

# THE SUNDAY TIMES

## Best for Couples Madeira

Can a golf course be romantic? Best consult your spouse before you answer. Either way, Palheiro is probably as close as you'll find. It's luxuriously located on a high shelf above the Funchal bay, and playing there is like hitting through a mountain top botanical garden. Acacias and banana trees line the fairways; agapanthus and proteas blaze around the greens.

Spring springs eternal in Madeira, so the temperature's great, and Palheiro makes for exemplary holiday, golf. The holes are relaxingly reachable; the views seem infinite. The emphasis is on leaning lazily on your putter and enjoying the sea-spangled scenery - that's Madeira for you.

The only other course is the 27-hole Santo da Serra, host to the Madeira open - a more muscular test, with even vaster views (be sure to hire a buggy). So you'll have lots of time to kick back and sip the island's carefully sophisticated atmosphere. The cobbled-street capital, Funchal, has piquant food, a vivacious market and 500 years of colonial history. If you really want to have your cake and eat it, pitch up during February's Shrove Tuesday street carnival - it's samba-tastic.

Where to Stay: Casa Velha do Palheiro is a hunting lodge turned country-house hotel, with home-from-home bedrooms, a pool and two kinds of aromatherapy - out of a bottle or out in the pungent gardens. It's a 50yd walk to Palheiro's 10<sup>th</sup> tee and a short shuttle ride to town.

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Palheiro Real Estate

Madeira Island

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