55.0"W. The first flock flew from south to northeast while the second one flew from east, northeast to west.

25. Parasitic jaeger ( Stercorarius parasiticus ) 10

*30th August Porto Moniz. One juvenile dark morph was seen in the mooring from the shore parade, about here: 32°52'08.1"N 17°10'15.3"W. It was flying northeast.

26. European herring gull ( Larus argentatus atlantis ) 1,3,5,6,9,10,11,12

27. Sandwich tern ( Thalasseus sandvicensis ) 10

*30th August Porto Moniz. We observed one individual among a common tern flock with first-winter plumage in the morning from the shore parade, about here: 32°52'02.7"N 17°09'55.0"W.

28. Common tern ( Sterna hirundo ) 1,3,5,6,9,10

29. Roseate tern ( Sterna dougallii ) 3

*25th August Funchal (harbour). One adult with winter plumage was hunting on the harbour.

30. Rock dove ( Columba livia ) 9

31. Trocaz pigeon ( Columba trocaz ) 2,8

*25th August Ribeiro Frio (Balcoes). Two birds were seen on the laurel forest, from the viewpoint, about here: 32°44'28.3"N 16°53'25.5"W. The birds were very lurking, they sat on a branch. The easiest way to spot it if you catch it flying. Early morning is the best.

*28th August Pico Ruivo de Santana. We saw five individuals in early morning (2+2+1), usually they sat on the roadside on the way to the parking lot. They were about this surrounding: 32°46'12.4"N 16°54'34.9"W.

32. Eurasian collared dove ( Streptopelia decaocto ) 5,10

33. Western barn owl ( Tyto alba schmitzii ) 1
25th Machico. One bird hunted close to our hotel, about here: 32°43'40.1"N 16°46'13.6"W. Rare species in Madeira, it was a very gladsome surprize.

34. Plain swift (Apus unicolor) 1,2,3,4,5,6,8,9,10,11
35. Eurasian hoopoe (Upupa epops) 6
36. Berthelot’s pipit (Anthus berthelotii) 6,8,9,11H
37. Grey wagtail (Motacilla cinerea schmitzi) 1H,2H,3,4H,5,10
38. European robin (Erithacus rubecola) 8
39. Common blackbird (Turdus merula cabrerae) 2,5,8,10,11
40. Eurasian blackcap (Sylvia atricapilla heineken) 2,10H
41. Madeira firecrest (Regulus madeirensis) 2,8,11
42. Rock sparrow (Petronia petronia) 6

*27th August Ponta de Sao Lourenco. About 15 individuals fed among an Atlantic canary flock on the route to the east end of the road.

43. Common chaffinch (Fringilla coelebs maderensis) 2,8,11
44. Common linnet (Linaria cannabina guentheri) 11

*30th August Ponta do Pargo. One bird was seen on the top of a bush.

45. European goldfinch (Carduelis carduelis parva) 6,11

*27th August Ponta de Sao Lourenco. One bird fed among an Atlantic canary flock on the route to the east end of the road.

*30th August Ponta do Pargo. One bird was seen in the village, it sat on a wire.

46. Atlantic canary (Serinus canaria) 1,4,5,6,8,9,10,11

+ Red-legged partridge (Alectoris rufa) 6,8H
+ Feral pigeon (Columba livia forma domestica) 1,3,5,6,10,11

Mammals (by Shirihai 2011; by Aulagnier, Haffner, Mitchell-Jones, Moutou and Zima 2008)

1. Short-finned pilot whale (Globicephala macrorhynchus) 1

*27th August Machico. We saw about three individuals on the Atlantic Ocean during the whale and birdwatching trip, including one female with her calf. This year wasn't the best for whalewatching, there were not so many of them, and those ones which were observed, appeared at unusual places. Nobody knows the reasons.

2. Bottlenose dolphin (Tursiops truncatus) 1

3. Atlantic spotted dolphin (Stenella frontalis) 9

*29th August Ilhas Desertas. On our way back there was a small school with about ten animals which was following our ship. Some individuals jumped so many times, it was an amazing experience. Interestingly, the dolphins were moving with about 30 Cory's shearwaters.

+ Rabbit (Oryctolagus cuniculus) 8
Reptile (by www.reptile-database.org, E - endemic)

1. Madeira wall lizard (Teira dugesii) E 1,2,4,6,9,10,11

Butterflies (by https://www.madeirabirds.com/madeira_butterflies, E - endemic)

1. Small white (Pieris rapae) 2,8,10
2. Clouded yellow (Colias croceus) 4
3. Madeiran cleopatra (Gonepteryx maderensis) E 2
4. African migrant (Catopsilia florella) 2,8
5. Painted lady (Vanessa cardui) 4
6. Specled wood (Pararge aegeria) 2,4
7. Madeiran speckled wood (Pararge xiphia) E 2
8. Madeiran greyling (Hipparchia maderensis) E 2
9. Monarch (Danaus plexippus) 1,4,5,10