



Spain

Canary Islands



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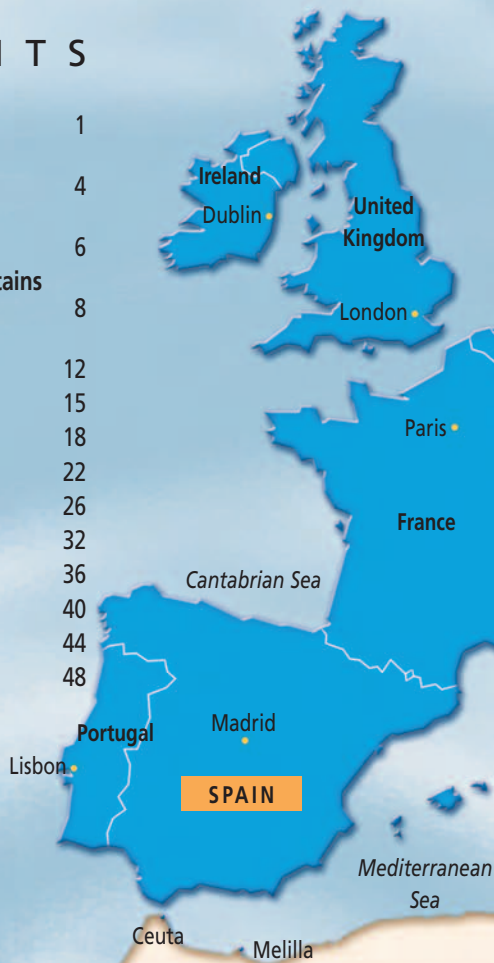
Canary Islands

Fuerteventura
La Gomera
Gran Canaria
El Hierro
Lanzarote
La Palma
Tenerife



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Prickly pear cacti in bloom. La Gomera

Text:
Hugo Palacios

Translation:
J. West

Photographs:
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Introduction

FUERTEVENTURA

The almost desert-like dryness of the island of Fuerteventura contributes to the existence of immense beaches of golden sand which open upon a sea of crystal-clear water. Here it is possible to walk on endless stretches of sand hardly ever running into a sole, due to the sparse population and the length of the seacoast.

LANZAROTE

Volcanic upheavals on Lanzarote have shaped a landscape of unusual beauty. The island is covered by multi-colored lava which is especially spectacular at Timanfaya National Park. Man and this unique landscape have learned to live in harmony in an unusual association, where traditional architecture and agriculture blend with the volcanos and beaches.

GRAN CANARIA

This "continent in miniature" accommodates in its abrupt terrain a surprisingly varied landscape with brusque changes every few miles; from the mini-desert of dunes and palm groves of the sunny south, to the wooded summits, passing by volcanos, deep ravines, and impressive scenic views. Gran Canaria, the most populated of all the islands, offers a wide range of tourist facilities related with its beaches, including a large variety of lodgings, restaurants, shops, sports and entertainment.

TENERIFE

The majestic volcano of Mount Teide, 3,718 meters (12,195 feet) high, dominates the largest island of the archipelago. The green lands of the north contrast sharply

Las Canteras Beach, Las Palmas



with the arid terrain of the south. The mountains, covered with thick forests, culminate in impressive beauty at the Cañadas del Teide National Park. Select tourist complexes are situated along the shores, taking advantage of the sunny climate of the south and the beautiful landscapes of the north.

LA GOMERA

The lack of an airport has helped to keep the natural environment of this island, scattered with palm trees, thoroughly unspoiled.

The rare botanical treasures found on its uneven terrain include the ancient, dense laurel forest of the Garajonay National Park, declared a World Heritage site by the UNESCO.

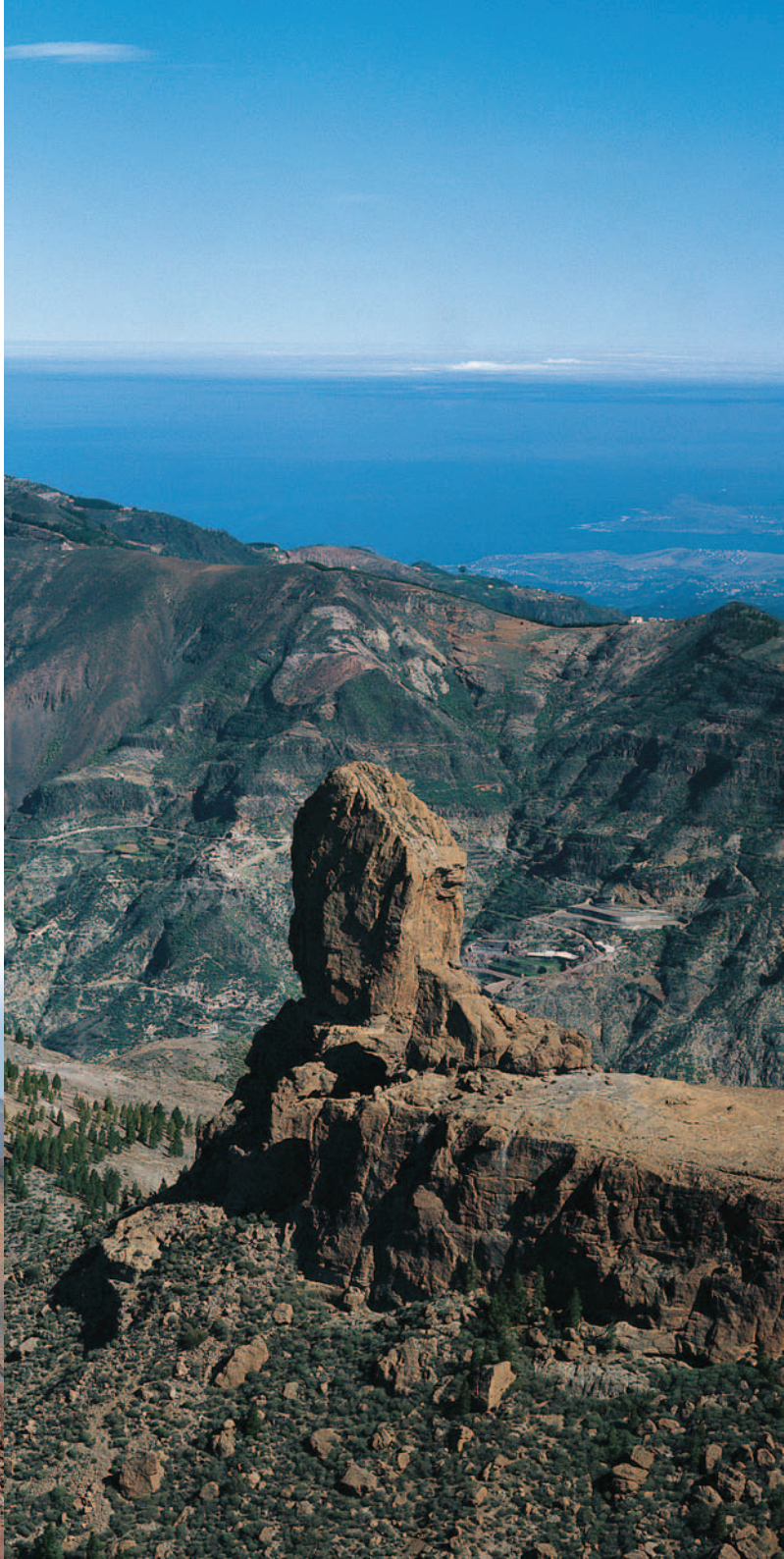
LA PALMA

Also called the “Isla Bonita” or Pretty Island, it is the greenest and most flowery of the Canary Islands. The high mountains and clear skies have made it the ideal location for the largest astrophysical observatory in the northern hemisphere. The center of the island is a gigantic volcanic depression 1,500 meters (4,920 ft.) deep comprising the remarkable Caldera de Taburiente National Park.

EL HIERRO

For centuries, the island of Hierro was considered the end of the known world. The smallest and most westerly of the Canary Islands, it is a mysterious land, where myths and legends form a part of the landscape as much as the unusual vegetation and the peaceful solitude of a land with a population of scarcely 8,000.

*Timanfaya National Park,
Lanzarote*



■ The Islands of Perpetual Springtime

The seven islands that comprise the Canary archipelago are located more than one thousand kilometers (620 miles) south of the Iberian peninsula, and only 115 kilometers (71 miles) from the closest point on the African coast. Their volcanic origin and special position in the Atlantic ocean have granted them some unique features with regard to geology and vegetation, resulting in a landscape that is unlike any other found in Europe or Africa. These natural characteristics favor the existence of a temperate climate with mild temperatures (22°C - 72°F average on the

coasts) with little seasonal variation in temperatures between day and night.

The climate of perpetual springtime, which permits enjoyment of the beach during all the seasons of the year without extreme oppressive heat, has also shaped the easy-going and good-natured character of its inhabitants.

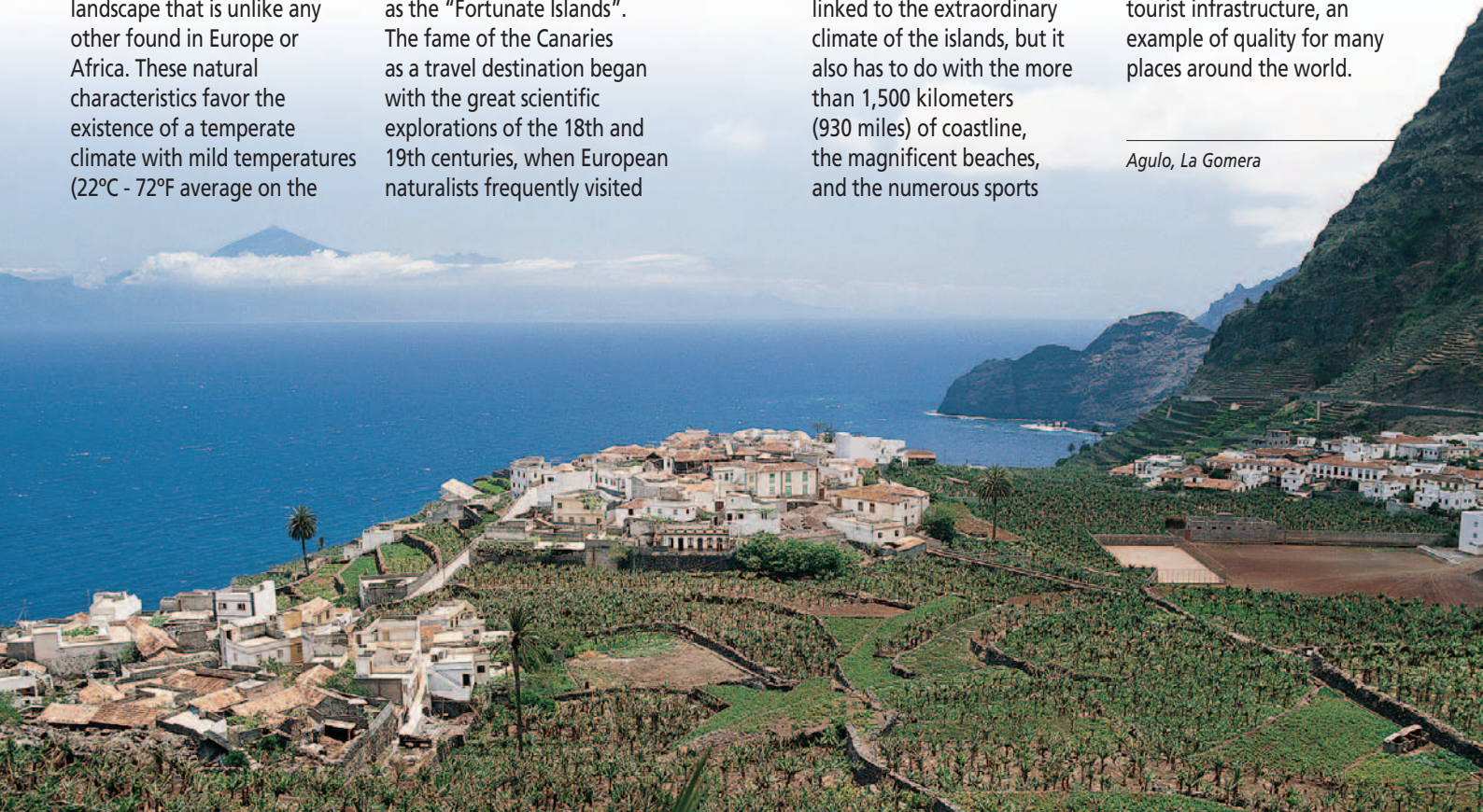
Since ancient times, the mild climate has been the most outstanding attribute of the Canary Islands. The Greeks located the Garden of Hesperides here, and during centuries, they were known as the "Fortunate Islands". The fame of the Canaries as a travel destination began with the great scientific explorations of the 18th and 19th centuries, when European naturalists frequently visited

the unique volcanic landscapes and the varied native flora. At the close of the 19th century, the fame of these islands was increased as a place to rest, and they were recommended for the treatment of a variety of illnesses. Presently, the Canary Islands are one of the leading destinations of European tourism, welcoming more than eight million visitors annually who are drawn to the irresistible charm of these islands.

The appeal of the Canary Islands for most visitors, 50% of whom return, is closely linked to the extraordinary climate of the islands, but it also has to do with the more than 1,500 kilometers (930 miles) of coastline, the magnificent beaches, and the numerous sports

and water-related recreation available. The subtropical environment has also provided the allure of volcanos, forests and other spectacular scenery, with a variety difficult to imagine in such a small territory. The people, their traditions and cuisine, inherited from a culture blending traditions from Europe, Africa and the Americas, have also played a large part. All of these factors have contributed to the islands' popularity, in addition to their easy accessibility, only a few hours by plane from the great cities of the Old Continent, and a complete tourist infrastructure, an example of quality for many places around the world.

Agulo, La Gomera



■ 1,500 Kilometers of Atlantic Coast

The approximately 1,500 kilometers (930 miles) of seacoast the Canarian archipelago enjoys on the Atlantic provide endless opportunities to make the most of the good climate by resting on the beach, swimming, practicing water sports, or simply delighting in the constant presence of the sea.

The waters of the Atlantic are slightly cooler in the Canary Islands than would correspond to their subtropical latitude due to the fact that the Gulf Current moves in a north to

south direction. Moreover, the characteristic intense blue color of the sea attests to the ocean's depth of up to 3,000 meters (9,840 ft.) between some of the islands.

The entire coastline provides a great variety of physical forms, depending on the orientation and the geological processes of each island. In the Canaries, there are as many cliff-lined coasts as vast beaches, which can be either flat or form dune complexes and consist of white sand at times and black volcanic sand at others.

The oldest islands geologically and with the most extensive coastal shelf - Lanzarote,

Fuerteventura and Gran Canaria - boast the largest beaches, almost all of them with white sand. On the western islands, the coast is usually more abrupt, although beaches are plentiful, the sand is usually of volcanic origin. On the island of Tenerife, man has covered part of the beaches with golden sand brought from the Sahara desert or the bottom of the sea, as is the case of the beaches of Las Teresitas and Playa de las Américas.

As expected, most of the hotels can be found near the sea, where the climate is mild with average temperatures that do not usually go below 19°C (66°F) in winter nor above 25°C (77°F) in summer.

Tourist accommodations in the Canaries have a capacity for more than 400,000 visitors and are among the most important in Europe. These lodgings are found distributed among the many coastal developments that include large tourist complexes with all types of services, entertainment and amenities, as well as smaller resorts devoted to rest and relaxation or boating.

It is also possible to lose oneself in nature in rural tourism establishments, taking advantage of the beauty and variety of the Canarian landscapes offering not only comfortable accommodations, but also activities related with the outdoors, including hiking or mountain biking.



Marina in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Gran Canaria



Las Teresitas Beach, Tenerife

■ Volcanos, Forests, Mountains and Deserts

Nature in the Canaries displays different characteristics from any other place in the world. From the moment of arrival, the terrain and vegetation tend to astound the visitor because they are unlike the neighboring continents of Africa or Europe. The origin of these differences must be sought in the more than 20 million years of volcanic upheaval and in the special position in the Atlantic which has maintained the archipelago isolated from two drastic climatic changes:

the glaciations in southern Europe and the formation of the North African desert.

The long volcanic history of the islands and the many different processes and materials have created a landscape of extraordinary shapes and colors. Scientific interest in the Canaries in this aspect is only surpassed by the spectacular beauty of the large rivers of lava, deep canyons, immense craters, and lofty volcanos. At each step, the terrain acquires different hues which go from intense red to yellow, from green to black, passing through all the shades of brown.

On the other hand, the isolation of the archipelago has succeeded in preserving

the exceptional fauna and flora, including a large number of native species. The biological wealth of the Canaries has converted this region into one of the most important areas of the world in this aspect, since only several other archipelagos, such as Hawaii or Galapagos, have a similar number of native species.

Although there is interesting native wildlife throughout the Canaries, some is known,

such as the canary bird, while other species are in danger of extinction, such as the giant lizards, the houbara bustards, the laurel and long-toed pigeons, and the blue chaffinch from Teide. But the authentic star of Canary Island nature is unquestionably the flora. Around 600 native species of plants, of the over 2,000 on the islands, are not found anywhere else in the world.

*La Corona Volcano,
Lanzarote*



Roque Nublo, Gran Canaria





Their survival on the archipelago was possible because of the exceptional climate which was not affected by the Quaternary glaciations. These forests once covered almost all of southern Europe and northern Africa during the Tertiary period, but only fossilized remains can be found in other areas. In the Canaries, these forests are found at high altitudes near the rings of clouds on the northern slopes of the western islands. The forest of El Cedro on Gomera is the best example of this botanical treasure.

The endangered evergreen laurel forests still survive on the Canary Islands after having disappeared millions of years ago from the rest of the world.



El Teide National Park, Tenerife

A People between Three Continents

Throughout centuries, the Canary Islands have been a bridge between Europe, Africa and America. Being a crossroads in the Atlantic has shaped the personality of its inhabitants, producing a very open people with an identity combining aspects of these three continents. After the conquest of the Canaries by the Crown of Castile in 1496, the native culture of the "Guanches" was enriched with contributions from the Castilian, Andalusian, Portuguese, Genoese, Flemish, Norman, Berber, British and Judaic peoples.

The natural attributes of the islands, with their mountainous terrain and contrasting countryside, make the Canary Islands a paradise for hiking. The four National Parks (Timanfaya, Teide, Garajonay, and Caldera de Taburiente) and more than 100 Parks and Nature Reserves make up more than 36% of the territory of the archipelago. This large proportion of protected areas offers many possibilities for enjoying nature. All of the islands have a network of trails for exploring on foot.



Typical Balcony, Tenerife

Embroidery, Tenerife



Pottery, Lanzarote

All of them, along with the constant influence of the Americas, make up what the Canary Island people are today: a melting pot that embraces the land of Africa, the spirit of Europe, and the heart of the Americas.

Tradition and Culture

The devotion of the islanders to their traditions has contributed to the preservation of many customs and artistic endeavors unique to the Canarian culture. Traditional architecture on the islands has its own particular characteristics along with a certain colonial style. Portuguese and Andalusian influences have given rise to constructions

with a distinctive style, incorporating typical wooden balconies on facades and in interior courtyards, along with sash windows with shutters.

Another important sign of identity is the folklore. On these islands there is an extraordinary variety of traditional music, the majority of it from the Iberian peninsula, some from the Americas, and some surviving from pre-Hispanic culture.

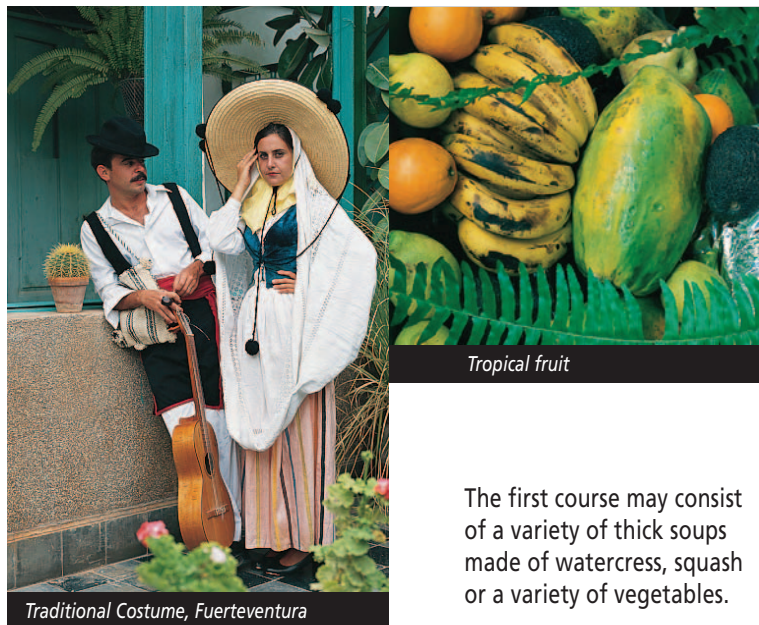
Folk music here is not obsolete; on the contrary, it forms a part of daily life, and there are hardly any islanders who do not react emotionally to their traditional songs. The revival of folk music has had its maximum exponent in the group "Los Sabandeños".

Canarian handicrafts are admirably represented by openwork embroidery, embroidery and "roseta", in addition to pottery shaped by hand without the aid of a potter's wheel, an art inherited from the "Guanches".

The most important festival is indisputably Carnival in February. Other celebrations of interest include: San Ginés

(August 25th) in Lanzarote, Nuestra Señora del Pino (September 8th), La Rama (August 4th) in Gran Canaria, Nuestra Señora de Candelaria (August 15th), Corpus Christi (beginning of June) in La Orotava in Tenerife, Nuestra Señora de Las Nieves (August 5th, every five years) in La Palma, Nuestra Señora de los Reyes (beginning of July, every four years) in El Hierro.

The cuisine is another one of the attractions of the Canary Islands. Its simplicity exalts the quality of the native ingredients, including fresh fish, pork and goat, excellent vegetables, including potatoes, and tropical fruit.



Traditional Costume, Fuerteventura

Tropical fruit

The first course may consist of a variety of thick soups made of watercress, squash or a variety of vegetables.

The *vieja* or widow fish must also be mentioned, along with marinated pork and goat. Indispensable accompaniments are red and green *mojo* (an emulsion of paprika and cumin with chili, oil and vinegar served with hot fish; green *mojo* uses fresh coriander leaves) and *papas arrugadas* (wrinkled potatoes are new potatoes boiled in seawater then baked and served with spicy *mojo* sauce). The wines also deserve special mention which are recovering the fame and quality they once had during the Renaissance.

■ A Legendary History

From days of old, the news of islands with a temperate climate beyond the Pillars of Hercules contributed to the classic mythology of the Elysian Fields and Garden of Hesperides. Plato situated the lost continent of Atlantis in these latitudes, and many classical authors described or attempted to position the "Fortunate Islands", including Herodotus, Plutarch, Pliny, Ptolemy, Horace and Virgil. All of them gave cause for the numerous expeditions which finally set the myth in the Fortunate Islands, later called the Canaries because of the abundance of "cans" or dogs on the island of Gran Canaria.

Later, during the European expansion in the 14th century, the classical legends were enhanced with voyagers' discoveries that these islands were populated by people nobody knew were in existence. For the first time in the history of the western world, existence was confirmed of a human being similar to the European but in a primitive state who did not worship an

Cigar-making, La Palma



anthropomorphous god like the Muslims, but the sun, moon and mountains instead, and who did not seem to have the vice of greed, but did have an elevated sense of justice. This news, spread by authors such as Boccaccio, renewed the belief in the Golden Age.

Even today this mythical vision of the Canaries persists, as in the still recurrent theories of the lost continent of Atlantis of which these isles would be the highest peaks, and in the uncertain origin of the natives. Modern

geology and archeology offer likely hypotheses on these origins, volcanic-Tectonic for the isles, and African-Berber for the Canarians. It is now believed that the Canarians were a Neolithic people that probably came from northern Africa in the first millennium before Christ, made up primarily by CroMagnon-type Berbers.

History was not officially recorded until after the Castilian conquest of the islands, after 94 years of progressive occupation. Agriculture then became

the backbone of the island development in a chronological succession of monocultures: first sugar cane in the 16th century, then wine in the 17th century, later the cochineal dye industry in the 19th century, and afterwards the banana and the tomato. Lastly came the development of trade with free port status, and recently, the arrival of tourism.

The existence of a people who were similar in appearance to the European but in a much more primitive cultural state amazed the world of that period, giving rise to a multitude of hypotheses, some of which considered the "Guanches" survivors of the European CroMagnon.

On one hand, the impossibility of classifying their cultural condition (primitive as far as material things, but advanced in moral and magic-religious areas, with complex procedures for mummification similar to the Egyptians and Incas); and on the other hand, their uncertain origin, have created many myths surrounding the "Guanches".

The "Guanches"

The mystery surrounding the primitive inhabitants of the Canaries, the "Guanches", appeared in the contemporary chronicles of the Castilian conquest and continued during the succeeding centuries until our days.

Floral carpets at Corpus Christi, La Laguna



Coenobites' retreat, Valerón



Fuerteventura

Endless beaches and transparent waters

The island of Fuerteventura indisputably has the biggest and best beaches in the archipelago. Many of its 340 kilometers (210 miles) of coastline consist of white sandy beaches practically untouched and deserted. The vast expanse of sand on the isle makes it possible to enjoy the sea in solitude, and it is possible, even on the most famous beaches, such as Sotavento de Jandía, not to run into a sole in many miles.

The sea is also very special here. Fuerteventura's coastal shelf contributes to the existence of shallow

transparent waters that acquire an extraordinary turquoise color. The wide variety and wealth of the underwater fauna make it ideal for scuba diving.

Windsurfing is the crown sport in Fuerteventura. Its coasts annually attract thousands of enthusiasts convinced that this is one of the best places in the world to practice windsurfing. Jandía beach has been the site of various world championships in various categories.

Most of the tourism is concentrated in the Jandía peninsula, in the south. This is a nature reserve separated from the rest of the island and bordered almost completely by vast beaches of white sand. To the west, the beaches of Barlovento,

somewhat dangerous for swimming, remain almost untouched. To the east, a large sandy fringe of some 20 kilometers (12 1/2 miles) in length and more than one kilometer wide in some areas, is the site of two tourist resorts: Costa Calma, near the unequalled Playa de Sotavento, and Morro Jable, built around the port where the jet-foil departs for the island of Gran Canaria.

The central and northern parts of the island boast small tourist resorts. Near the airport and the capital city, Puerto del Rosario, we find Caleta de Fustes. On the northern coast, Corralejo, near an enormous beach of dunes, is an attractive spot with a fishing port where fresh fish can be savored. It is also possible to take a trip to the nearby volcanic isle of Lobos, as well as Lanzarote.

A Desert by the Sea

Only 115 kilometers (71 miles) from the African coast, the island of Fuerteventura is the island that offers the scenery most similar to the nearby continent. It measures 1,700 square kilometers (663 square miles) and has been devastated by erosion for millions of years, giving rise to a desert-like terrain of gentle hills and vast plains that upon approaching the sea takes the form of beaches of fine golden sand.

The geological age of this island has determined its eroded geography. This is at the same time the cause of the scant rainfall since the small mountains cannot retain the moisture-laden oceanic clouds as in the other islands. Thus, the climate of Fuerteventura is dry and sunny, favoring only



the growth of sparse xerophytic vegetation which is, nonetheless, of great botanical interest.

This aridness has bestowed the island with some exclusive natural privileges. The difficulty for agriculture has kept the lands in the interior almost uninhabited for centuries, leaving the bare beauty of its deserted landscapes practically untouched. Likewise, the dry eroded surface of the island has encouraged some very unique ecosystems. This is especially important on the coast, where the vast coastal shelf of Fuerteventura has facilitated the formation of large sandy ecosystems - flat, such as the Jandía peninsula, or made of dunes, as in Corralejo - and rich in underwater life.

■ Spiritual Rock

From among the most appropriate names that have been applied to Fuerteventura, the one given to it by Miguel de Unamuno, the great Spanish author, certainly stands out. He defined it as the "spiritual rock", alluding to the magical charm this island has for all who live here, even in spite of, or perhaps because of, the mixture of sentiments of solitude, seclusion and protection these lands evoke.

The arid landscape has never allowed the development of agriculture beyond what the hard earth and absence of water have yielded. This has conditioned the sparse population. Even today with the existence of water purification and desalination

systems and the development of tourism, the population density is the lowest of the islands with only 22 inhabitants per square kilometer. The economy has been traditionally sustained by livestock, particularly goats, enabling the production of the excellent cheese of Fuerteventura called "majorero", in allusion to Maxortata, the former name of the island. This artisan industry still produces the most renowned cheeses of the Canaries, frequent winners of international prizes.

Windmills are scattered on the solitary plains of Fuerteventura, while some of the most picturesque towns in the Canary Islands can be found hidden in the mountains, including Antigua, Pájara and Betancuria. The latter is undoubtedly the prettiest village on the island. Its appearance has hardly changed at all since it was founded at the beginning of the 15th century, and the beauty of the natural surroundings seems to possess an ancestral spirituality. Worth visiting are the Church of Santa María and the Archeological Museum.



The historic monument par excellence on Fuerteventura is the Casa de los Coroneles (House of the Colonels) in the township of La Oliva in the north. This stately mansion with its original architecture was the residence of the governor of the island for centuries and today is testimony to the seigneurial rule that persisted up to the 19th century.

The fishing towns of Corralejo and El Cotillo on the northern coast, paint a more sea-faring picture of Fuerteventura. Fresh fish can be savored at these pleasant ports.

Dunes at Sotavento



Lanzarote

Sand and Lava

The extraordinary light on the island of Lanzarote is undeniably one of the most startling features for the visitor. This is due in large part to the colors of the landscape caused by the various dark hues of the lava contrasting with the clarity of the sandy beaches.

The climate, dry and sunny as corresponds to its easterly geographic position but with low hills, is responsible for the absence of green in the landscape, and the sparse vegetation on the island seems to grow miraculously out of nowhere, constituting botanical formations that are often very rare. One might think that this desert-like dryness would create an unfriendly landscape, but Lanzarote is just the contrary, the impression the visitor receives is of an inviting and enchanting land.

A chief attraction in Lanzarote is its extraordinary volcanic landscape with a multitude of remarkable



places, including Timanfaya National Park, El Golfo, and Los Verdes caves, to which the superb, golden sandy beaches must be added.

Lanzarote is an example to the world of tourism sustained by its magnificent integration with the environment. The hotel infrastructure, although well-developed, has avoided agglomeration by adopting forms more in harmony with the landscape, including small housing developments and the use of traditional architecture.

The most popular tourist resort on the island is Puerto del Carmen. Although not

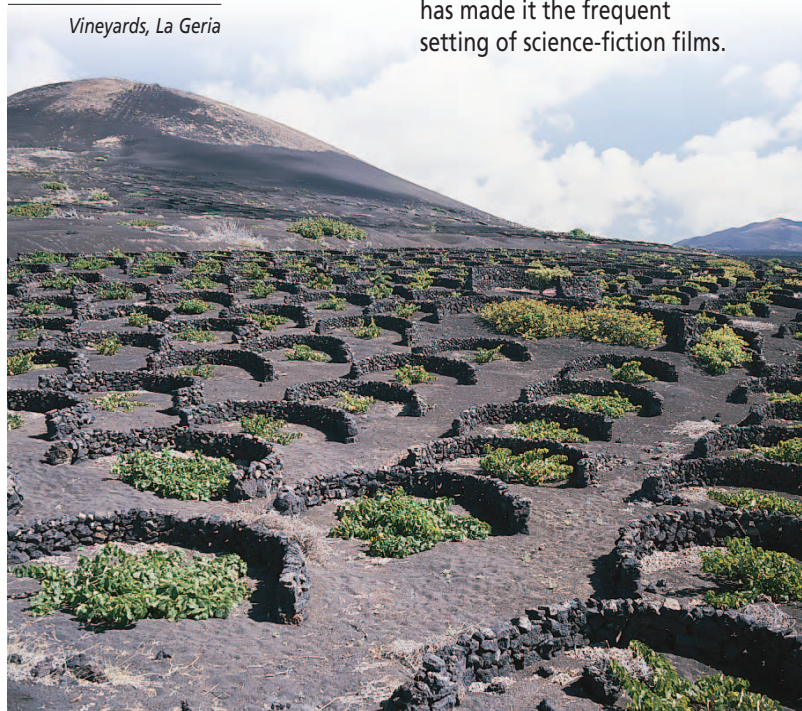
very large in size, it has numerous restaurants, night spots, shops, and a nice beach. Costa Teguise, further north, assembles a group of select hotels, where we find one of the most luxurious hotels in Europe. On the southern coast, Playa Blanca is a tourist center that has grown around a small fishing port. Nearby are the most stunning beaches on the island, the idyllic coves of Papagayo with white sand and crystal-clear waters, only accessible by dirt roads and preferably with a 4-wheel drive vehicle. The relative isolation of this succession of beaches has kept most of them unspoiled.

A Landscape from Another Planet

On the island of Lanzarote, where volcanic activity was the most violent, nature and mankind have learned to live in harmony as few places in the world, forming a unique landscape of special beauty and originality. The UNESCO has declared the entire island a Biosphere Reserve.

The spectacular volcanic upheavals in Lanzarote, with more than 300 cones and a multitude of shapes and colors of lava, have been relatively recent; two eruptions in the 18th and 19th centuries covered the center of the island, molding a landscape that resembles another planet, a fact which has made it the frequent setting of science-fiction films.

Vineyards, La Geria



All of this area is called “Montañas del Fuego” (Mountains of Fire) and has been declared a National Park. A visit includes a bus tour through the most solitary places of this mysterious lava mass, as well as a demonstration of the heat still preserved by the earth, 350°C (662°F) only an inch or so from the ground, capable of burning a bundle of straw in seconds or grilling a steak.

In addition to the attractions at the protected area of Timanfaya National Park, the surroundings offer many other points of interest, such as a ride around the volcanos on a camel, an animal traditionally used for agriculture on the island, the unique crops at La Geria,

the coastal area of Los Hervideros, where lava and the Atlantic have converged to create a tormented rockscape, and the spectacular emerald green crater of El Golfo.

Other places on the island also merit a visit, including the beaches of Papagayo in the south; the cliffs and beach of Famara to the west; the Cactus Garden, the malpaís de la Corona, with the mysterious volcanic tubes of the Jameos del Agua and Los Verdes Cave, and the splendid lookout of Mirador del Río in the northern part of the island. From here the nearby archipelago of Chinijo can be seen, consisting of the isles of La Graciosa, Montaña Clara, and Alegranza.



Jameos del Agua

■ The Legacy of César Manrique

It is impossible to speak of traditional architecture in Lanzarote without mentioning the name of César Manrique. This 20th century artist, designer, sculptor and architect devoted his life to the island where he was born, rediscovering the beauty of the landscape and the culture of Lanzarote. Thanks to his determination and originality, the islanders began to appreciate their architecture of white walls, green windows, and unique chimneys. The artist designed many of the structures which are now examples of the harmony that can exist between architecture and nature, including the Monumento al Campesino (Monument to the Peasant),

Jameos del Agua, Mirador del Río (lookout), and the Cactus Garden.

Some of the most charming towns on the island are Yaiza, Uga, Tías and Haría; all of them with the typical island architecture. The present capital, Arrecife, and the former one, Tegüise, boast the majority of the historical monuments. In Arrecife, we find San Gabriel Castle and San José Castle in the outskirts. In Tegüise, Spínola Palace in the town center, and Guanapay Castle at the rim of a nearby crater, also merit a visit.

Green Lagoon, El Golfo



San Gabriel Castle, Arrecife



Gran Canaria

Dunes and Palm Trees

Gran Canaria assembles in an almost perfect circle of 1,532 square kilometers (597 square miles) a little of everything found on the other Canary Islands, in addition to holiday attractions that combine vast beaches and natural physical diversity. This astonishing variety has turned it into the vacation destination of various millions of visitors a year who seek to enjoy not only the sun and the sea, but also the beautiful countryside, the culture, and the excellent tourist facilities.

Approximately 50 of the 236 kilometers of coastline are occupied by diverse beaches. Maspalomas, with 250 hectares (618 acres)



Sand Dunes at Maspalomas

of dunes by the sea, is unquestionably the focal point. In addition to this calm sandy shore, Gran Canaria also has abrupt wild areas with secluded unspoiled spots, such as Güigüí, or rockscapes that push headlong hundreds of feet towards the sea, such as the cliffs of Andén Verde.

the south has clear skies all year long, and sunbathing and swimming are possible in winter as well as in summer. Some of the best beaches in this area are near tourist complexes of different sizes, offering the amenities of a large city in some cases, or the quiet of a small village in others, or the possibility of practicing water sports.

San Agustín and the Playa del Inglés, together with Maspalomas, make up one of the most important tourist complexes in Spain with a large variety of hotels, apartments, shops, restaurants, bars, and entertainment. The two resorts share what is possibly the most well-known beach of the archipelago; eight kilometers (5 miles) long and up to two meters wide

Most of the beaches are found on the southern end of the island, where the climate is sunny and dry. Whereas the mountains in the interior retain the clouds coming from the north,



Countryside, Fataga





Playa del Inglés

formed by dunes and an oasis of palm trees, an authentic mini-desert by the sea.

Puerto Rico and Mogán are two smaller resorts devoted to the practice of water sports, each with its own boating marina. Puerto Rico has a quiet beach around which it is possible to enjoy a wide assortment of activities, including boat trips, windsurfing, deep-sea fishing, parachuting into the sea, etc. The port of Mogán is an attractive enclave of traditional architecture located in a fishing village. Its flower-adorned streets open onto a harbor where hundreds of boats are docked and excellent fresh fish is plentiful.

■ A Continent in Miniature

The incredible variety of scenery in Gran Canaria merits it the description of “a continent in miniature”.



Mogán Port

In effect, together with its beaches and the excellent tourist infrastructure, this island offers physical variety that never ceases to amaze the visitor with contrasting changes every few miles. Its interesting volcanic profile, the varied vegetation, the deep ravines, and superb views are often hard to imagine from the coast, and are sometimes hidden from the visitor who does not venture inland. Renting a car is a good way to discover the changing scenery and provides a myriad of possibilities for the visitor who enjoys nature excursions.

The island has the shape of a cone 60 kilometers (37 miles) in diameter and 1,950 meters (6,396 ft.) in height, furrowed radially by deep ravines. The changing geological landscapes of Gran Canaria

must be understood as the result of the land's orientation, either north or south, and its geological age, which have determined the different grades of erosion, the presence or not of rainfall, and the types of vegetation. Thus, each area of the island and almost every ravine exhibits a different landscape, varying from the almost desert-like terrain of the south to the impressive canyons of the west, from the pine groves of the central plateaus to the strange volcanic monoliths of the summits, from the green hillsides of the north to the black volcanos of the central areas.

The diverse and accessible natural environment of Gran Canaria together with the excellent year-round climate facilitate the practice

Volcanic Landscape

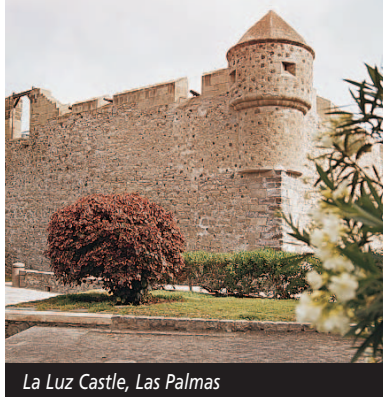


of rural tourism and mountain sports. The deep-cut island geography is a paradise for walking and hiking, providing continuous changes in landscape and a profusion of secluded spots.

The singularity of Canary nature is best appreciated on foot, and a complete network of paths and “royal trails” have been designated for this purpose.

Towns, Villages and Cities

Gran Canaria, with a population of 715,000, is the island with the largest population in the archipelago. More than half of the people are concentrated in the capital, Las Palmas, the largest city on the Canary Islands and one of the most important ports on the

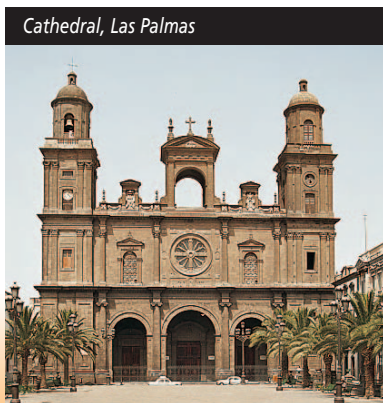


La Luz Castle, Las Palmas

Atlantic. Founded in 1478 by order of Queen Isabella, the Catholic, the capital preserves its lovely historic center of cobblestone streets and typical Canarian constructions, the Vegueta district. Here we encounter the Cathedral looming over the Plaza de Santa Ana, the interesting Canario Museum, displaying artifacts of the pre-Hispanic natives, and the lovely Casa de Colón, exhibiting testimonies of Columbus’s stopover on this island and the importance of the Canaries in the discovery of America.



Columbus's House, Las Palmas



Cathedral, Las Palmas

A journey to the interior of Gran Canaria uncovers the charm of the rural architecture. In the green and fertile lands of the agricultural north, the city of Arucas, surrounded by banana plantations, displays its past splendor on the slopes of a volcano. Not very far away is the town of Teror, where we find the basilica of the Virgin of El Pino, one of the most charming places on the inland itinerary, with its handsome traditional balconies. Also of interest in the northern and central areas are the agricultural towns of Santa Brígida, San Mateo, Moya, and Vallesco, and closer to the coast, Guía and Agaete.

The picturesque villages of Tejeda, Ayacata and Artenara are perched among the island’s abrupt summits and framed by spectacular landscapes. In the arid south, the pristine chalky-white of Santa Lucía, Fataga and Arteara stands out from among the green palm groves.

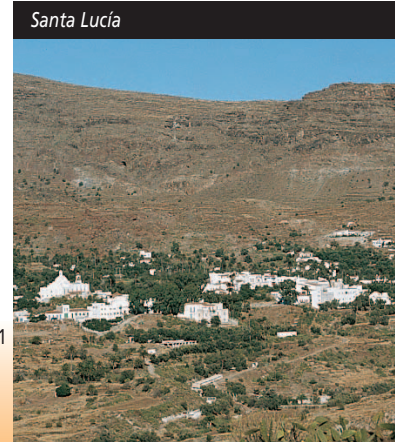
Meriting special mention are the cities of Telde and Gáldar, both former pre-Hispanic capitals which preserve invaluable historic centers and interesting archeological remains in their surroundings.



Teresa de Bolívar Plaza, Teror



Church, Agaete



Santa Lucía

Tenerife

Two Ways to Enjoy the Sea

The beautiful scenery throughout the Canary Islands and their Atlantic culture contribute to the pleasures derived from the island climate and the sea without having to give up nature excursions or cultural visits. This is especially true on the island of Tenerife, where the marked contrasts and dramatic beauty of its scenery, as well as the rich traditions, can be indulged in at the two large, renowned tourist centers: one in the fertile north, the other in the sunny south.

Puerto de la Cruz is the oldest tourist center in the Canaries. Since the 19th century, it exists

as a famous place of rest and relaxation due to its mild climate and lovely surroundings. It is located by the sea at the foot of the fertile Orotava valley on the northern coast of the island. The harbor is an enclave that blends with the tropical valley, and its streets, filled with trees and flowers, are ideal for strolling. Particularly lovely are the Paseo Marítimo promenade and Lake Martiánez, a dramatic area of natural pools created by the great artist from Lanzarote, César Manrique. In the outskirts of the city, there are lovely spots that should not be missed, including the prestigious Botanical Gardens, and the aviary, Loro Park. A large number of excursions to all kinds of places of interest are possible from here by foot and by car, only a short distance from the city.



Martiánez Lake. Puerto de la Cruz

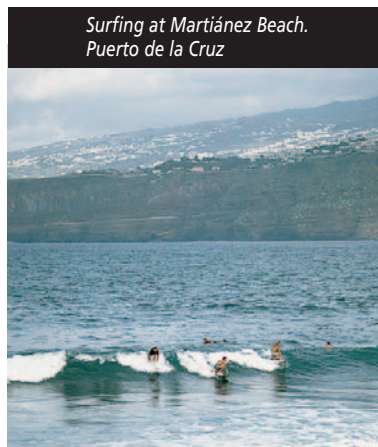
Another way to enjoy the sun and sea is at the tourist resorts of the south, more arid and with a better climate. The Playa de las Américas-Los Cristianos certainly stands out with its wide variety of lodgings, restaurants, bars, night spots, and other amenities for the comfort of the tourist. All along the southern coast, there are other smaller resorts, including El Médano for

windsurfing, Costa del Silencio and Los Gantes; each one with a personality of its own.

The southern part of the island is perfect for relaxing on the beach, swimming in the sea, and practicing water sports, especially windsurfing.

Farmlands under the Volcano

Of all the attractions in the Canary Islands, the imposing Pico de Teide volcano, the highest mountain in all of Spain, is undeniably one of the most well-known. It rises 3,718 meters (12,195 ft.) above sea level from a large volcanic depression located at an altitude of 2,000 meters (6,560 ft.) in the central part of the island of Tenerife. This assembly of strange forms and colors of solidified lava, exclusive flora, and the geological singularity make Teide National Park the most visited one in Spain.



Surfing at Martiánez Beach. Puerto de la Cruz

The island of Tenerife is actually like a large mountain terminating in the cone of El Teide. The geological history of the island was conditioned by the eruptions that accompanied the formation of the volcano and covered most of the land,

transforming it into steep slopes. Two areas, however, remained untouched by the upheavals: the massifs of Anaga and Teno, geologically older and with landscapes of deep wooded ravines in the former, and deserted and picturesque in the latter.

At the foot of the mountain, a varied and lovely landscape can be observed that has been praised since antiquity. The northern part, traditionally agricultural, is a green carpet that runs from underneath Mount Teide to the sea: the Valle de La Orotava, before which it is said the celebrated German naturalist, Humboldt fell to his knees in awe and called it the most beautiful scenery on Earth.

The highlands are covered with dense forests with a complete network of paths to explore.

The southern part of the island presents a landscape which contrasts surprisingly with the north. The oceanic clouds, trapped by the high mountains in the interior, cannot continue towards the south. For this reason, the southern area is always sunny, and as a result, the arid landscape reveals multi-colored lava and desert-like vegetation. Here incredible landscapes exist, including the Barranco del Infierno (Devil's Gorge) and the cliffs of Los Gigantes (the Giants) with a vertical drop of 600 meters (almost 2,000 ft.) from the Teno massif to the sea.

■ A Cheerful Festive People

The amiable and garrulous nature of the people in Tenerife relish the celebrations and festivals. Many traditional festivals have been preserved on the island, including the famous *Carnavales*. There are few islanders who do not prepare their Carnival costumes months in advance or who don't form part of a group of minstrels.

The most important cities on the island are the capital, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, and the historic city of La Laguna. Santa Cruz de Tenerife has a population of 200,000, a busy port, noble mansions, and lovely gardens and parks. La Laguna, the former capital, is the historic and university city par excellence of the Canaries. Its historic center assembles a number of stately homes from the 17th and 18th century and concentrates the most notable religious architecture in the archipelago. The mansions of Corregidor, Lercaro, Salazar and Nava, as well as the Cathedral and the Church of La Concepción, are good examples of this important artistic legacy.

Three towns in the northern part of Tenerife are famous for their local color and historic value. La Orotava, in the valley of the same name, is a beautiful town in the middle of a sea of banana plantations which dresses in a carpet of flowers during the festival of Corpus Christi. Icod de los vinos, a wine-growing center that created the famous malvasía (Malmsey) wine, houses in its attractive historic quarter the island's oldest dragon tree, symbol of Tenerife. Garachico, built on land that a river of lava recaptured from the sea, is a picturesque town of cobblestone streets and handsome white buildings.

El Teide

Carnival



La Gomera

An Ecological Paradise

The last island without an airport is, perhaps for this reason, a haven of ancestral customs and incredible natural beauty that astounds the visitor with its rare vegetation and abrupt terrain. In effect, the 370 square kilometers (144 square miles) of this island is cut by deep ravines. This uneven terrain of Gomera has always made communications difficult between towns, keeping many areas practically untouched.

The scenery in Gomera is splendid with an amazing system of terrace farming and thousands of palm trees perched on steep green valleys, in addition to the exotic foliage of the central plateau, inhabited by the ancient laurel forest enveloped in mist.

All of these attractions have made a day trip to Gomera from the tourist resorts on southern Tenerife a popular pastime. The ferry makes the trip in 90 minutes, and the



jet-foil in 40. However, a visit to this island truly requires more than a one-day excursion on account of the difficult roads which make it impossible to see the many attractions in a short time.

The best way to explore the scenic areas of La Gomera is to take several days and either travel the many paths and peaceful trails of the island on foot or by bicycle. Lodging may be found in the capital city of San Sebastián, at Playa de Santiago, and in Valle Gran Rey.

San Sebastián is the largest town on the island. The ferry and hydrofoil from Tenerife dock here, and there are several small hotels and boarding houses. The Tourist Parador rises on a cliff overlooking the city in a

beautiful setting. The majority of tourist lodgings can be found at Playa de Santiago, the sunniest spot on the island. This small tourist complex is located around a fishing town where excellent fresh fish can be enjoyed. Near the outlet to the sea of the idyllic Valle Gran Rey, there is a small beach and quiet harbor with a number of small hotels, boarding houses, and apartments.

Valle Gran Rey has been for some years the center for an alternative tourism committed to the environment that has chosen this spot as the ideal place to escape from an impure civilization.

A Relic of Nature

Contrary to the rest of the islands in the archipelago, La Gomera never suffered from volcanic eruptions during the Quaternary period. This geological particularity has permitted the preservation of the best example in the world of the evergreen laurel forests that covered the Mediterranean basin during the Tertiary period. The central plateau of the island, at an altitude between 800 and 1,500 meters, collides with the moisture-bearing clouds formed by the trade winds, receiving the constant humidity from this sea of mist that dampens the earth with the phenomenon called "vertical rain". Since the disappearance of these forests from other parts of the world with the glaciations of the Pleistocene, the highlands of

San Sebastián de La Gomera





Gran Rey Valley

Gomera have been like a giant greenhouse where almost 400 native species, extinct in Europe and Africa millions of years ago, still survive.

Garajonay National Park, which occupies more than 10% of the total area of the island, was created to preserve the botanical treasures. In 1986, it was declared a World Heritage site by the UNESCO. The 4,000 hectares (9,880 acres) of the Park are crowned by the Alto de Garajonay at 1,487 meters (4,877 ft.) above sea level. The ecosystem accommodates a multitude of native invertebrates and two species of endangered birds: the long-toed and laurel pigeons, truly living relics.

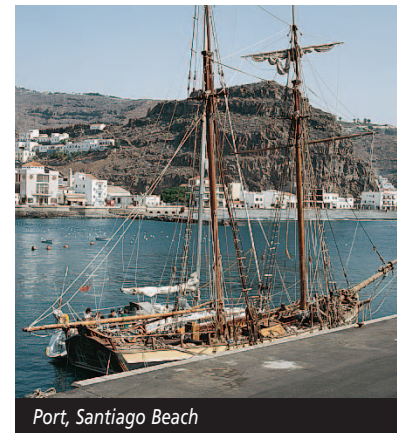
A complete network of paths facilitate exploration of this exceptional forest. In the Visitor's Center of "Juego de Bolas", ample information is provided about the Park's characteristics and services, and guided tours may be engaged.

The lowlands not protected by the Park display a landscape furrowed by deep-cut ravines, arid in the south and green in the north with terrace farming and countless palm trees. On the coast of Vallehermoso to the northeast, the basalt columns of Los Órganos, resembling giant organ pipes, rise 80 meters (262 ft.) in height.

Colombina Island

The history of Gomera is linked with the discovery of America. Not in vain, it was also called "Colombina Island" for its contribution to this historic deed. The capital, San Sebastián, was the last place Columbus touched ground before his mission, and afterwards was a customary stopover on journeys to the New World. The Conde Tower, built in 1449, and the Casa de Colón and Casa de la Aduana are testimonies to the proud history of this town, starting point for visiting the island.

A brief journey through the most important towns of La Gomera will lead in the



Port, Santiago Beach

south to the small fishing port of Playa de Santiago; in the west to the curious town of Chipude, to the foot of the impressive natural monument of La Fortaleza, and to the fertile terraces and palm groves of Valle Gran Rey; and in the green north, to the picturesque villages of Agulo and Hermigua.

Remnants of pre-Hispanic traditions contribute to create the atmosphere of a wild and primitive place. The cave-dwelling people who still make pottery without the aid of a potters' wheel, and a special whistling language used among the shepherds for communicating across ravines, are present-day examples of these ancient traditions.



Hermigua

La Palma

Between the Atlantic and the Sky

La Palma, the third most populated island, is a long way from experiencing the tourist growth sustained by Gran Canaria and Tenerife. Its scenic beauty, peace and quiet, local color, and enormous possibilities offered for rural tourism have made it focus on visitors wishing to combine rest and relaxation with the pleasures of nature.

The full name of the island is San Miguel de La Palma, and of all the Canary Islands it is the one most influenced by its Atlantic calling, evidenced in the greenness of the coasts, in the rural architecture of Portuguese influence, and in the character and traditions of its people. This grand mountain rising above the



Los Tilos Forest

ocean 2,426 meters (7,957 ft.) at Roque de los Muchachos on a slope covered with vegetation, preserves a way of life based on the banana crop and the perpetuation of its traditional customs. The island lacks industry, and everyday life unfolds with a tranquility that does not take long to affect the visitor.



LA PALMA
año 2005

The island has a capacity for approximately 7,000 visitors, distributed among the lodgings at beach resorts, in the cities, and in rural areas. There are two small resorts on the coast, one on the eastern shore, and the other on the western shore. Los Cancajos to the east, is only a few miles from the airport and the capital of the island. Puerto Naos, in the agricultural township of Llanos de Aridane to the west, enjoys a sunnier climate due to its orientation. Both places grew up around two tranquil beaches of volcanic sand. There are also hotels situated in the capital, Santa Cruz de La Palma, and in the second largest city on the island, Los Llanos, close to the Caldera de Taburiente.

An increasing number of mountain hotels and houses for rural tourism are also

available. This is an important tourist sector in La Palma due to the suitability of its countryside for all types of activities related to nature.

Isla Bonita

After contemplating the overwhelming greenery on La Palma, it is not hard to understand why Canarians call it the "isla bonita" or pretty island. Plenty of water and fertile volcanic soil assure the survival of forests of great botanical interest.

The laurel forests covering the northern part of the island between 500 and 1,500 meters (1,650-4,900 ft.) are authentic relics of the past, the last representatives of the forests that covered southern Europe during the Tertiary period.

Santa Cruz de la Palma



In the narrow ravines of the northern area of the island, 20 native species of trees form a dense mass of vegetation often covered by mists. The ravines of Cubo de la Galga and Los Tilos, the latter declared a Biosphere Reserve by the UNESCO, are home to magnificent examples of these forests, transversed by paths to explore on foot.

The Canary pine trees of the Caldera de Taburiente make up, along with the surrounding geological environment, the most well-known landscapes on the island and one of the most

Caldera de Taburiente



spectacular on the Canary Islands. Declared a National Park since 1954, the Caldera de Taburiente is a gigantic depression of volcanic and erosive origin that occupies the entire center of the island.

This crater 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) in diameter with a circumference of 28 km. (17 miles), and 1,500 meters (4,920 ft.) deep shelters a landscape untouched by man, startling on account of its huge size and isolation. To observe it in all of its splendor, there are various lookouts: La Cumbrecita, Las Chozas, and Roque de los Muchachos, the highest point on the island, where we find the largest Astrophysical Observatory in the northern hemisphere. Within the Caldera de Taburiente, there is a network of paths with various itineraries for exploration on foot.

Another point of interest is a ridge of volcanic peaks which form a raised spine transversing La Palma from North to South. The so-called "Route of the Volcanos" runs along this line of cones and craters terminating at the southernmost tip of the island at Teneguía volcano, scene of the most recent eruption on the archipelago in 1971.

Spanish Colonial Ambience

The importance of La Palma during the Renaissance, when its capital Santa Cruz became the third most important port of the Spanish Empire after Seville and Antwerp, has left a valuable architectural legacy. The artistic splendor that took place during the reign of the Hapsburgs is evidenced in the lovely civil and religious constructions, as well as a profusion of Flemish imagery.

Handiwork on La Palma, which includes the manufacture of cigars and silk by traditional methods, competes with the excellent cuisine, boasting the best "mojos" in the Canaries.

Popular Architecture, Santa Cruz



Hand-processed Silk

In Santa Cruz de La Palma, the most charming buildings on the island can be found, built in Spanish Colonial style. The old quarter, designated a Historic-Artistic Complex, assembles important architectural examples around the Calle Real and the Plaza de España, including the parish Church of El Salvador, the Ayuntamiento (Town Hall), the Church of San Francisco, and the Palace of Salazar, among others.

Other interesting towns on the island are Los Llanos, the second largest city on the island; El Paso, famous for manufacturing silk and cigars; Fuencaliente, a wine-growing center; and Mazo, in whose outskirts we find the pre-Hispanic cave of Belmaco.

El Hierro

The End of the World

During centuries, the island of Hierro was considered a far-away mysterious place where the world seemed to end. This has encouraged an age-old isolation that has kept it tied to an agricultural economy and its ancestral traditions. Thus, the inhabitants live a very relaxed, unhurried way of life, in harmony with a landscape that provides a haven of tranquility throughout the island, where time seems to pass ever so slowly.

The belated discovery of the tourist possibilities of Hierro have kept the land free from the type of development generally associated with

this sector. This factor has encouraged realization of the enormous treasure there is in the purity and tranquility of the island, thus focusing tourism on the visitor wishing to flee from the hustle and bustle and worries of modern-day life "losing himself at the end of the world". Some small lodgings have appeared scattered throughout the island, but there are no large tourist complexes. Most hotel accommodations can be



found divided among the Tourist Parador at Las Playas, the capital Valverde and its coastal area, and the area of El Golfo, where we find Club Punta Grande, listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the smallest hotel in the world.

Hierro has an abrupt coastline, but there also are small coves and natural pools where the transparent waters are perfect for swimming and underwater exploration. The coastal towns of Timijiraque, La Caleta, and Tamaduste offer ideal conditions for enjoying the sea, particularly Tamaduste with its interesting natural lava pool opening onto the sea.

Where Time Stands Still

In the southwest corner of the Canarian archipelago, the island of Hierro has remained immersed in legends. It is difficult to forget that for centuries it was considered the end of the known world, the most westerly patch of land, beyond which there was only the endless sea. For this reason, it is impossible to observe the landscape without it evoking the legends that have endured



El Sabinar

alongside it: the elusive magical island of San Borondón, which appears and disappears in the ocean and can sometimes be seen on the horizon through the mist, or the sacred Garoé tree, whose branches supplied the water for the entire island in times of the pre-Hispanic natives.

Nature on Hierro is solitary and mysterious, giving the impression that time is standing still. The twisted lava at Punta de Orchilla boasts the most westerly lighthouse in Spain. Here they once thought it was the end of the world, and for this reason it was used by geographers as zero meridian until relocated to run through Greenwich. El Sabinar of La Dehesa shelters the last forest of juniper trees unique to El Hierro with bizarre wind-twisted shapes.

Tamaduste



The wildlife also seems to have stopped evolving here. On an inaccessible cliff, opposite the Roques de Salmor, an authentic living fossil has survived here: the giant prehistoric lizard of Hierro.

The geography of the island was determined by the gigantic depression of El Golfo, a semi-circumference of 25 kilometers (15.5 miles), isolated by cliffs of up to 1,000 meters (3,280 ft.) high opening onto the sea, occupying all of the northern part of Hierro. This is the most fertile and flattest area, where most of the agriculture takes place. The rest of the island rises from the sea up to 1,501 meters (4,923 ft.) (Malpaso peak) in only four kilometers. These slopes are

covered in the central area by a lovely pine grove, where the greenness contrasts with the blackness of the lava at a line of volcanic cones. The coast terminates often in abrupt cliffs and interesting shapes, such as the Roque Bonanza, a strange rock formation rising straight out of the sea a few feet from the shore.

■ **Legendary Traditions**

Valverde, the only capital of the archipelago not located by the sea, is the most important town in Hierro with a population of scarcely 3,500. Its peacefulness and scattered population are almost a preview of the leisurely atmosphere on the island awaiting the visitor.

La Peña Lookout, El Golfo



Tourist Parador, Valverde

The inland towns of Tiñor and San Andrés still cling to the memory of the Garoé tree. The southern slope of the island ends at the southern tip in the small fishing village of La Restinga, a spot with clear calm waters and excellent fish.

To the north, the lands of El Golfo seem to form part of a different island, separated as they are by sheer rock faces more than 1,000 meters high. Agriculture here is prosperous and the traditional grapevine begins to alternate with the more recent tropical pineapple. In Frontera, capital of this fertile region, the quality of the products can be appreciated, including, in addition to the pineapple, the famous cheesecakes, delicious smoked cheese, and excellent wines.

There is one event on the island of Hierro that overshadows all others: the Bajada de la Virgen de los Reyes (the Descent of the Virgin of the Kings), at La Dehesa down to Valverde. Every four years since 1643, the image of the Virgin is removed in the darkness of the early morning hours of the 4th, 5th, or 6th of July (the day may change) accompanied by singing and dancing to the beat of drums and whistles. This celebration is undoubtedly one of the most fascinating on the Canary Islands.

Virgen de los Reyes Hermitage



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e-mail: miami@tourspain.es

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	Freeway and dual carriageway		Nature Park
	Primary Regional Road		Golf course
	Secondary Regional Road		Marina
	Local road		Camp site
	Parador		Airport
	National park		Lighthouse

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 cartografiagcar@infonegocio.com