

# Welcome to the Canary Islands

*Looming volcanoes, prehistoric sites, lush pine forests, lunar landscapes, sandy coves and miles of Sahara-style dunes. Yes, there is another world beyond the Canaries' seafront resorts.*

## A Dramatic Landscape

The Canary Islands boast near-perfect year-round temperatures, which means whether it's summer or winter you can enjoy the dramatic and varied landscape here that you usually have to cross continents to experience. Marvel at the subtropical greenery of La Gomera's national park, the pine-forested peaks in Gran Canaria's mountainous interior or the tumbling waterfalls of La Palma. Then contrast all this lushness with the extraordinary barren flatlands flanking Tenerife's El Teide, the surreal play of colours of Lanzarote's lava fields and Fuerteventura's endless plains, punctuated by cacti, scrub and lots (and lots) of goats.

## Be a Good Sport

It is this very diversity of landscape, coupled with those predictable sunny days, that makes outdoor activities so accessible and varied. Hike the signposted footpaths that criss-cross the islands, ranging from meandering trails to mountains treks; scuba dive in enticing warm waters, marvelling at more than 350 species of fish (and the odd shipwreck); or pump up the adrenalin by riding the wind and the waves – kitesurfing, windsurfing and surfing are all big here. Slow down the pace with camel rides, rounds of golf, horse treks and boat rides.

## Or Just Relax...

If your idea of a perfect holiday is that enticing combo of R&R, you're in the right place. The most obvious spot to relax is on a beach, and there are plenty of choices: from the soft rolling dunes in Fuerteventura to the wide arcs of golden sand in Tenerife. Others may like to up the self-pampering stakes by visiting a spa. Thalassotherapy centres are spouting forth everywhere and offer a tempting range of treatments and massages. There's also a tidal wave of ocean-front bars where you can enjoy a cocktail at sunset while contemplating the gently lapping sea.

## Superb Art & Architecture

While the Canary Islands may not boast the grand-slam museums of Spain's big mainland cities, there is plenty to compel art and culture aficionados here. Surrealist fans should check out the spectacular canvases of world-acclaimed painter Óscar Domínguez in his Santa Cruz de Tenerife home town, while the huge abstract sculptures of locals Martín Chirino and César Manrique are impossible to miss on Gran Canaria and Lanzarote. If buildings are your thing, look for the emblematic wooden balconies, leafy internal patios and brightly painted facades that typify vernacular Canarian architecture.



## Why I Love the Canary Islands

By Lucy Corne, Author

There are few destinations as underrated and maligned as the Canary Islands. My first real encounter, working in a Gran Canaria resort, wasn't the best introduction to the islands' scenic and cultural wealth. But on escaping I found dramatic mountains, quaint pueblos and charming seaside villages. I was enamoured with the underdog archipelago and moved there soon afterwards. For years I explored every island and was wowed – and wooed – over and over. On returning for this book I fell in love with the islands again. And when you hike through Tenerife's lava fields, drive Gran Canaria's central mountains or enjoy a plate of cheese in a hilltop pueblo, I suspect you might fall in love too.

**For more about our authors, see page 288**