

Buying Property in Madeira

FREQUENT QUESTIONS

PART 3 OF MADEIRA PROPERTY BUYERS' GUIDE

When considering the purchase of a property in Madeira, most people are interested in knowing details on the cost of living, scope of facilities available, etc. Over the years we have received numerous questions in this regard, and decided that a 'Buyers' Guide' would not be complete without information on the day to day aspects of living in Madeira. Hence this section.

Below is a selection of the most common questions which people have asked. Feel free to browse and/or print this for your information. The list of items presented is not static, for obvious reasons. Should you like to have answers to questions on other subjects, or further clarification on these, please email your question to us. This will help us to add more topics to this section.

Internet. What connection options are available?

There are a number of Internet Service Providers (ISP's) in Portugal, extending to Madeira. Some still operate as free servers, with email facilities, etc. You can also opt for a paid service like Telepac. Various connection options are available, namely:

Analogue telephone line (up to 56Kbps) or ISDN (64Kbps) telephone line. In both cases you need a modem (either analogue or ISDN) installed on your computer. You pay the cost of the telephone call, which is at a special rate, and either:

- Free ISP - no further charge, or
- Paid Server - between €1.16 and €1.53 per hour, depending on times of day.

ADSL connection which works as a parallel data transfer over your normal telephone line. Connection speeds start at 256Kbps and go as high as 1000Kbps. The modems are provided by the service company, and may be purchased outright or rented from them. This service is not yet available over the entire region, but is being extended rapidly. After the initial activation fee of €99.76, you pay a fixed monthly fee for a particular connection speed, and do not pay any connection charge (such as telephone call).

For example: You pay a monthly fee of €38.00 for up to 4 GB of data transfer on the 512Kbps/128Kbps connection speed. This also gives you up to 5 email accounts.

Cable Internet, which works through the Cable TV connection. Connection speeds depend on the number of users that are online, but can get very fast - as high as 1MBps. The modems are provided by the service company, and may be purchased outright or rented from them. This service is not yet available over the entire region, but is being extended rapidly. You pay a fixed monthly fee of €35.00 for up to 1GB of international and 20GB of Portuguese data transfer.

Television. Do you get foreign language programs, and if so, which?

You have some options as regards TV reception. The simplest is normal public TV, but by far the most popular is Cable TV. Satellite TV is also an option, which implies getting a satellite dish and decoder installed through a private supplier. The latter is very seldom chosen, thanks to the variety offered by cable.

Public TV offers RTP Madeira and RTP 1 (from Mainland Portugal). All programs are in Portuguese, but films are often in English with Portuguese subtitles. This service is free.

Cable TV, offering over 60 channels, is by far the most common. The number of channels depends on which decoder and package you choose. There are channels in English (CNN, MTV, VH1, BBC World, BBC prime, SKY News, Travel, CNBC, Bloomberg, Cartoon Channel, Disney, etc.), as well as German, French, Spanish and Portuguese. Most of the films shown on the Portuguese channels are in English with Portuguese subtitles. You pay for the initial installation with a decoder, and then a monthly fee which varies depending on your options:

- Analogue decoder (up to channel 35): initial cost approx. €76.00 and monthly fee of approx. €20.00.
- Digital decoder (up to channel 61): initial cost approx. €300.00 and monthly fee of approx. €20.00.
- Optional paid channels (must have Cable TV): Some of the channels provided by the Cable TV supplier are optional, and are paid for separately. Various combination packages are offered. The channels currently falling in this category are: Telecine Premium, Telecine Gallery, Disney Channel, Sport TV and Playboy.
New movies channel = €9.62 p.m.
New and 'classic' movies = €11.65 p.m.
Sport TV = €17.30 p.m.

Cinema. Can we see foreign language films in Madeira

There are over a dozen cinemas in Funchal. All the films shown at the cinemas are in their original language (mostly English) with Portuguese subtitles. We get all the latest films at practically the same time as most European cities, and have been known to actually get them before some!

Newspapers. Can we find foreign language newspapers in Madeira?

Most of the popular UK, German and French newspapers and magazines are available. Some are on sale on the same day of publication, and others on the following day.

Electricity. What is the voltage and costs?

Madeira uses a 220 volt system, with individual metering per household. This means that most European (including UK) appliances work perfectly here.

- Fixed monthly cost = Approx. €10.00
- The consumption is charged per Kilowatt-hour at €0.094 per kWh. The author's monthly bill (a couple with a baby) is in the order of €25.00 per month.

Water Supply. Do you have Council water or private supply?

Council water is standard in Madeira, with individual metering per household.

- Fixed monthly cost = Approx. €4.00
- The consumption is charged per kiloliter at €0.24 per kiloliter. The author's monthly bill (couple with a baby) is in the order of €8.00 per month.

Telephones. What are the options and costs?

There are various options available, including fixed and mobile systems. In the fixed lines, both analogue and ISDN are commonly used. Fixed costs for these two options are listed below.

There are currently three mobile phone operators in Madeira, with a variety of pricing options and packages. It would be fruitless to give all these here, but generally mobile communications in Madeira are cheaper than in the UK.

- Fixed monthly cost for an analogue line (use is then charged on the units used, which depends on destination, time, etc.) is €12.87 per month. The author's monthly bill is in the order of €45.00 per month.
- Fixed monthly cost for an ISDN line, which offers two channels with 3 possible numbers, so you can have a phone number, fax number and use it for modem Internet access, all in one package (use is then charged on the units used, which depends on destination, time, etc.) costs €23.89 per month.

Gas. Is gas used and how is it supplied to the homes, and at what cost?

Gas is the most commonly used energy source for water heating and cooking, as it is by far cheaper than electricity. All new properties already come with the installation of gas lines to the boiler and cooker, as it is almost standard that these appliances run on gas. Apartments and townhouses in recent developments are supplied with piped gas. A communal container is built as part of the development, and is kept supplied by the gas company. Each home is fitted with an individual meter, and the consumer pays for the gas used.

Properties that are not part of a development use bottled gas, usually located outdoors for safety reasons. Normally 2 bottles are used, and one replaced when empty.

- One-off installation charge for piped gas = €80.34, and €35.00 is returned when you

terminate the contract.

- Fixed monthly cost for piped gas supply = Approx. €2.79.
- The consumption of piped gas is charged cubic meter at €2.02 per cubic meter. The author's monthly bill (couple with a baby) is in the order of €35.00 per month.
- Bottled gas is supplied in various sized bottles, the most common one being 45kg. The prices are €52.08 per 45kg bottle, supplied to the consumer's home.

Shopping. What shopping facilities are available?

Well, hold on to your credit card, because there are certainly unlimited ways to wear it down!

Madeira has for some time been well served by most of the major supermarket chains and franchise outlets operating in the Mainland. Most of these outlets were, until recently, located in Funchal. Now they are available in other strategic points on the island, making life a lot easier for the residents who live outside of the capital. Well recognized franchise names are here, from fast food to designer apparel.

The new Madeira Shopping has placed most under one roof, in a modern complex strategically located just off the main motorway out of Funchal. It is a complex that holds its own well when compared to shopping centers in major cities, and the combination of variety, entertainment and dining offered makes it a must for most Madeirans.

Dining. What are restaurants like in Madeira, and what variety?

While Madeira is known for its Espetada, this specialty is by means the only one offered in local restaurants. The variety is now vast, ranging from the highest standard in formal dining, to fast food.

On the whole, restaurants are of a good standard,

and prices are very reasonable. The number available is vast, so options are really limited only by your personal tastes. Besides the traditional Madeiran fair of espetada, grilled chicken and fresh fish, there are now also more exotic options. Indian, Mexican, Chinese, Japanese, Italian, Brazilian, Tex-Mex, English, German and Vegetarian restaurants are now available.

Sea Bathing. Is sea access readily available, or does one have to go through a hotel?

The local authorities have taken great care to prevent the sea access being limited to hotels and resorts. Residents have a variety of options, including visiting one of the public swimming areas with sea access (at a nominal charge), or going to public beaches around the island. Some hotels do allow the public to use their facilities for a fee.

English Schools. Are there any English or other foreign language schools in Madeira?

There are two schools in Madeira teaching in English and Portuguese. These are the British School, and the International School.

Learning Portuguese. Are there any schools or colleges teaching Portuguese to foreign residents?

A number of language institutes offer Portuguese lessons to foreign residents. Courses are given both during the day and in the evenings. Private lessons can also be arranged through private tutors.

Maid Service and gardening. Is it easy to find maids and gardeners, and what would such services cost?

Maid and gardening services can be contracted

through companies or privately. The latter is most common. Normally a daily rate is agreed upon, and the number of visits per week contracted. Normally a

maid or gardener will cost in the order of €30.00 per day.

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