

The Canary Islands

The Canary Islands are so much more than sitting on a beach. Both Tenerife and Lanzarote are exciting places to explore and the other islands in the archipelago offer a more unusual holiday.

Surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, the main islands in the Canaries are Tenerife, Fuerteventura, Lanzarote, Gran Canaria, La Palma, La Gomera and El Hierro, with several smaller islets scattered throughout and the landscape of each island is unique.

With a fairly recent volcanic heritage, the islands have a unusual lunar-like terrain created by lava, black sand on some beaches, dramatic cliffs and astonishing rock formations. If you like adventure you can explore lava tubes in a slightly different version of potholing or take to the sea for windsurfing, sailing or diving. If your activity of choice is more restrained, the islands have many top quality golf courses with unusual design, often in full view of the sea.

Tenerife is the largest of the islands and the one with most tourist amenities, excursions, lively nightlife and a number of top-quality hotels and spas. The centre of Tenerife is dominated by the imposing Mount Teide, Spain's highest mountain and the third largest volcano on Earth at 3,718 metres. In the National Park surrounding the volcano you can take a cable car most of the way up Teide and climb through soft volcanic dust and steaming fumaroles to the peak.



Fuerteventura means 'Big Wind'. Because Fuerteventura is just 60 miles from the Moroccan coast, over many thousands of years Saharan sand has been deposited on the island creating some of the archipelagos' best beaches. The interior of the island consists of mountains, lava-landscapes and rolling plains dotted with ancient mills and ruins and can be explored by 4x4 or cross-country motorbike.

Lanzarote has its amazing volcanic landscapes too, in particular Jameos del Agua. This maze of lava tubes and

caves has been turned into a major tourist attraction with a restaurant, a tropical garden and an auditorium for concerts and shows.

Some of Lanzarote's beaches are golden sand while others are black volcanic sand. Depending on the area, the sea will be calm or have powerful waves ideal for watersports.

Gran Canaria is described as a 'continent in miniature' due to the variety of landscapes and climates. Wander through sand dunes, forests, mountains and explore enchanting villages which have retained their historical charm. There are plenty of activities to keep you occupied, from surfing to big-game fishing, and lots of museums as well as a lively night life.



La Gomera is rural and unspoilt, with woodlands, dramatic cliffs and trekking. Although direct flights from the UK have recently been announced, currently the only way to get to La Gomera is a 20 minute catamaran trip from Tenerife.

La Palma can only be reached by island-hopping from either Tenerife or Gran Canaria which means that this small island is very peaceful and the perfect get-away-from-it-all location. It is known as the 'Isla Bonita' or Pretty Island because of its spectacular natural landscapes with fresh water springs, ravines and woodlands. The most extraordinary site is Roque los Muchachos high up in the mountains where, due to the altitude and clear, unpolluted sky, one of the world's most important astronomical observatories is situated.

El Hierro is the smallest and most remote island in the Canaries and although it has few beaches, the stark and dramatic volcanic scenery appeals to many people. This island can only be reached from Tenerife so it makes for a perfect two-destination holiday, with its leisurely and relaxing atmosphere as a contrast to other islands. For scuba divers, the underwater national park, Mar de Las Calmas is a must and the Parque Natural de El Hierro is ideal for trekking and exploring. With a year-round average temperature of 22° Celsius, warm, clear seas and just a 4 hour flight from the UK, each of the Canary Islands has something to appeal to everyone.