

TOP 34 From Pico do Arieiro onto the Pico Ruivo, 1862m

5.30 hrs

An excellent walk onto the roof of Madeira

There is not a more exciting mountain walk on Madeira. The mountain path, constructed 50 years ago by the island administration, links the three highest mountains in spectacular fashion. For this walk you should make an early start as gathering clouds shroud the summit around midday.

Starting point: By car or taxi via Poiso to the car park at Pico do Arieiro, 1818m.

Height difference: A good 1250m.

Grade: Very demanding mountain walk; the mule tracks used are sometimes cobbled and stepped, and sometimes stony. Exposed sections are protected. Fitness is required for the steep ascents and a torch for the tunnel. You should only undertake this walk when the weather conditions are dry and stable!

Return along the eastern route: In 2017, the eastern route was closed due to a rockslip. If the route has been reopened in the meantime, start off at the Casa de Abrigo (6), at first along the ridgeline (5), then descend along the metal steps on the western slope of the Pico de Torres to reach the eastern route by bearing left at the fork and walking through a 20m-long tunnel. Then, bear to the right and ascend to a saddle, 1740m, on the craggy eastern slope of the Pico das Torres.

res. Now descend fairly steeply along a mostly stepped path to reach the fork in front of the tunnel Pico do Gato (3). By utilising the eastern route, about ½ hr. is added to the total walking time.

Refreshment: A cafeteria at the Pico do Arieiro.

Alternatives: If you don't need to return to your car, you can descend via Achada do Teixeira and then continue on to Santana (see Walk 33). Long distance walkers can extend the route from Pico Ruivo and keep going all the way to the Encumeada pass (Walk 35).

Tip: The current weather conditions on Pico do Arieiro are captured by a webcam. If you are not carrying a mobile internet device along, after breakfast, at the hotel reception, you could ask to take a look at the web page, www.netmadeira.com/webcams-madeira. If the mountains are shrouded in mist, you should postpone this walk.

The dizzying ridge between the »buzzard's nest« and Pedra Rija.



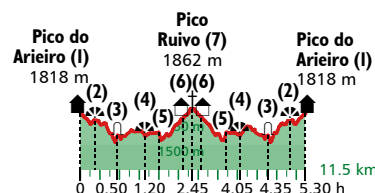
From the car park at **Pico do Arieiro (1)**, at first climb up to the summit column right next to the radar cupola. After orientating yourself for a moment on the Pico do Arieiro, descend along the cobbled path (PR 1) which runs 10m below the summit. A good quarter of an hour later, reach the **Miradouro Ninho da Manta (2)**, 1744m, (the »buzzard's nest«), from where there's a magnificent view down into the Ribeira da Fajã da Nogueira valley below.

A short climb over a spectacular ridgeline and the descent that follows along a dizzying ridge path (well-secured by wire cables) leads to **Pedra Rija**, yet another viewpoint. Descend a very steep section of path that is protected with wire cables to the **Pico do Gato tunnel (3)**, 1600m. The path divides 3 minutes after the 50m long tunnel.

Turn left along the western route (PR 1 Pico Ruivo O, 3.5km) to continue. (The eastern route around the east face of the Pico das Torres has been closed for years due to a rock slip.) The path, in some sections cut into the rock face, immediately leads into a semi-circular craggy cirque and, 4 minutes later, reaches a tunnel, not quite 100m in length. Due to a bend, this plunges into pitch darkness for the first paces. Shortly afterwards, the path leads into another tunnel, flanked by two high rock spires. With a length of 200m,



At the entrance to the tunnel in front of the third rock pinnacle.





In the mountain springtime, purple Pride of Madeira (*Echium candicans*) contrasts with the yellow flowers of the gorse.



this is the longest one of the route although already from the entrance one can see the renowned »light at the end of the tunnel«; some sections, depending on the season, can be somewhat damp. Hardly having adjusted to daylight yet, two more, short tunnels follow, each 10m in length. After a short ascent and descent, reach a **mountain spur (4)**, 1590 m, where you can take in an overview of the continued route that climbs up to the ridgeline via metal steps. However, at first meet up with a signed fork. Bear to the left here to descend again for a short stretch and then ascend fairly steeply along the two first metal

stairways to reach a small saddle and, from there, continue via more steps to reach the **ridgeline (5)**, 1630 m. Here we can enjoy a short breather!

After a short descent, turn left (a right turn runs along the closed eastern route). The path continues now through what was once a proud forest of heather trees; unfortunately, a fire has reaped so much damage that, in many places, only the bare, skeleton-like trunks remain a reminder. Fresh greenery is provided by Scotch broom and, in springtime, Pride of Madeira is flowering. Below the mountain hut, Casa de Abrigo (closed at the moment), the path meets up finally with the cobblestone trail ascending from Achada do Teixeira (Walk 33) and, two minutes after that, reaches the **Casa de Abrigo (6)**, 1775m. Passing the fountain and the little WC hut, now the last stage begins: an upwards climb to the highest peak on the island. At the fork, 5 minutes later, bear left and after a short, steep ascent, we are standing at the summit pillar of **Pico Ruivo (7)**, 1862m. The views from Madeira's paramount point are simply overwhelming; you are at a loss to decide in which direction you should cast your gaze first. Especially breathtaking is the panorama westwards, taking in the wind turbines on the high plain, Paul da Serra – of course, provided that these aren't being hidden by a cloud bank. After a good, long look, return along the approach route to get back to the **Pico do Arieiro (1)**.



The steep stepped path to the ridge.

The tunnel path snuggles up close to the rock face.

