

SEA & STYLE IN TENERIFE, SPAIN

WHEN TO VISIT: MAY TO OCTOBER

Two World Heritage Sites, one National Park, and 42 natural protected spaces are some of the treasures to be discovered in Tenerife. Whether you go alone, with your partner, in the company of friends or with the whole family, get ready to have a unique experience thanks to the wide range of activities that will make your stay in the island unforgettable.

In Tenerife you will find each day brings you a new experience. Going shopping in the capital, visiting a museum or going to one of the many cultural events that take place: these are some of the options you won't be able to resist. Equally exciting are the various theme parks, designed for the entertainment of both young and old. In fact, you'll get the impression that the whole island is one big park, with a range of different settings and an infinite number of attractions and things to do. What's more, all this takes place against a background dominated by a majestic volcano, the highest peak in Spain, which acts as the guardian of this island full of contrasts.

But that's not all. Prepare yourself to enjoy an incredible variety of landscapes of extraordinary natural wealth in a land scored through with ravines, as well as spectacular cliffs, forests of prehistoric species, extensive wooded areas of the canary pine (an endemic species in the Canaries) remarkable rock formations, hidden bays and lively beaches, volcanic peaks and heathlands, valleys growing tropical fruit... These are places that are home to multifarious species of flora and fauna, many of which are exclusive to the island.

Things to Do

Tenerife is a favoured destination for scuba divers, with numerous dive operations of all qualities and nationalities. The waters round the island are diveable throughout the year, with the temperature varying between 18 degrees in January to around 25-26 degrees in August. Go around the harbour wall in Puerto de la Cruz for fantastic volcanic rock formations, or feed the stringrays at Las Galletas for something a bit different.

Water sports are available in the south including surfing, wind surfing, speed boat parascending and jet-ski. Nowhere seems to rent canoes.

Santa Cruz has a big market by the station on Sunday mornings. Las Americas has one Thursday and Saturday and Los Cristianos on Sundays. Santa Cruz has a number of museums and an art gallery. Also a space museum and planetarium on a small scale near La Laguna. Visit the beautiful old towns of La Orotava and La Laguna, the latter being a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Visit the world class botanical garden just above Puerto de la Cruz.

Barranco del Infierno (Hell's Ravine), close to Adeje popular with hikers, you need to book to go on the walk. There is little to see but vegetation on this walk and a TINY waterfall at it's end. (Path currently closed due to danger of falling rocks and risk of fatal accidents.)

The most western point is Punta de Teno with excellent views.

Travel & more

Of course many visitors just want to spend their time on a beach or by the hotel swimming pool. Playa Americas beach is black volcanic sand but Los Cristianos is yellow imported sand. The black sand feels the same as the yellow but is not as pleasing to look at to many. Beaches often have sun-loungers with parasols available to hire for the day, but if you are doing this for a few days it is probably better to just buy a parasol and some beach mats.

February there is a huge fancy dress parade by locals which is said to be third in size after Rio and Notting Hill carnivals.

Tenerife is an excellent destination for hiking. There are routes for anyone, from leisurely one hour strolls to extremely strenuous full day hikes in demanding terrain with either a huge ascent, descent or both. There are several books describing hiking routes, such as two Landscapes of Tenerife books from Sunflower Books, one covering the northern side and the other covering the southern side. It's a good idea to get a guide book before you go to Tenerife, as they might be difficult to find there.

Tenerife attracts a large number of cyclists all year around. Whether Mountainbiking or Roadbiking, Tenerife has plenty of beautiful roads and dirt tracks. If you want to avoid the hassle of bringing your own bike, you can rent bikes on the island, for example in Las Americas or El Médano.

The island is quickly becoming an important winter destination for cross-country and enduro mountain biking, as on average it enjoys sunny skies and warm temperatures when Europe's bike resorts are covered in mud and snow. Exploring the island on a mountain bike is a rewarding experience, thanks to the great diversity of terrain, vegetation and elevation. Little compares to a descent through lava fields and Canary pines to the beach in time to sip a beer at sunset. Guiding businesses will take you safely on Tenerife's best trails.