

# Madeira M'dear?

**Keith Waugh and his wife Pauline travelled to Madeira for a week of hill walking and relaxing. Thankfully for us, Keith took along his dive kit; and his camera, so he was able to snap a few pictures showing us what Madeiran waters have to offer in terms of marine life.**



MADEIRA HAS long been thought of as a holiday destination for the old folks, the 'Saga' brigade, the crumblies! What a pity - the island is picturesque, subtropical, not too large and quite mountainous.

Funchal is the capital and occupies the south coast, slightly towards the east end of the island. Though the islanders don't like to think so, Madeira is part of Portugal and lies approximately 1000 kilometres off the North African coast, just below the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea.

It is approximately 50km by 20 km, has a temperature range of between 19°C and 24°C all year round and is only four hours flying time from Glasgow. The sea temperature in October is 21°C. My wife, Pauline and I went to the island last October for a week of hill walking, *but* I did smuggle some diving gear and an underwater camera – just in case!

The hill walking is quite magnificent with mountains at over 6000ft (2,300m),

certainly not for older people (I'm thinking of the General Committee and NDC), unless they are very fit. We had three very good walks: one on the Levadas - Madeira's historical irrigation system which is still very much in use; a coastal trek; and a spectacular walk over the three highest peaks on the island. Some parts of the mountain track were quite 'airy' with cliffs dropping away several hundred feet on each side.

All breathtaking, panoramic and very photogenic - but what has this have to do with diving? Absolutely nothing except that it has been suggested that I have a morbid fear of sea level; I like to be well above it, or well below it which brings us to the diving.

There seem to be five main diving centres in Funchal spaced fairly evenly across the city. As we were at the west end of the capital I found the Tauchschub Hotel Pestana Palms Diving Centre ([www.scuba-madeira.com](http://www.scuba-madeira.com)).

Waltraud Charné, a Chief CMAS

Instructor at the Centre showed me around, checked out my diving credentials and explained their set-up. The diving season was drawing to a close in October but they were still running boat and shore dives. How lucky was I?

I was taken on a boat dive to one of the best sites on the south coast of Madeira, at Ponta Do Garajau. This entailed a trip by RHIB across Funchal Bay and harbour to a point (Ponta) at the south-east corner of Madeira. I must admit that it did not look too promising, about 200m off shore from a small construction site. But oh was I wrong.

We dropped down the shot line to a 20m depth seabed strewn with very large boulders. I almost landed on a 1.7metre long grouper which was lying motionless on the sand. I banged off several photos of it with the dive guide. It turned out that this particular grouper has lived in the area for years.

There were plenty of other fish including Yellow Grouper, triggerfish,



*grouper greeting (photo at top of page a colourful wrasse)*



*sinister looking moray eel*



*getting friendly with the fish*

small one metre Moray eels, Banded Bream, parrotfish, goatfish, trumpetfish and barracuda. All very tropical, but with the coral obviously missing. The seaweed was also a bit sparse.

With visibility in the order of 30 metres and the water a grey/blue colour, it was a strange but delightful combination of English south coast, Mediterranean and Red Sea. It turned out that the snorkelling was also pretty good with reasonable numbers of fish swimming around in the shallows to entertain Pauline.



*bandtail puffer fish*

My second dive was at the house reef, a small islet just off the dive centre which again had numerous varieties of sub-tropical fish including a well camouflaged two metre stingray, Turkish Wrasse, grunt and Blue Sailfin Tang. The depth gradually dropping away over a boulder slope to sand at 20 metres.

I was certainly impressed by the quality of my two dives. However, if my first dive was one of the best sites in the area, I'm not sure that there would be enough good diving to sustain a week.

But if you are going on a family holiday with the hope of getting a day or two of diving in as well, then I would definitely say don't forget to pack your dive kit ... and a camera!

**DIVING ALSO AVAILABLE AT**  
**Madeira Divepoint,**  
**PADI Resort # 798430**  
**Hotel Madeira Carlton**  
**Largo Antonio Nobre**  
**9004-531 Funchal, Madeira**  
**Phone: 00351 291 239 579**  
**Email: info@madeiradivepoint.com**



*a bright yellow grouper*



*school of fish*

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