



LA PALMA

CANARY ISLANDS

La Palma is a small island whose shape is often compared to that of a stone-age axe. The island rises dramatically up out of the sea. In fact, La Palma has the greatest altitude to surface ratio on the entire planet. Roque de Los Muchachos is the highest peak and the location of one of the best observatories in the world due to the clarity of the sky.

Known as the “Green” or “Beautiful Island,” La Palma is the most northwestern of the seven larger Canary Islands. La Palma is covered in trees and flowering vegetation. There is even a small rainforest on the Northeast side of the island. The natural beauty of La Palma includes volcanic cones, lava flows and one of the world’s largest craters. Agricultural products are the foundation of the economy. Bananas have replaced sugar as the principal crop and the high quality hand-rolled cigars of La Palma are known worldwide.

La Palma has approximately 90,000 inhabitants. The capital and main port is Santa Cruz where 18,000 people live nestled on the edge of a volcanic crater named Caldereta. The city has striking architecture and has managed to preserve its historic past. Santa Cruz is an excellent place to start your exploration of La Palma where there is much to see and do on this small island.



HISTORY

Since classical antiquity, the Canary Islands have been a land of legends. The existence of the Canaries can be traced back to famous Greek authors such as Homer, Plato and Plutarch. These imaginary islands were known as the Fortunate Islands and remained only a myth and a mystery until after the middle ages.

It is believed the first inhabitants, the Guanches, arrived in the 1st or 2nd century B.C. They were a white skinned, blue eyed, blonde haired race related to North Africa’s Cro-Magnon man. The Guanches were cave dwellers who like the ancient Egyptians, carefully embalmed their dead, presumably for a ceremonial passage to the next world.

The first European visitor was Lanzarotto Marcello, a Genoese sailor, who colonized the Island of Lanzarote in the early 14th century. The real European conquest began in 1402 and was led by Jean de Bethencourt, under the service of Henry III, King of Castile. By the end of the 15th century the Spanish had conquered all seven islands, but not without resistance from the Portuguese who also fought for ownership in the mid 1400’s.

With the Canaries being the world’s most westerly charted point, the islands became the last stopping point for the explorations of Christopher Columbus before venturing into the unknown. For the next several centuries, the islands became a bridge between the Old and New World.

In the 17th – 19th centuries, the Canaries experienced economic ups and downs due to their dependence on various crops. Sugar became the first staple crop but profits declined with the arrival of cheaper sugar from the West Indies. Grapes became the main crop producing a sweet white wine called Malmsey which retains worldwide recognition. In the mid-19th century the Canaries were given free port status which lowered duties and trade barriers. Las Palmas and Tenerife became two of the world's busiest ports. With the introduction of the banana crop as a major export and the increasing growth of tourism, the Canaries continue to have a stable economic base.

LA PALMA PLACES OF INTEREST

Santa Cruz is a city of brightly colored homes, ornate balconies, charming plazas and steep alleyways. There is a Museum of Natural History, Naval Museum and numerous art galleries to explore. Real Street is the center of commerce and Espana Square is where the 16th century Town Hall and church Iglesia del Salvador can be found.

Santuario Virgen de Las Nieves is located a few kilometers out of town in the hills overlooking the city. The image of the island's patroness resides in a beautiful 16th century renaissance building.

Roque de los Muchachos is the island's highest mountain at 2,426 meters above sea level. Located atop the mountain are several important astrophysics observatories.

Mirador de la Cumbrecita is one of the well-known overlooks on the island. From here there are panoramic views and great photo opportunities of the island.



Caldera de Taburiente, This National Park was created in 1954. The park has one of the largest craters in the world with a circumference of 28,000 meters. The national treasure also has hundreds of streams, falls, and unique species of trees considered authentic living fossils.

San Pedro is famous for its cigar makers and the "Palmero" cigar. Cigar production became part of the craftsmanship of La Palma by the end of the 19th century when emigrants returned to the island from Cuba. Great care and skill are used in cultivation, curing and production to make some of the finest cigars in the world.

Fuencaliente was a much sought after spa before the 17th century. The soothing properties of the hot water springs gave the town its original name, Fuente Santa, or Holy Fountain. When the San Antonio Volcano became active for a period of two months in 1677, the lava flow buried the Holy Fountains. The volcanic soil of the area is now famous for the wines it produces.

Breña Alta can be found nestled on the hills of the east coast. The village has panoramic views of the sea and mountains and is known for its sunrises making it a natural location for vacation villas.

La Galga is a tiny town situated right on the edge of two deep gorges. The viewpoint Mirador de San Bartolo provides photo opportunities of the spectacular terrain.

Los Tilos has been declared a Biosphere reservation by UNESCO. The lush park contains Canarian Holly trees, Strawberry trees and the Canarian bellflower.

Los Sauces is the prosperous and principal farming and commercial center of the northern part of the island. The fertile area has one of the densest forests on the island.

Charco Azul are natural seawater swimming pools formed by lava flowing into the ocean. The pools are a popular destination and famous for their clarity.

San Antonio Volcano is estimated to be around 3,200 years old. The Visitors Centre offers insights into the powerful forces at work within a volcano and views of the San Antonio crater.

Teneguia Volcano is the youngest of the Canary Island volcanoes. Teneguia last erupted in October 1971. The eruption produced enough lava to increase the dimensions of the island.

SHORE EXCURSIONS

To make the most of your visit to Santa Cruz and surrounding areas we suggest you take one of the organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing, consult azamaraclubcruises.com or contact the onboard Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, guests are advised to take with them only the items they need and to secure any valuables.

LOCAL CUSTOMS

Bargaining: is acceptable in some stores.

Tipping: All prices on a menu include tax and a service charge. It is customary however to leave a tip of 5% -10% if you are happy with the food and service. Taxi drivers generally are tipped approximately 10%.

LOCAL CUISINE AND DRINK SPECIALTIES

Fish is a staple among the islands. Tuna, swordfish, sardines and octopus can be found in a variety of dishes. The people of La Palma also enjoy pork, goat, rabbit and chicken. Paella, a combination of seafood, chicken, and vegetables mixed together in a saffron-flavored rice and Tapas (appetizers) are also readily available. Fresh vegetables grown on the island have a lot of flavor due to local cultivation methods. A lot of La Palma's desserts consist of almonds and honey which are produced on the island. Flan is a typical dessert treat.

The Canaries are famous for Malmsey wine made from the volcanic soil. These wines tend to be very sweet. Sangria is also a popular drink throughout Spain. Bottled water is recommended.

SHOPPING

Shopping hours are generally from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm, and 4:30 pm to 8:00 pm. In 1852 the Canary Islands were declared a duty-free zone in order to stimulate trade and growth. The Canaries remain duty free to this day and goods are imported without restrictions from all over the world. With a lower luxury tax, you may find some bargains but not as many as one would expect. The items with a slightly lower luxury tax are similar to what one would find in a duty free shop at the airport – cameras, watches, perfume, jewelry, leather goods, spirits and tobacco.

The most celebrated local handicraft item is embroidery. You will find excellent and detailed needlework on bedspread, towels, napkins and tablecloths.

U.S. dollars may be accepted in some stores. Many major stores accept credit cards.

LOCAL CURRENCY

The unit of currency in this port of call is the euro. There are 8 euro coins denominated in 2 and 1 euros, along with 50, 20, 10, 5, 2, and 1 cent pieces. Every euro coin carries a common European face. On the obverse, each Member State decorates the coins with their own motifs. No matter which motif is on the coins they can be used anywhere inside the Member States. There are 7 euro notes. In different colors and sizes, they are denominated in 500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10, and 5 euros. The notes are uniform throughout the euro area; unlike coins, they have no national side. All euro notes are legal tender in all countries of the euro area. Most stores accept major credit cards.

POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE FACILITIES

The main Post Office is located at the entrance of the city.

Coins or a calling card are required for local phones. Calls using a personal calling card may be dialed using the following access numbers:

AT&T: 1.800.55.0000

MCI: 1.800.55.1001

TRANSPORTATION

Taxis are in limited supply on the pier. It is advisable to negotiate a fare before departing. There is a local bus system, but it is not designed for tourists. There are infrequent timetables to locations outside the city.

TOURIST INFORMATION

There is a Tourist Information Center located next to the port's terminal building.

USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

Good Morning • Buenos Dias

Good Afternoon • Buenas Tardes

Good Day • Buen Dia

How Much • Cuanto Es

You're Welcome • De Nada

Thank You • Gracias

