THE ATLANTIC PARADISE OF MADEIRA

At Wheeler Expeditions, we define an “expedition” as an adventure with a purpose, with a mission to be accomplished.

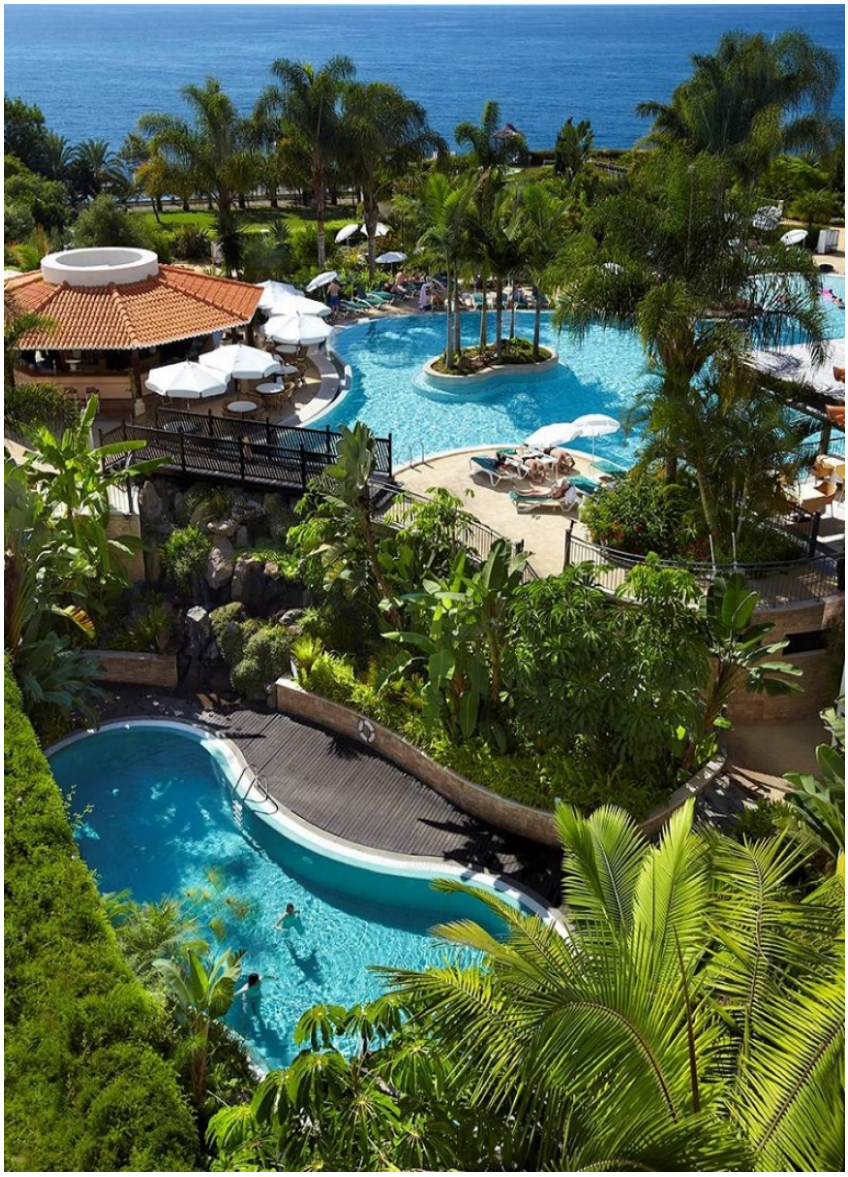
We have hard core adventure expeditions exploring the Gobi Desert or the Amazon, overland expeditions across Central Asia or the Sahara, helicopter expeditions through the Himalayas or the Albanian Alps, cultural expeditions to Israel’s Holy Land or tribal people in Southeast Asia, safari wildlife expeditions to Zambia or Borneo.

Then there’s a *fun* expedition – with the purpose and mission to simply enjoy being in magical places with luxury accommodations, wonderful food and wine, surrounded by natural beauty, Goldilocks weather (not too hot, not too cold, just right), exploring something cool to see and do around every corner, just relax and have fun.

Ideally, such places would be easy to get to and nearby – not half-way around the world. And where it won’t cost an arm and a leg to have a life-memorable experience you’ll always remember with a smile. Oh, without a lot of time, say in about 10 days or so.

Well, there are such places – and we’re going to a trio of them this coming June. We call them *Atlantic Paradises*. We’re going to focus on one this week – the Portuguese island territory of *Madeira*.

The capital is Funchal, founded by the Portuguese when they first arrived 600 years ago in 1419. Wouldn’t those early explorers love to stay in one of the marvelous seaside resorts here today?



Or have Madeira's *99 miles of beaches* turned into the playgrounds they are now?

First, let's ride the spectacular *Funchal cable car* to the hills above Funchal to explore the world famous *Monte Palace Tropical Gardens*, considered by many to be among the most beautiful on earth.

After a relaxing stroll through such a luxuriant haven of serenity, have a shot of adrenaline returning downhill to Funchal via Madeira's uniquely famous *Carros de Cesto Wicker Toboggan*. There's nothing like it, it's a Madeira tradition for over 100 years, it's safe, fun, and exciting.

Ready for an aperitif after that? There's no better place than *Blandy's Wine House*. Blandy's has been here for over 200 years, since 1811. They make Madeira's most renowned wine. Time to get to know each other over a glass or two.

Time to explore this fascinating island. Drive along the south coast to the traditional village of *Camara de Lobos.* The picture perfect little harbor is filled with fishing boats, while most of the village is perched high on a cliff above.

Further along the coast, cantilevered on top of a massive sea cliff, is the astounding *Cabo Girao Glass Skywalk.* Standing here is an experience you don't forget.

We go up a valley to the island's center with views like this:

We drop down to Madeira's north coast where we find these amazing natural lava pools for unforgettable swimming fun – there are a series of them, so bring your bathing suit.

We have to be back in Funchal before the party begins this evening. June weekends are the time

of Madeira's *Atlantic Festival*, meaning Old Town Funchal tonight is one non-stop series of concerts, street performances, parades, and parties on every block. Everyone is dedicated to having as much fun as they can, and we'll join right in!

Next morning, it's time for a walk. Unique to Madeira are a series of irrigation channels called *levadas*. The Portuguese have been digging, building, and maintaining them for over 500 years to bring water from the mountains to towns and agricultural areas. There are maintenance trails along them, thus *levada walks* are immensely enjoyable.

Some involve steep hiking.

Others are easy walking along a breathtakingly beautiful levada. We'll start mid-morning and enjoy a nice picnic next to a waterfall along the way.

We'll be back mid-afternoon to change into nice clothes for an exceptional experience: *Afternoon Tea on the Terrace at Reid's Palace*, a time-honored Madeira tradition. How honored? It's exactly where and how Winston Churchill ordered it when he stayed here in 1950.

This evening, *spectacular* doesn't *begin* to describe what we'll see. Tonight, at one of Funchal's best restaurants overlooking the city, we witness one of *the* world's greatest fireworks displays -- Madeira's celebration of the summer solstice.

Does all this look like your idea of fun? If so, then Click here to let us know that Atlantic Paradises are for you.

Carpe diem. Life is short. The time for a great adventure is *now.*