

TOP 10



Not to be missed!

Our TOP 10 hits – from the absolute No. 1 to No. 10 – help you plan your tour of the most important sights.

★ MUSEO CANARIO ▶ 54

The most important museum in the Canary Island archipelago is to be found in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. It sheds light on the life and culture of the island people in ancient times whose most famous artefact is the Idol of Tara.

★ DUNAS DE MASPALOMAS ▶ 124

A hint of the Sahara sweeps across this stupendous dune landscape between Maspalomas and Playa del Inglés (left). Some of the dunes are 10m (33ft) wide and up to 20m (66ft) high.

★ ROQUE NUBLO ▶ 106

A popular hiking trail leads up to these bizarre rock pinacles from where the reward for the strenuous climb is a breathtaking view.

★ CENOPIO DE VALERÓN ▶ 78

This cave system, used by the island's first inhabitants, comprises some 300 chambers carved out of tuff; it is regarded as one of the most important archaeological sites in the Canary Island archipelago.

★ CALDERA DE BANDAMA ▶ 80

The virtually round cauldron is the product of a massive eruption. Pico de Bandama nearby offers a won-

derful view of the volcanic scenery and the sea of houses that make up the island's capital.

★ JARDÍN CANARIO ▶ 83

The botanic garden showcases the exceptional variety of plants on the Canary Islands, including several impressive dragon trees.

★ TEROR ▶ 86

Many of the old houses in the historical district of this little country town – considered the most 'typically Canarian' of all towns on the island – boast artistically crafted balconies and idyllic patios.

★ PUERTO DE MOGÁN ▶ 128

Gran Canaria even has its own 'Little Venice' – part of this beautiful coastal resort around the marina is built out into the water.

★ PALMITOS PARQUE ▶ 132

More than 200 different species of birds as well as other animals live in this park that extends over more than 49 acres. Its stars are those that perform in special shows.

★ ARTENARA ▶ 109

From this, the highest village on the island, and the Mirador de Unamuno, you have a spectacular view of the mountain scenery.

PARADISE Island?

Think of Gran Canaria and what springs to mind? Is it cheap-and-cheerful package tours with year-round sunshine, fine beaches and watersports, or lively entertainment and night-time revellers? Scratch beneath the surface of this holiday island and you will find a much more sophisticated picture.



A hibiscus flower

The island's reputation as a tourist hotspot has brought prosperity as well as problems, such as over-development and pollution.

At the end of the last century, a serious debate began on Gran Canaria about the future of tourism on the island. Gran Canaria seeks to attract a new kind of visitor, interested in culture and history as well as sun, sea and sand. Grants are available to fund rural tourism projects, from the renovation of cave dwellings to the restoration of the *caminos reales* (royal paths). The newest resorts boast conference facilities, golf courses, marinas and luxury hotels. The challenge of the 21st century is to continue to attract tourists without upsetting the delicate balance of a fragile environment

Left: Canary pines at Pinar de Tambada

GOOD ADVICE

"Rheumatism, neuralgia, gout, scrofula, venereal and other diseases find the climate most suitable... if strength permits, excursions should frequently be made to the hills or to the mountains, the change of air, even if only for a few hours, being of great advantage. All hotels will provide luncheon in a basket." A. Samler Brown, *Madeira, Canary Islands and Azores: A Practical and Complete Guide for the use of Tourists and Invalids* (1889)

Getting Your Bearings

Las Palmas is the only place in the Canary Islands with that big-city feeling. The capital is an urban centre bursting with life along with permanent traffic jams and drab housing estates on the outskirts. However the spruce Old Town, excellent museums and the pulsating clubbing area of Santa Catalina make a visit to the capital of the island a must.

Las Palmas stretches out like a long, thin lizard along the island's northeastern tip. The shape of the city has the effect of making it seem even larger than it is; from the Old Town to the modern centre is more than 5km (3mi).

The easiest way to tackle Las Palmas is to break it down into manageable districts and to travel between them by bus. Head straight for Vegueta, the oldest part, with attractive cobbled streets, shady squares and colonial-style architecture. It was founded by the Spanish captain and conqueror Juan Rejón in 1478 on a *vegueta* (meadow) with *palmas* (palm trees) beside the Guinguada ravine.

Triana, adjoining Vegueta, has a pleasing mixture of buildings from the 16th to 20th centuries, together with theatres, lively streets for shopping and open-air bars. North of Parque San Telmo, the long route through various residential districts leads to Parque Santa Catalina, the hub of the modern city. Playa de las Canteras, which must be one of the finest city beaches in the world, is a short walk away. Beyond Puerto de la Luz, Spain's largest port, lie the volcanic peaks of La Isleta, providing a scenic backdrop. Although now connected to the mainland by a port built on land reclaimed from the sea, until the 19th century La Isleta was an island, cut off twice a day by high tide.

The Avenida Marítima along the seafront is perfect to explore on foot. As you stroll along the promenade, with ferries, tankers, cruise ships, navy vessels, yachts and lateen sailboats heading in and out of the port, you can easily appreciate Las Palmas' historic role as a maritime city at a crossroads between continents and cultures.

View from the AC Hotel over the district of Santa Catalina and the port



TOP 10

★ Museo Canario ▶ 54

Don't Miss

① Catedral de Santa Ana ▶ 57

⑫ Casa de Colón ▶ 60

At Your Leisure

⑬ Mercado de Vegueta ▶ 62

⑭ Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno ▶ 62

⑮ Casa Museo Pérez Galdós ▶ 63

⑯ Parque San Telmo ▶ 63

⑰ Calle Mayor de Triana ▶ 63

⑱ Pueblo Canario ▶ 64

⑲ Parque Santa Catalina ▶ 64

⑳ Museo Elder ▶ 65

㉑ Playa de las Canteras ▶ 65

