



Fuerteventura

📍 928 / POP 107,000

Includes ➔

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Why Go?

Fuerteventura lies just 100km from the African coast, and there are striking similarities not only with the landscape, but also the houses, with their North African-style flat roofs for collecting rainfall. In other ways, Fuerteventura emulates its neighbour Lanzarote, only with more colours. Its volcanoes resemble piles of saffron, chilli and coriander, surreal triangles of exotic spices.

Most visitors, however, are more interested in mastering the waves and the wind than contemplating the abstract aesthetics of the scenery. The second-largest island in the archipelago (after Tenerife), Fuerteventura has year-round sunshine and the biggest and best beaches in the Canaries.

The main tourist resorts lie at opposite ends of the island. At the northern tip is Corralejo, beloved by British sun-seekers, while deep down south lies Morro Jable, largely frequented by Germans and a markedly staid place.

The island was declared a Unesco Biosphere Reserve in 2009.

Best Beaches

- ➔ Playa de Cofete (p96)
- ➔ Parque Natural de Corralejo (p86)
- ➔ Playa de la Barca (p93)
- ➔ Playa de la Mujer (p85)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Casa Isaías (p222)
- ➔ Hotel Rural Mahoh (p222)
- ➔ Soulsurfer Hotel (p222)

When to Go

- ➔ High season runs from December to February, with accommodation filling up well in advance; temperatures are slightly cooler with prevailing winds, but still pleasant.
- ➔ Late spring (April to May) is perfect temperature-wise, although Easter can mean crowded beaches.
- ➔ Spanish holidaymakers favour the islands in July and August, along with families travelling with school-age children. Temperatures often surpass 30°C, though it rarely gets stiflingly hot. The Windsurfing World Cup takes place in July.
- ➔ Autumn is a great time for festivals, including Corralejo's Kite Festival and the Fiesta de la Virgen del Rosario in the capital. Average daytime temperatures hover around the agreeable 20°C mark, while nights gradually become cooler.

History

Fuerteventura has had several names in history, ranging from the Roman's unimaginative Planaria ('Plains', due to the island's overall flatness), to the considerably more exciting Fuerteventura (Strong Adventure), which dates from the first European conquerors. Ruled by the Norman nobleman Jean de Béthencourt, the conquerors turned up in 1405 to find the island divided into two tribal kingdoms separated by a low 6km-long wall. Jandía occupied the southern peninsula, as far north as La Pared; Maxorata controlled the rest of the island.

Béthencourt established a permanent base, including a chapel, in the mountainous zone of what came to be known as Betancuria, with Santa María de Betancuria evolving as the island's capital. The choice of location was determined by the natural water supply that is still in evidence: this is one of the lush regions on the island. The mountainous location also created a measure of natural defence against those dastardly pirate raids.

New settlements spread slowly across the island and, in the 17th century, Europeans occupied El Coto, once the seat of the Guanche Maxorata kingdom. At this time, the Arias and Saavedra families took control of the *señorío* (the island government deputising for the Spanish crown). By the following century, however, officers of the island militia had established themselves as a rival power base in La Oliva. Los Coroneles (the Colonels) gradually took virtual control of the island's affairs, enriching themselves at the expense of the hard-pressed peasantry. You can learn more about their reign by visiting their extraordinary former home: Casa de los Coroneles in La Oliva.

The militia was disbanded in 1834 and, in 1912, the island, along with others in the archipelago, was granted a degree of self-administration with the installation of the *cabildo* (local authority).

i Getting There & Away

AIR

Fuerteventura airport (☎ 902 40 47 04; www.aena.es) is 6km south of Puerto del Rosario in El Matorral. **Binter Canarias** (www.binternet.com) has direct flights to Gran Canaria and Tenerife, from where you can fly on to the other islands.

ROAD DISTANCES (KM)

Corralejo	32			
El Coto	58	20		
Caleta de Fuste	10	36	56	
Costa Calma	64	90	87	56
	Puerto del Rosario	Corralejo	El Coto	Caleta de Fuste

Approximate distances only

BOAT

Fred Olsen (☎ 902 10 01 07; www.fredolsen.es) Ferries leave seven times daily from Corralejo for Playa Blanca (€27, 25 minutes) in Lanzarote. You can buy tickets at the port in Corralejo. There's also a service from Morro Jable to Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (€45, two hours, twice daily).

Naviera Armas (☎ 928 54 21 13, in Corralejo & Morro Jable 902 45 65 00; www.navieraarmas.com) Six daily ferries leave Corralejo for Playa Blanca (€26, 35 minutes) in Lanzarote. From Morro Jable, daily ferries leave for Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (€41, three hours) and to Santa Cruz de Tenerife (€70, 6½ hours). From Puerto del Rosario there are ferries to Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (€35, 6½ hours) and Santa Cruz de Tenerife (€62, 11 hours) at 11am from Tuesday to Saturday.

Trasmediterránea (☎ in Puerto del Rosario 902 45 46 45; www.trasmediterranea.es) Operates a weekly service to Puerto del Rosario from Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (€33, six hours) on Saturdays. There are also indirect boats from Santa Cruz de Tenerife and Santa Cruz de La Palma, but journeys are long and you'd be better on a plane.

i Getting Around

BUS

Tiadhe has 17 bus routes covering the main destinations across the island.

CAR

Driving is a pleasure here; the terrain is largely flat and the roads excellent. Cicar is a reliable local car-rental choice, with offices at the airport, Puerto del Rosario and all the main resorts.