

Find golden sand, mountainous terrain in Portuguese islands

BY JUDY BERNE
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On a recent cruise, we visited Portugal's two inhabited Madeira islands situated off the coast of Morocco. Madeira and Porto Santo, separated by about 30 miles, are a contrast in topography, size and ambiance.

Porto Santo, flanked by small volcanic peaks, is primarily the color of ochre — receiving very little rain. The orange-tiled roofs that I remembered from a previous visit to Portugal add to the island's golden glow. Porto Santo means Holy Port. It's much smaller than the main island of Madeira.

It's also much more low-key, receiving a lot fewer tourists although its wide, soft golden sand beaches extend for about five miles.

Our cruise material included this description: "Remote Porto Santo still offers visitors an air of tranquility and a look at an unhurried way of life, where stress has not yet had its effect... On the other hand, one must keep in mind that tourist facilities are not of the same high standard as on the sister island, Madeira."

The word, I think, is unspoiled.

Yes, there are a few souvenir shops, but they are small and also sell items for the general population.

You can see the sights of Porto Santo in a couple of hours. Its main town and capital of Vila Baleira boasts a few interesting churches, Christopher Columbus' home that he shared with his wife until she died and he went on

MADEIRA FACTS

Where: The Madeira Islands, Portugal
When to go: Year-round.
Population: Madeira Island, 280,000; Porto Santo, 5,000.

to discover the New World, and the island's fort Pico de Castelo, built in the 16th century to deter attacks by pirates.

Columbus' home appears in keeping with his job selling sugar and sugar cane between the Madeira Archipelago and Lisbon.

A museum that has been added shows some later portraits of him as well as the routes of his four journeys and small replicas of the ship on which he sailed.

I loved the small church across the street with its lattice-work of fresh flowers and a behind the main altar. On the day we visited, workers were twisting strands of sweet smelling evergreen around its encircling fence posts in preparation for a festival.

Porto Santo souvenirs are mainly of straw, shells and, of course, tiles. Shopkeepers are unhurried so be prepared to have them get to you at their convenience.

The larger island of Madeira is verdantly green, mountainous and relatively beach-less by comparison. Ilha da Madeira means the island of wood.

I had been to Funchal, its capital, on a previous trip to Portugal. I did not mind

returning.

This time, approaching from the sea and anchoring at the port of Funchal, we missed seeing the terraces of fertile fields that generations of farmers have etched from the island's steep, irregular terrain.

On my last trip I had engaged in the two activities for which the island is duly famous. One is staying at the famous, slightly stuffy, Reid's Hotel, which has a memorable swimming pool built into the rocky coast on which it sits.

The other is riding in a wicker sofa-style toboggan, pulled by two young men in white flannels and boaters from the hillside city of Monte back down into Funchal.

This time we spent our day in port wandering Funchal's steep cobbled streets. We visited its 15th Century Manueline-style cathedral, enjoyed the pattern of black and white stones that quilts its main square, and had lunch at an outdoor cafe, near the prominent statue of Joao Goncalves Zarco, who co-discovered and named the islands.

We also made our way to a highlight of our previous visit — the "Workers Market."

Think the largest covered farmer's market you can imagine filled with produce and flowers, then a second large room devoted to scaling and filleting fish, and a halcyon featuring still more offerings. On the edges of the market proper, handiercrafts are just a bargain away.

The line from the song, introduced years back by Flanders and Swann, goes



Low-key Porto Santo dresses up for a religious festival.

"Have some madeira my dear, it's really much nicer than beer." That may or may not be true, depending on your taste. An expert on Portuguese wines told us, port has it all over madeira wine.

Unfortunately, that was after we had already purchased two bottles of madeira in tidy wicker holders as gifts.

Madeira also is renowned for its embroidery. It is magnificent but pricey.

Although smaller, more rea-

sonable samples were available at the market and at a nearby embroidery factory, the dining room tablecloth that caught my eye at a private shop was marked more than \$4,000.

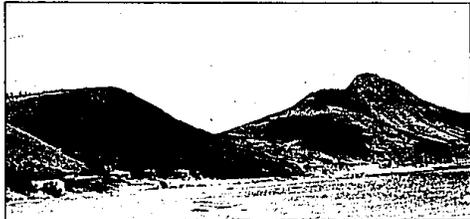
I was happy, and my husband even happier, when it turned out the store was closing for siesta and there wasn't time for further consideration.

The island of Madeira is enjoyable, but the British influence sometimes threatens to overtake the Portuguese.

Reid's Hotel, the toboggan run, and the cottage industries of embroidery and wicker, were all introduced by the English. Santo Porto is more representative of the mainland.

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Golden Porto Santo boasts miles of golden sands and an arid landscape.



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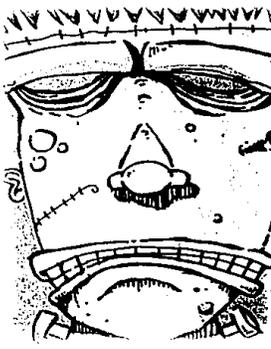
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