**Initial Summary Proposal and Risk Assessment**

**Dayhike the ancient forests, canals, high ridges and seacoasts of Madeira, – April 9-20, 2025**

Overview

Over 11 days the participants on this adventure will explore a representative sample of Madeira’s most spectacular ridgetop, waterfall, Laurissilva forest[[1]](#footnote-1) and levada[[2]](#footnote-2) (canal) trails on a self-guided adventure with nights at nice 3-star hotels central to the upcoming days’ hikes. Daily distances will be between 5 and 10 miles, with daily elevation gains of up to 3000 feet (still working on alternative hikes within this range to optimize views and a range of ecologies, so the hikes currently listed on the distance-elevation profile may change but the difficulty and the areas we’re hiking will not.). The 4 trails we will do on our own are well signed and easy to follow, and we have identified a well-regarded local guide to do three more off-the-beaten-track routes.

Four areas have been identified as Moderate Risk (highlighted in yellow below) and none as High Risk. (1&2) Activity and Route: Sections of some trails are narrow and exposed (the exposed sections generally have hand-cables but not always), and are sometimes steep and slippery, so participants will be required to use sturdy grippy footwear and trekking poles, and will be vetted for experience on rugged trail and for comfort with heights and exposure. We have set up a flex day so that we can avoid certain trails if it is likely to be wet and more treacherous. If a participant becomes ill or tired they can stay at the same hotel or, if needed, can shuttle to the next village with the luggage. The maximum elevations along the route will be less than 6100 at the greatest, but most trails top out much lower. Multiple afternoons will be free for people to relax or explore from the hotel, but everyone’s free explorations will need to be planned with a defined route and return time, and safety and communication gear and map carried, with at least two people, and pre-approved by the leader (and optional organized explorations will be scheduled for afternoons where we have enough time). (3) Leader Experience on Route: The leader has not hiked on Madeira before, so we have hired a self-guided outfitter (Portugal Nature Trails) who will provide us with GPX routes and detailed maps/descriptions of each day’s hike. (4) Transportation. Roads on Madeira are notoriously narrow and winding, and often hard to follow. We have arranged to be transported to and from trailheads in hired private shuttles by professional local drivers who know the roads.

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| ***Risk Assessment Matrix for Madeira Global Adventure*** | | | | | |
| **FACTOR** | **RISK RATING FOR CURRENT TRIP AND WHY** | **MITIGATION MEASURES** |  |  |  |
| **1. Activity-Specific Factors** | | |  |  |  |
| **ACTIVITY** | Moderate - some challenging hikes though rocky steep sometimes exposed or slippery terrain. | Screen participants for recent hiking experience and confidence moving on steep rocky or slippery terrain , and confidence with heights and modest exposure.. |  |  |  |
| **ROUTE** | Same as above | Same as above. We will stay on terrain that is within our capabilities, and will use a local guide when we want to travel off-trail routes. |  |  |  |
| **LEADER EXPERIENCE ON ROUTE** | Moderate - Leader not familiar with route | Excellent maps and trail beta will be provided for most trails, and a Local guide will accompany the group on days when we want to travel less beaten tracks. |  |  |  |
| **2. Destination/Country-Specific Risk Factors** | | |  |  |  |
| **GENERAL ILLNESS RISK FACTORS AT DESTINATION** | Low - travel advisory level 1 . Water and food are of a high hygeine standard. Covid risk is rated as low, and medical care is rated as being as good as most European countries. | Will closely monitor health and safety risks, and will be using a local self-guided outfitter who will keep us updated on any issues. |  |  |  |
| **RISK OF TERRORISM/ VIOLENCE AT DESTINATION** | Low | Modern, safe area |  |  |  |
| **SECURITY OF MONEY, VALUABLES, PERSONAL PROPERTY** | Low - Theft/petty crime are low on Madeira but can happen anywhere | Group will be briefed on how to keep valuables safe |  |  |  |
| **TRANSPORTATION RISK AT DESTINATION** | Moderate: Roads are notoriously poor - steep and winding with sheer dropoffs. | Using local outfitter who provides drivers with good experience and safety records |  |  |  |
| **CULTURAL RISK FACTORS AT DESTINATION** | Low: Modern European country with lots of western tourists | Will share info to help with cultural awareness and appropriate norms |  |  |  |
| **3. Combined Activity-Destination Risk Factors** | | |  |  |  |
| **ILLNESS POTENTIAL FOR THIS ACTIVITY AT THIS DESTINATION** | Low: Low altitude, low covid incidence. | Will follow Global Adventures Covid-19 policy |  |  |  |
| **OTHER ACTIVITY HAZARDS AT DESTINATION** | Low-Moderate: See Activity and Route risks | See activity and route risks |  |  |  |
| **REMOTENESS, DISTANCE TO GOOD MEDICAL RESOURCES AT DESTINATION\*\*** | Low: Road access never far away, and medical services available throughout the island. | Daily exit routes identified and emergency transport details kept handy at all times |  |  |  |
| **EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION AT DESTINATION** | Low: Much of the island has good 5G coverage. | Will bring satellite communicators and share emergency contact details. |  |  |  |

**Leader:** Cheryl Talbert

**Leader Qualifications:**

* Has backpacked for 40 years. Former chair of the Foothills Backpacking committee and is an instructor for several hiking and backpacking courses including our new leader seminar. Leads domestic backpack trips from local overnights to extended trips in the Sierras, Cascades and Rocky Mountains for Mountaineers and private groups.
* Mountaineers member since 2009, and Global Adventures leader since 2012. Has led 40 successful Global Adventures and several private hiking, backpacking and trekking trips with family and friends in the US and overseas. Has led the Rota Vicentina coastal trek in Portugal but this will be her first time on Madeira (though will use the same outfitter as the previous trip).
* Current with Wilderness Navigation and Wilderness First Aid.
* Managed a large business operation for 20 years with a strong emphasis on risk management and safety. Was a safety and risk management trainer during that time. Member of Outdoor Safety Institute.

**Outfitter:** Working with Portugal Nature Trails, a local Portugese company who did a fantastic job outfitting my Rota Vicentina trip in 2017. Very responsive and reliable with lots of trips offered and modern tools for registration, communication and payment.

**Primary Measures to Minimize Injuries and Risk to the Mountaineers**

* Rigorous screening of participants for fitness, backpacking experience; review of medical history to assure no pre-existing conditions that put the person at risk
* Each participant will be asked to initial and sign a trip agreement indicating that they understand and accept the primary hazards and risks on the trip and the expectations of participants, including the steep terrain and exposed cliffside paths. Will ensure that they understand that this is not a guided trip and they are responsible for their own safety and that of the group. In addition, each participant will be required to sign a Release of Liability form and will be required to hold medical and med-evac insurance sufficient to transport them back to the US if needed.
* The itinerary is designed to provide for rest between trips and for participants to be able to rest a day or more if needed due to illness or injury.
* The leader will provide communications and intensive support to participants with conditioning, planning of gear, food and logistics in advance of the trip, will brief the group every morning about the day’s trek and hazards to watch out for, and will check in regularly with each participant multiple times a day to ensure that any issues are caught and addressed before they get serious.
* The leader will prepare and follow a safety and emergency response plan.

1. The subtropical Laurissilva forest, which is about 20 million years old, was once much more widely distributed but is now limited to a few islands at lower latitudes. Some trees in this forest on Madeira are centuries old, and these forests feature unique endemic plants and animals. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. About 3,000km of levadas (irrigation channels) run throughout the island of Madeira, a living reminder of the titanic effort of past generations to distribute the abundant water that flows from springs at the top of the mountains down into the slopes and valleys. Many of Madeira’s levadas nave walking paths alongside them. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)