

# Madeira – A Seabird Extravaganza

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

### Outline Itinerary

<b>Day 1</b>	Fly Funchal; Zino's Petrel colony
<b>Day 2</b>	Morning birding; afternoon pelagic
<b>Day 3</b>	Morning excursion; afternoon pelagic
<b>Day 4</b>	Morning excursion; afternoon pelagic
<b>Day 5</b>	Fly London

### Departs

June

### Focus

Birds & cetaceans

### Grading

**Grade B** – expect some bumpy sea journeys, plus the hike to Zino's Petrel colony can be demanding

### Dates and Prices

See website (tour code PRT02) or brochure

### Highlights

- Night-time walk to Zino's Petrel colony
- Three specialist pelagics for Zino's and Desertas Petrels
- White-faced Storm Petrel a possibility
- Trocaz Pigeon, Madeiran Firecrest plus other regional endemics and subspecies
- Common, Bottlenose & Atlantic Spotted Dolphins; Short-finned Pilot, Bryde's and even Sperm and Fin Whales



White-faced Storm Petrel, Madeira Firecrest (Matt Eade)  
& Cory's Shearwater (Matt Eade)



Naturetrek    Mingledown Barn    Wolf's Lane    Chawton    Alton    Hampshire    GU34 3HJ    UK

**T:** +44 (0)1962 733051

**E:** [info@naturetrek.co.uk](mailto:info@naturetrek.co.uk)

**W:** [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk)



## Introduction

Madeira is a special place. Its golden light, dramatic scenery and ubiquitous exotic-looking flowers offer the visitor a visual feast from the moment of arrival. Less well-known, perhaps, is that Madeira is an island of true wildlife gems, in particular its birdlife, and it is some of these which we will be taking you to enjoy on this new tour.

The Madeiran archipelago is a seabird watcher's paradise and we will begin our exploration of Madeiran birds with a night visit to the breeding site of Zino's Petrel – a Madeiran endemic and one of Europe's most threatened species. This excursion provides a very atmospheric start to our tour – listening to the petrels' eerie calls at dusk as they return to their colonies is an unforgettable experience. Next, we focus on Madeira's special land birds, with a full day spent going in search of the endemic Trocaz Pigeon and Madeiran Firecrest. We'll also be searching for Berthelot's Pipit, Pallid and Plain Swifts, and a range of other island and regional endemic species and subspecies. Madeira has so much to offer that we will take our time enjoying its flowers and insect life too, as we go in search of our target bird species.

Considering its relative isolation, it is not surprising that Madeira has so much unusual wildlife. Located in the middle of the North Atlantic Ocean, some 560 kilometres off the north-west coast of Africa, the Madeiran archipelago consists of five larger islands and a few small islets.

A boat ride on these clear, Prussian blue waters is a joy in itself. The sea here is home to many species of whale and dolphin, and boats setting off from Machico harbour are frequently joined by bow-riding Bottlenose Dolphins and pods of Pilot Whales as well as a variety of other larger cetacean species, such as Sperm Whales and Bryde's (pronounced 'broo-dess') Whales. This is arguably the ultimate destination for anyone with an interest in the seabirds of the Western Palearctic and throughout our three exciting pelagics, we'll be keeping watch as we cruise for Cory's, Great and Manx Shearwaters and, with luck, Bulwer's Petrel, Madeiran Storm-petrel and the two much sought-after petrels, Fea's and Zino's! White-faced Storm Petrels are now regularly attracted to the frozen chum block – needless to say the views of the seabirds will be superb!

Madeira has a way of captivating visitors in a way that few other places do. It offers a variety of interesting endemic land and seabird species, as well as vivid year-round blooms and insect life. It is home to an internationally significant population of endangered Mediterranean Monk Seals and, despite offering some very good whale and dolphin-watching, is relatively undiscovered as a destination for seeing marine mammals. Why not come and see for yourselves!



Our pelagic vessel

**NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather and other local considerations can necessitate some reordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.**

## Day 1

## Fly Funchal

We depart today on a flight to Funchal Airport on Madeira. We'll transfer directly to our hotel in Machico where we will then, after dinner, ascend to one of the highest and accessible sites on the island to listen out for returning Zino's Petrels. During the day, this incredibly rare species spends its time out at sea, arriving back to their breeding grounds well after dark. Listening to one of the world's rarest birds in the near-darkness will be one of the highlights of the trip; if the moon is bright, we may even glimpse a petrel, but be rest-assured we will be hopeful to find this magnificent *Pterodroma* during our three pelagics.

## Day 2, 3, 4

## Land & Pelagic Birding

We will make an early start on Day 2 today in order to coincide with the morning activities of several bird species. In particular we will be hoping to see the endemic Trocaz Pigeon and Madeira Firecrest. The island is home to a variety of other interesting birdlife, such as Pallid Swift, Spectacled Warbler, Rock Sparrow and several local races of more familiar species such as Buzzard, Blackcap and Chaffinch.

We will pass through several typical Madeiran habitats today, and we will be looking for the characteristic bird species in each one we visit. One of the most distinctive of these is the island's native laurisilva forest. Laurisilva is a forest type found only in Macaronesia and on Madeira once covered some 60 per cent of the land area. Deforestation has, however, meant that it is now reduced to about 10,000 hectares, or 16 per cent of the land area. The climate of the north slope of Madeira is much wetter than the southern slope and it is here that the majority of the remaining evergreen laurisilva forest is to be found. The laurisilva forest of Madeira is characterised by the presence of the Lily-of-the-valley Tree (*Clethra arborica*) and is also the only place in the world where the rare Trocaz Pigeon can be found. We should get glimpses of these birds as they fly swiftly over the forest canopy and we'll be hoping to see one or two perched in the open as well.

We will also visit some of Madeira's spectacular mountainous scenery today. The deep ravines and gorges and fascinating rock formations reflect the island's volcanic origin. We'll be hoping to see Buzzards here, and regular stops as we cross various different landscapes today should give us views of Plain Swift, Sparrowhawk and Kestrel. We'll also be searching for one of Maderia's few breeding land species, Berthelot's Pipit. We may also encounter Rock Sparrows. These birds were formerly widespread on Madeira but have declined dramatically in numbers in the last few years, probably due to competition with House Sparrows, which are recent colonists.

Madeira has 113 species of plants that are endemic to the archipelago and, though our focus will be on birds, we may spot some of its attractive flora, such as the Madeiran Marsh Orchid, Anemone-leaved

Stork's-bill and Madeira Stock. We are also likely to come across a number of butterflies during our wanderings, such as the endemic Madeiran Speckled Wood.

The main attraction of this tour will be the three pelagics we have scheduled for each afternoon and evening. The pelagics last around five to six hours and aim to provide us with un-rivalled views of the many species of petrel and shearwater which feed in these waters.

For full details on the pelagic days, please see the page 5 of the itinerary.

Our three pelagics will be positioned around the northern and eastern end of the island to maximise our chances of such sought-after species including Zino's and Desertas Petrels. Usually, both species are seen either together or over a short period of time allowing the perfect opportunity to separate these two near-identical Pterodromas. With a larger breeding population, Desertas Petrels are far more numerous out on these waters, whereas Zino's, being far rarer, is seen with less frequently, but we will hope for some satisfactory views. The 'chum' used is a frozen block which attracts a large number of storm petrels: Wilson's, Madeiran and White-faced Storm Petrels are all potential species which could come to feed around the vessel, while Cory's Shearwaters and Bulwer's Petrels are usually present.

Of course, being out at sea gives us a superb opportunity to find cetaceans. Sperm, Bryde's and Short-finned Pilot Whales are possible encounters, while dolphins may include Bottlenose, Striped and Common. Other exciting marine mammals which are seen with relative frequency include Ocean Sunfish, Blue Shark and Loggerhead Turtle!

During each morning, we have the opportunity for further land-based birding, or, walking around Machico or Funchal. Either way, we will make the best use of our time on the island.

## Day 5

## Fly London

This morning, after a leisurely breakfast, you will have free time before a transfer to the airport to catch your flight home.

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## Tour Grading

**This tour is graded B.** The night-time walk to the Zino's Petrel breeding site involves a 25-minute trek across moderate to steep terrain – there are also lots of steps, so be prepared for this and bear in mind this is during the night. Anyone reasonably fit will easily be able to manage this. The path and scenery are spectacular here but there are steep drop offs (although railings are present) so this outing is not suitable for those who suffer from vertigo. Bring a torch or head torch for this excursion. Also, the sea excursions, although on a sturdy vessel, if you do suffer from a prolonged back problem, this may take away the enjoyment from the trip.

## Food & accommodation

We will be staying at a comfortable hotel in Machico, in the east of the island. Lunches and the three evening meals in Machico are not included in the tour cost, for which you should allow approximately £100 - £120.

## Pelagics

The pelagics start and finish at Machico Harbour, leaving at 3pm and ending close to 10pm on each afternoon/evening on days 2, 3 and 4.

The trips take place on the North Atlantic and so it is common to get some waves up to three or, sometimes, even four meters. Wind is vital to better observe the seabirds; with wind there is always a possibility of getting some water spray into the boat and getting wet. We recommend you bring along waterproof clothes (jacket and trousers) and also warm clothes as the sea breeze is always cooler.

The RHIB (Rigid-Hulled Inflatable Boat) Oceanodroma is the chosen boat for our pelagic expeditions as it is fast and offers a very stable and aerodynamic platform. The 11-meter RHIB has a deep "V" keel that makes it seaworthy in adverse sea conditions and extremely comfortable as it moves quickly on a highly maneuverable ride to easily reach the seabird hot spots. Manufactured in 2008 in Spain by Narwhal Boats, Oceanodroma meets the international safety standards as a leisure-sports vessel for oceanic waters. On board, there is the following approved safety equipment: compass, portable GPS (global positioning system), VHF radio, navigation lights, spotlight, EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon), emergency flares, fire extinguisher, horseshoe rescue buoy, life vests, electric and manual water pumps, bailer, rescue raft and first aid kit. It has twin outboard Yamaha engines, each with 250 horsepower and the fuel tank takes about 600 liters, so we lowered probability of staying drifting at sea to a minimum. The seating for up to 12 passengers has shock-mitigation technology which makes the ride very comfortable without the worry of wave bumps.

If you are bringing a photographic camera and equipment, we recommend you to keep it in a waterproof bag during the boat ride until the chumming position. After the crew drop the chum into the sea and position the boat to drift along it then you can get your camera out. We get the birds quite close to the boat so big lenses are not so necessary. Normally the ideal is a 300mm with a teleconverter. A 500mm telephoto lens is usually too big. Tripods or monopods are not handy in the boat and can endanger others.

## Flights

We will be choosing from the schedules offered by TAP Air Portugal and Easyjet. We advise early booking to secure seats on the limited direct flights between the UK and Funchal.



## Clothing

You will be sent a full clothing list in your pre-departure information, sent upon booking. For the night-time Zino's Petrel excursion you will need warm clothing, a raincoat and comfortable walking shoes.

## How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk), or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.



Zino's Petrel (Matt Eade)