



Gran Canaria

928 / POP 805,000

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Best Places to Eat

- » Deliciosa Marta (p48)
- » El Salsete (p65)
- » Jack El Negro (p68)

Best Places to Stay

- » La Hacienda del Molino (p211)
- » Fonda de la Tea (p211)
- » Casa Rural Doña Margarita (p211)

Why Go?

Gran Canaria is the third-largest island in the Canaries' archipelago but accounts for almost half the population. It lives up to its cliché as a continent in miniature, with a dramatic variation of terrain, ranging from the green and leafy north to the mountainous interior and desert south. To glean a sense of this impenetrable quality, head to the centre, where the sheer drama of the mountains more resembles the Tibetan highlands than a relatively small island.

The flip side to these unspoiled peaks and valleys is a rugged coastline interspersed with white sandy beaches and, more famously (and depressingly), a garish tiara of purpose-built holiday resorts.

Beyond the sands, though, Gran Canaria can keep the adrenalin pumping, with scope for hiking, horse trekking and watersports, while culture-vultures can be similarly satiated, particularly in the historic cosmopolitan capital of Las Palmas.

When to Go

Peak season here is the springtime: February through to Easter, when the weather is warm, rain is sporadic and the island's stunning interior is green and verdant with the occasional visual blast of almond trees in blossom. It is also party season, with the February Carnaval followed by other festivities, culminating with the ceremonial passion of Semana Santa (Holy Week). Autumn is also a good time of year for visitors, but avoid crowded July and August, when Spaniards from the mainland take their annual hols.

Getting Around

Global (www.globalsu.net) provides the island with a network of bus routes.

Car hire is highly recommended to explore the interior; **Cicar** (www.cicar.com) is a good local choice with representation throughout the island.

Taxis are plentiful, especially in Las Palmas and tourist resorts.

THREE PERFECT DAYS

Day One

Head for Vegueta, Las Palmas' exquisite colonial-style neighbourhood and home to its top cultural treasures. Get the lowdown on your surroundings from the high-point of the **cathedral tower**, before exploring **Columbus's House** (Casa-Museo de Colón). Staying in history mode, stop by the splendid **Museo Canario**, then pull up a chair at atmospheric **El Herrerío** for a coffee, tapa or benchtime slumber in leafy relaxing surrounds.

Day Two

Head for the **Cruz de Tejeda** to contemplate the surrounding sacred mountains and towering peaks. Stride out on a half-hour walk to the mystic **Roque Nublo** landmark, before rewarding the exertion with a visit to Tejeda's famous **bakery**. Next stop is **Artenara**, with its cave dwellings and panoramic views, especially from the terrace of **Bar La Esquina**, a handy refuelling spot. Spend the afternoon exploring the backroads of the island's magnificent interior.

Day Three

Take a walk on the fabulous **Maspalomas dunes**, a peaceful haven from the clamour of the coast. Next, stop by the **Fedac** store at the Playa del Inglés tourist office to stock up on quality handicrafts. Head down the coast to picturesque **Puerto de Mogán** and a late seafood lunch at **Patio Canario**, overlooking the bobbing boats. After lunch, collapse on a sunbed on the beach before heading up to **Mogán** itself for a stroll around one of the most delightful small towns on the island.

DON'T MISS

Exploring the interior of the island with its dramatic scenery, including pine-clad massive mountain ranges stretching for as far as the eye can see.

Best Archaeological Sites

» **Troglodyte caves** (p62) Fascinating prehistoric caves; some are still inhabited.

» **Cueva Pintada** (p60) Intriguing geometric paintings in a cave once occupied by the Guanches.

» **Cenobio de Valerón** (p59) Over 350 ancient silos and caves historically used for storing grain.

Best Beaches

» **Playa de las Canteras** (p47) A truly capital-city beach with calm waters and a 3km-long arc of golden sand.

» **Maspalomas** (p62) Fabulous golden sand dunes in the south of the island.

» **Puerto de Mogán** (p67) A crescent of pale sand fronts this delightful small harbour resort.

Resources

» Official tourism site: www.grancanaria.com

» Rural tourism and accommodation: www.ecoturismocanarias.com

» Gay website with info on bars and nightlife: www.gay-grancanaria.com

» Online magazine [www.islandconnections.eu](http://islandconnections.eu)

Getting Away from It All

» **Hike in the mountains** Pick up a tourist-office brochure of mapped walks around Tejeda (p54).

» **Pack a picnic** Head for the lush and green Barranco de Guayadeque (p52) or the lakeside picnic tables at Presa de las Cuevas de las Niñas (p69).

» **Visit a farmers market** Teror is one of the interior's most stunning small towns. Come here on a Saturday morning to join the locals at the weekly produce market (p57).