

History

MYTHOLOGICAL BEGINNINGS

We can't pinpoint the date of the discovery of the islands now known as the Canaries, but we can say with certainty that they were known, or at least postulated about, in ancient times. In his dialogues *Timaeus* and *Critias*, Plato (428–348 BC) spoke of Atlantis, a continent sunk deep into the ocean floor in a great cataclysm that left only the peaks of its highest mountains above the water. Whether Plato believed in the lost continent's existence or had more allegorical intentions remains a matter of conjecture. In the centuries since Plato's death, those convinced of the existence of Atlantis have maintained that Macronesia (the Canary Islands, the Azores, Cape Verde and Madeira) constitutes the visible remains of the lost continent.

Legend also has it that one of the 12 labours of Hercules was to go to the end of the world and bring back golden apples guarded by the Hesperides (daughters of evening), offspring of Hesperis and Atlas, the latter a Titan in Greek and Roman mythology who gave his name to the Atlantic Ocean and the Atlas mountain ranges in Morocco. Hercules supposedly had to go beyond the Pillars of Hercules (the modern Strait of Gibraltar) to reach the paradisiacal home of these maidens. Hercules carried out his task and returned from what many later thought could only have been the Canary Islands – about the only place to fit the ancients' description.

Classical writer Homer identified the islands as Elysium, a place where the righteous spent their afterlife. For all their storytelling, there is no concrete evidence that either the Phoenicians or Greeks ever landed on the Canaries. It is entirely possible, however, that early reconnaissance of the North African Atlantic coast by the Phoenicians and their successors, the Carthaginians, took at least a peek at the easternmost islands of the archipelago. Some historians believe a Phoenician expedition landed on the islands in the 12th century BC, and that the Carthaginian Hanno turned up there in 470 BC.

The expanding Roman Empire defeated Carthage in the Third Punic War in 146 BC, but the Romans appear not to have been overly keen to investigate the fabled islands, which they knew as the *Insulae Fortunatae* (Fortunate Isles). A century-and-a-half later, shortly after the birth of Christ, the Romans received vaguely reliable reports on them, penned by Pliny the Elder (AD 23–79) and based upon accounts of an expedition carried out around 40 BC by Juba II, a client king in Roman North Africa. In AD 150, Ptolemy fairly accurately located the islands' position with a little dead reckoning, tracing an imaginary meridian line marking the end of the known world through El Hierro.

THE ISLANDS' ORIGINAL INHABITANTS

The origin of the islands' first inhabitants has long been a source of mystery, with theories being volleyed about for decades but none accepted as definitive. Everyone agrees that the Canary Islands had no indigenous population and that they've been inhabited since before the birth of Christ. So the people living here had to come from somewhere. But the question was, where?

The Spanish conquistadors' tales of Tinerfeños being tall, blonde and blue-eyed fostered many convoluted theories about how Celtic immigrants from mainland Iberia, possibly even related to the Basques, somehow made their way to the island. More fancifully, some saw a drop of Nordic blood in them – did Norse raiding parties land here in the 8th or 9th centuries?

History of the Canary Islands by José M Castellano Gil and Francisco J Macíos Martín is a fairly straightforward summary of the islands' past. This book is published in various languages by the Centro de la Cultura Popular Canaria.

Recently, however, historians using archaeological, cultural and linguistic studies have thrown out these theories in favour of a simpler, if more boring, one. Spotting similarities between the dwellings, burial practices and rock carvings of the various ancient tribes living in the Canaries and the Libyan-Berber peoples of North Africa, they've concluded that the original inhabitants of the islands came from the Maghrib, the area spanning from present-day Tunisia to Morocco. Place names and the handful of words from the Canary Islands' languages (or dialects) that have come down to us bear a striking resemblance to Berber tribal languages. Also, the occasional case of blue eyes and blondish hair occurs among the Berbers too.

Studies from the University of La Laguna in Tenerife have proposed that as the Romans conquered northern Africa from the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD they exiled some people groups to the Canaries. This would explain why the tribes had no knowledge of seafaring; they were inland peoples. If the Romans exiled them soon after arriving in the territory, the people would have had no opportunity to learn Latin script or Roman building techniques. And if the Romans never visited the islands again it was perhaps because they saw no reward worthy of such a long, difficult journey.

Carbon dating of the sparse archaeological finds has pushed back the known date of the earliest settlement to around 200 BC, although earlier occupation is conceivable. For a long time, learned observers maintained that the islands were first inhabited by Cro-Magnon man, the Neolithic predecessor of modern *Homo sapiens*. Such conclusions have emerged from the comparison of ancient skulls of indigenous inhabitants with Cro-Magnon remains discovered around the Mediterranean. Historians wrinkle their noses at the idea now, but if the theory were proved true (which seems unlikely) it would throw the doors of speculation wide open, since Cro-Magnon man came onto the scene as long as 40,000 years ago.

Exactly when, and in what number, people occupied the islands remains a mystery. What seems clear, however, is that they came from several north African tribes. One of them may have been the Canarii tribe, which could explain the islands' present name. Certainly, by the time European swash-bucklers started nosing around the islands in the Middle Ages, they were peopled by a variety of tribes.

FIRST ENCOUNTERS

Virtually no written record remains of visits to the Fortunate Isles until the 14th century. The first vaguely tenable account of a European landing comes in the late 13th or early 14th century when the Genoese captain Lanzarotto (or Lancelotto) Malocello bumped into the island that would later bear his name: Lanzarote. From then on, slavers, dreamers searching for the Río de Oro (the River of Gold route for the legendary African gold trade, which many thought spilled into the Atlantic at about the same latitude as the islands) and missionaries bent on spreading the Word all made excursions to the islands.

Of these missions, the most important and influential was the Italian-led and Portuguese-backed expedition of 1341. Three caravels (two- or three-masted sailing ships) charted a course around all seven islands and took note of even the tiniest islets: the Canary Islands were finally, and more or less accurately, on the map.

THE CONQUEST BEGINS

On 1 May 1402, Jean de Béthencourt, lord of Granville in Normandy (France) and something of an adventurer, set out from La Rochelle with a small and ill-equipped party bound for the Canary Islands. The avowed aim, as the

The average height of a Guanche (the original island inhabitants) man was 1.7m. The average height of a Guanche woman was 1.57m.

All the myths and outer-edge theories about Guanche history can be found at <http://istina.rin.ru/eng/ufo/text/243.html>.

priests brought along for the ride would testify, was to convert the heathen islanders. Uppermost in de Béthencourt's mind was more likely the hope of glory and a fast franc. With his partner, Gadifer de la Salle, he may have hoped to use the Canaries as a launch pad for exploration of the African coast in search of the Río de Oro. That project never got off the ground, and the buccaneers decided to take over the islands instead. So commenced a lengthy and inglorious chapter of invasion, treachery and bungling. Many Guanches would lose their lives or be sold into slavery in the coming century, with the remainder destined to be swallowed up by the invading society.

De Béthencourt's motley crew landed first in Lanzarote, at that stage governed by Mencey Guardafia. There was no resistance and de Béthencourt went on to establish a fort on Fuerteventura.

That was as far as he got. Having run out of supplies, and with too few men for the enterprise, he headed for Spain, where he aimed to obtain the backing of the Castilian crown. What had started as a private French enterprise now became a Spanish imperialist adventure.

GUANCHE SOCIETY

Guanches, a name originally used to describe only the inhabitants of Tenerife, came from the words *guan*, meaning 'man,' and *che*, meaning 'white mountain', in reference to the snowcapped El Teide. But, with time, the name came to be used for all the tribes of the archipelago – the Canarios, Bimbaches, Majos, Benahoritas and Gomeros.

For all their differences, these pre-Hispanic tribes had much in common. Their Stone Age economies relied on farming, herding, hunting and gathering, and their diets were based on meat (goat and fish) and *gofio*, made of toasted and ground barley. These staples are still eaten today.

Women made pottery. Implements and weapons were fashioned roughly of wood, stone and bone. Goat-skin leather was the basis of most garments, while jewellery and ornaments were largely restricted to earthenware bead-and-shell necklaces. The majority of islanders lived in caves, although on the eastern islands some built simple low houses with rough stone walls and wood-beam roofs.

Oddly enough, the Guanches seem to have known nothing of sailing, at best using simple dugouts for coastal fishing or to move occasionally between the islands. Among the Guanches' primitive weapons were the *banot* (lance), rocks and the *tenique* (a stone wrapped up in animal hide and used as a mace).

The Guanches worshipped a god, known as Alcorac in Gran Canaria, Achaman in Tenerife, and Abora in La Palma. It appears the god was identified strongly with Magec (the sun). Tenerife islanders commonly held that Hades (hell) was in the Teide volcano and was directed by the god of evil, Guayota.

The head of a tribe or region enjoyed almost absolute rule, although justice was administered through a council of nobles, which gathered under the branches of a dragon tree. Between them, the chief and aristocrats owned all property, flocks and fields, leaving the plebs to get along as best they could.

Although living in an essentially patriarchal society, women did have some power. On Gran Canaria, in particular, succession rights were passed through the mother rather than the father. But when times got tough, they got tougher still for women. Infanticide was practised throughout the islands in periods of famine, and it was girls who were sacrificed, never boys.

The island clans were not averse to squabbling, and by the time the European conquest of the islands got under way in the 15th century, Tenerife was divided into no less than nine tiny fiefdoms. Gran Canaria had also been a patchwork of minor principalities, but by the 15th century these had merged to form two kingdoms, one based around the town of Gáldar, the other around Telde. Fuerteventura was another island divided in two, and tiny La Palma boasted an astonishing 12 cantons (small territorial divisions). The other islands were each ruled by one *mencey* (Guanche king).

De Béthencourt returned in 1404 with ships, men and money. Fuerteventura, El Hierro and La Gomera quickly fell under his control. Appointed lord of the four islands by the Spanish king, Enrique III, de Béthencourt encouraged the settlement of farmers from his Norman homeland and began to pull in the profits. In 1406 he returned for good to Normandy, leaving his nephew Maciot in charge of his Atlantic possessions.

SQUABBLES & STAGNATION

What followed was scarcely one of the world's grandest colonial undertakings. Characterised by continued squabbling and occasional revolt among the colonists, the European presence did nothing for the increasingly oppressed islanders in the years following de Béthencourt's departure.

The islanders were heavily taxed and many were sold into slavery; Maciot also recruited them for abortive raids on the remaining three independent islands. He then capped it all off by selling to Portugal his rights – inherited from his uncle – to the four islands. This move prompted a tiff with Spain, which was eventually awarded rights to the islands by Pope Eugene V. Low-key rivalry continued for years, with Portugal only recognising Spanish control of the Canaries in 1479 under the Treaty of Alcáçovas. In return, Spain agreed that Portugal could have the Azores, Cape Verde and Madeira.

Maciot died in self-imposed exile in Madeira in 1452. A string of minor Spanish nobles proceeded to run the show, all eager to sell their rights to the islands almost as soon as they had acquired them.

Numerous commanders undertook the business of attacking the other islands with extraordinarily little success. Guillén Peraza died in an attempt to assault La Palma in 1443. In 1464 Peraza's brother-in-law Diego de Herrera, the appointed lord of La Gomera, attempted a landing on Gran Canaria and another landing near present-day Santa Cruz de Tenerife. By 1466 he had managed to sign a trade treaty with the Canarios, and won permission to build a defensive turret in Gando Bay.

THE FALL OF GRAN CANARIA

In 1478 a new commander arrived with fresh forces (including, for the first time, a small cavalry unit) and orders from the Catholic Monarchs of Spain, Fernando and Isabel, to finish the Canaries campaign once and for all. Juan Rejón landed and dug in at the site of modern Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. He was immediately attacked by a force of 2000 men under Doramas, *guanarteme* (island chief) of the island's Telde kingdom. Rejón carried the day but fell victim to internal intrigue by making an enemy of the spiritual head of the conquered territories, Canon Juan Bermúdez, accusing him of incompetence.

The investigator sent from Spain, Pedro de Algaba, sided with Bermúdez and had Rejón transported to the mainland in chains. But, once there, Rejón convinced the Spanish authorities that he'd been unjustly treated and was

Might you be related to the ancient Guanches? Probably not, but islanders are being encouraged to join up with Family Tree DNA (www.familytreedna.com/public/Guanches-CanaryIslandsDNA) to map out the Guanche's DNA and discover where descendants are today.

The Canary Islands Through History by Salvador López Herrera attempts to trace the story of the Guanches and the Spanish conquest of the archipelago. This is a quirky volume of at times dubious academic worth.

IN TOUCH WITH THE GUANCHES

Ancient Guanche cave paintings and petroglyphs (rock carvings), the oldest dating to AD 150, are found throughout the archipelago. No one knows what these whorling, squiggling designs expressed – spiritual sentiments, perhaps? But they're one of the most tangible connections with Guanche culture still evident on the island. Small museums and tourist offices like the ones in **Parque Ecológico de Belmaco** (p218), **Los Letreros** (p240) and **Cueva Pintada** (p81) let you see them up close and personal. For a full overview of all the 'rock art' in the Canaries, visit the fabulous online **Rock Art Gallery** (www.almogaren.org/gallery/canarias.htm).

given *carte blanche* to return to the Canaries to re-establish his control. One of his first acts was to have Algaba, his erstwhile accuser, arrested and executed. However, this act of vengeance proved his final undoing, as Queen Isabel believed the punishment unwarranted and had Rejón replaced by Pedro de Vera.

De Vera continued the campaign and had the good fortune to capture the island's other *guanarteme*, Tenesor Semidan (known as Don Fernando Guanarteme after his baptism), in an attack on Gáldar by sea. Tenesor Semidan was sent to Spain, converted to Christianity and returned in 1483 to convince his countrymen to give up the fight. This they did and de Vera subsequently suggested that some might like to sign up for an assault on Tenerife. Duly embarked, de Vera committed the umpteenth act of treachery that had marked the long years of conquest: he packed them off to be sold as slaves in Spain. But the Canarios learnt of this and forced the ships transporting them to dock at Lanzarote.

After the frightful suppression of a revolt on La Gomera in 1488 (see p193), de Vera was relieved of his post as captain-general of the conquest.

THE FINAL CAMPAIGNS

De Vera's successor was Galician Alonso Fernández de Lugo, who in 1491 received a royal commission to conquer La Palma and Tenerife. He began in La Palma in November and by May of the following year had the island under control. This he achieved partly by negotiation, though the last *mencey* (Guanche king) of La Palma, Tanaúsú, and his men maintained resistance in the virtually impregnable crater of the Caldera de Taburiente. Only by enticing him out for talks on 3 May and then ambushing him could de Lugo defeat his last adversary on the island. For La Palma, the war was over.

Tenerife provided the toughest resistance to the Spaniards. In May 1493 de Lugo landed on Tenerife, together with 1000 infantry soldiers and a cavalry of 150, among them Guanches from Gran Canaria and La Gomera.

In the ensuing months the Spaniards fortified their positions and attempted talks with several of the nine *menceys*, managing to win over those of Güimar and Anaga. Bencomo, *mencey* of Tahoro and sworn enemy of the invaders, was sure of the support of at least three other *menceys*, while the remaining three wavered.

In the spring of the following year, de Lugo sent a column westwards. This proved a disaster. Bencomo was waiting in ambush in the Barranco de Acentejo ravine. The Spanish force was decimated at a place now called La Matanza de Acentejo (Slaughter of Acentejo). De Lugo then thought better of the whole operation and left Tenerife.

By the end of the year he was back to engage in the second major battle of the campaign – at La Laguna on 14 November 1494. Here he had greater success, but the Guanches were far from defeated and de Lugo fell back to Santa Cruz. At the beginning of the New Year a plague known as the *modorra* began to ravage the island. It hardly seemed to affect the Spaniards but soon took a serious toll on the Guanches.

On 25 December 1494, 5000 Guanches under Bencomo were routed in the second battle of the Acentejo. The spot, only a few kilometres south of La Matanza, is still called La Victoria (Victory) today. By the following July, when de Lugo marched into the Valle de la Orotava to confront Bencomo's successor, Bentor, the diseased and demoralised Guanches were in no state to resist. Bentor surrendered and the conquest was complete. Pockets of resistance took two years to mop up, and Bentor eventually committed suicide.

Four years after the fall of Granada and the reunification of Christian Spain, the Catholic monarchs could now celebrate one of the country's

A fabulous online library of digitised primary source documents from the 18th and 19th centuries, the Humboldt Project (<http://humboldt.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de>) is a must for Canary history buffs.

For background on a few far-fetched but entertaining theories on the origins of the Gaunches, check out <http://istina.rin.ru/eng/ufo/text/243.html>.

first imperial exploits – the subjugation in only 94 years of a small Atlantic archipelago defended by Neolithic tribes. Even so, the Spaniards had some difficulty in fully controlling the Guanches. Many refused to settle in the towns established by the colonists, preferring to live their traditional lives out of reach of the authorities.

Nevertheless, the Guanches were destined to disappear. Although open hostilities had ceased, the conquistadors continued shipping them as slaves to Spain. Remaining Guanches were converted en masse to Christianity, taking on Christian names and the surnames of their new Spanish godfathers.

Some of the slaves would be freed and permitted to return to the islands. Although the bulk of them were dispossessed of their land, they soon began to assimilate with the colonisers. Within a century, their language had all but disappeared: except for a handful of words, all that comes down to us today are the islands' many Guanche place names.

ECONOMIC & FOREIGN CHALLENGES

From the early 16th century, Gran Canaria and Tenerife in particular attracted a steady stream of settlers from Spain, Portugal, France, Italy and even Britain. Each island had its own local authority, or *cabildo insular*, although increasingly they were overshadowed by the Royal Court of Appeal, established in Las Palmas in 1526. Sugar cane had been introduced from the Portuguese island of Madeira, and soon sugar became the Canaries' main export.

The 'discovery' of the New World in 1492 by Christopher Columbus, who called in to the archipelago several times en route to the Americas, proved a mixed blessing. It brought much passing transatlantic trade but also led to sugar production being diverted to the Americas, where the cane could be grown and processed more cheaply. The local economy was rescued only by the growing export demand for wine, produced mainly in Tenerife. *Vino seco* (dry wine), which Shakespeare called Canary Sack, was much appreciated in Britain.

Poorer islands, especially Lanzarote and Fuerteventura, remained backwaters, their impoverished inhabitants making a living from smuggling and piracy off the Moroccan coast – the latter activity part of a tit-for-tat game played out with the Moroccans for centuries.

Spain's control of the islands did not go completely unchallenged. The most spectacular success went to Admiral Robert Blake, one of Oliver Cromwell's three 'generals at sea'. In 1657, a year after war had broken out between England and Spain, Blake annihilated a Spanish treasure fleet (at the cost of only one ship) at Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

British harassment culminated in 1797 with Admiral Horatio Nelson's attack on Santa Cruz. Sent there to intercept yet another treasure shipment, he not only failed to storm the town but lost his right arm in the fighting.

ISLAND RIVALRIES

Within the Canary Islands, a bitter feud developed between Gran Canaria and Tenerife over supremacy of the archipelago. The fortunes of the two rested largely with their economic fate.

When the Canaries were declared a province of Spain in 1821, Santa Cruz de Tenerife was made the capital. Bickering between the two main islands remained heated and Las Palmas frequently demanded that the province be split in two. The idea was briefly but unsuccessfully put into practice in the 1840s.

In 1927 Madrid finally decided to split the Canaries into two provinces: Tenerife, La Gomera, La Palma and El Hierro in the west; Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria and Lanzarote in the east.

The Guanches – Survivors and their Descendants by José Luis Concepción is a fine tome that looks at the fate of the islands' first inhabitants. The author also wrote a volume on traditional island customs, called *Costumbres, Tradiciones Canarias* (published in English and German).

The website www.abouttenerife.com/tenerife/history.asp gives an easy-to-read summary of Tenerife's history.

La Gomera was the last place Christopher Columbus touched dry land before setting sail to the New World.

FRANCO'S SPAIN

In the 1930s, as the left and the right in mainland Spain became increasingly militant, fears of a coup grew. In March 1936 the government decided to 'transfer' General Franco, a veteran of Spain's wars in Morocco and beloved of the tough Spanish Foreign Legion, to the Canary Islands.

Suspicious that he was involved in a plot to overthrow the government were well-founded; when the pro-coup garrisons of Melilla (Spanish North Africa) rose prematurely on 17 July, Franco was ready. Having seized control of the islands virtually without a struggle (the pro-Republican commander of the Las Palmas garrison died in mysterious circumstances on 14 July), Franco flew to Morocco on 19 July. Although there was virtually no fighting on the islands, the Nationalists wasted no time in rounding up anyone vaguely suspected of harbouring Republican sympathies.

The postwar economic misery of mainland Spain was shared by the islands, and again many Canarios opted to emigrate. In the 1950s the situation was so desperate that 16,000 migrated clandestinely, mainly to Venezuela, even though by then that country had closed its doors to further immigration. One-third of those who attempted to flee perished in the ocean crossings.

TOURISM, 'NATIONALISM' & CURRENT EVENTS

When Franco decided to open up Spain's doors to northern European tourists the Canaries benefited as much as the mainland. Millions of holidaymakers now pour into the islands year-round.

Always a fringe phenomenon, Canaries nationalism started to resurface in opposition to Franco. MPAIC (Movimiento para la Autodeterminación e Independencia del Archipiélago Canario), founded in 1963 by Antonio Cubillo to promote secession from Spain, embarked on a terrorist campaign in the late 1970s. Dodging Spanish authorities, Cubillo fled to Algeria in the 1960s, but in 1985 he was allowed to return to Spain.

In 1978 a new constitution was passed in Madrid with devolution as one of its central pillars. Thus the Canary Islands became a *comunidad autónoma* (autonomous region) in August 1982, yet they remained divided into two provinces.

The main force in Canary Islands politics since its first regional election victory in 1995 has been the Coalición Canaria (CC). Although not bent on independence from Spain (which would be unlikely), the CC nevertheless puts the interests of the islands before national considerations. Fringe groups, however, do push for independence, and while those supporting independence are in the minority, they are gaining strength.

Immigration from Africa and other parts of the world has changed the Canaries' population landscape drastically over the past decade and has forced the islands to reassess their relationship with the continent. Over the past 10 years the islands have made cooperation with Africa a major priority, investing around €17 million in education, health and infrastructure in Africa, especially in transport and communication links with the continent.

The past few years have also seen a struggle between intense development and concerted efforts to preserve the islands' natural resources and beauty. Political groups, islanders and ecologists are in constant discussions about the best way to combine the archipelago's dependence on tourism, and the perceived need for more hotels, ports and golf courses, with the pressing need to conserve water resources, combat marine pollution and prevent development from infringing on the flora and fauna that have made the islands a nature lover's paradise.

The Canary Islands after the Conquest by Felipe Fernández-Armesto, a leading authority on the islands' history, is a fairly specialised work concentrating on 16th-century life in the Canaries.

General Franco stayed in the Hostal Madrid in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria the night before launching his coup.

The Culture

REGIONAL IDENTITY

It's hard to sum up the peoples and traditions of seven islands into one neat description. Mannerisms, expressions, food, architecture and music vary significantly from island to island and rivalries (especially between heavyweights Tenerife and Gran Canaria) are strong. Yet among all seven islands is a fierce pride in being Canarian, and the belief that their unique history and culture sets them apart from the rest of Spain. While most of the Canary Island locals have the classic Mediterranean looks of the Spaniards – dark hair, flashing eyes and olive complexion – you might find that they don't think of themselves as all that Spanish.

Soon after the 1982 electoral victory of the socialists at national level, the Canary Islands were declared a *comunidad autónoma*, one of 17 autonomous regions across Spain. And a few vocal Canarios would like to see their islands become completely autonomous – keep an eye peeled for splashes of graffiti declaring 'Spaniards Go Home'.

The region's flag is a yellow, blue and white tricolour, to which the few militant *independentistas* add seven stars to represent the islands. The archipelago's division into two provinces, Tenerife and Gran Canaria, remains intact, as does the rivalry between the two provinces – so much so that the regional government has offices in both provincial capitals, which alternate as lead city of the region every four years!

LIFESTYLE

The greatest lifestyle change that has come to the Canary Islands has been the tourism industry. In a matter of decades a primarily agricultural society became a society largely dependent on the service industry. Traditional lifestyles on small *fincas* (farms) or in fishing villages have been supplanted by employment in the tourism sector. This may go some way to explaining a certain reticence in the local population – after all, work is work – so don't take offence when it seems there's a distance between you and the locals a lot of the time.

As the islands close the gap between their traditional, rural lifestyles and the fast-paced, modern lifestyle of the rest of Spain, some problems are inevitable. The cost of living has skyrocketed, forcing those who have kept traditional agriculture jobs to supplement their income with positions in the tourism industry. As the economy becomes more like mainland Europe's, the bureaucracy does too; evidence of this are the half-built houses dotting the rural landscape. Years ago, no one paid much attention to who built houses where. But modern urbanisation laws require permits for nearly any construction, something that islanders accustomed to the old ways are reluctant to get, forcing some towns to halt construction midproject while the slow wheels of bureaucracy turn. Education is yet another issue; since the

NAMING NAMES

Although the term Canario has come to designate all of the islanders, it once referred more strictly to the people of Gran Canaria alone (now more often as not referred to as Grancanarios or Canariones). The people of Tenerife are Tinerfeños; those of Lanzarote are not Lanzaroteños but Conejeros; Fuerteventura, Majoreros (from the Guanche name for much of the island, Maxorata); La Gomera, Gomeros; La Palma, Palmeros; and El Hierro, Herreños.

SHOE BIZ

The most famous shoe designer in the world, Manolo Blahnik was born in 1943 in Santa Cruz de Tenerife. The son of a Czech father and Spanish mother, he spent his childhood among banana plants – an unlikely beginning for a world-famous fashion designer if there ever was one. He was always fascinated by feet and shoes, and as a child he made shoes for monkeys and iguanas out of tiny pieces of foil.

He left the banana plantation to study in Geneva, but he soon moved to Paris and finally settled in London, where he worked as a fashion photographer and became friends with the city's jet set. In the 1970s Blahnik was dreaming of getting into theatre set design, but when a friend of a friend (who just happened to be the editor of US *Vogue*) saw his shoe-design sketches she insisted he keep at it.

The rest is history, and today 'Manolo's' costing €500 to €2500 grace the feet of fashionable women across the globe. Superfan Sarah Jessica Parker claimed her Manolo's last longer than most marriages, Madonna has claimed his shoes are 'better than sex', and Linda Evangelista and China Chow both have shoes named after them. Although the designer does get back to Tenerife every now and again to visit his mother, who still lives on the family farm, you'll be hard-pressed to find any of his shoes here; his only two signature shops are in London and New York.

small islands have no universities, young people have to study in Tenerife or Gran Canaria and this can deplete a family's already over-stretched budget. After school, many college-educated islanders end up leaving the island of their birth to look for better jobs on Tenerife, Gran Canaria or the mainland. By necessity, many Canary families are separated.

Still, family is still at the heart of Canary culture. Big island celebrations, like El Hierro's *Bajada de la Virgen de los Reyes* (Descent of the Virgin), held every four years, are always celebrated with family, and islanders come from as far away as the Americas to reunite with family and friends. Most religious and cultural celebrations are also family-focused. Although families now are smaller than they used to be – one or two children is the norm – they're still an important social unit. As elsewhere in Europe, couples are waiting longer to get married (the average age is 31 for women and 34 for men) although not necessarily later to have kids (the average age is 30), proving that Canary society is not as traditional as it once was.

In any case, kids are treated as *los reyes de casa* (kings of the house) and have a freedom to run and play rarely seen outside southern Europe. On a sadder note, some wives do not enjoy such freedom; while the macho image is not as prevalent as it once was, domestic violence is still a very big concern here, and each year women lose their lives at the hands of their husbands or partners.

ECONOMY

The Canary economy, fuelled by tourism and agriculture, has made great strides over the past few decades, but the region is still far from being an economic powerhouse. The average hourly wage is just over €9 (less than €1 higher than the 2001 average) and the average family income hovers around €23,600. Unemployment is high at 11.5%.

While incomes are relatively low, the cost of living is almost as high here as it is on the mainland. The price of housing has doubled since 1999, making independence virtually impossible for many young people. So far, the government has done a poor job of providing enough fixed-price housing for those unable to afford the steep prices.

The Canary Islands receive a lot (some Spaniards say more than their fair share) of money from the European Union (EU). The vast improvements

in roads and infrastructure here is in large part thanks to the investments made by the EU over the past few years.

More than any other region of Spain, there is inequality between males and females in the workforce. Women's average annual earnings are about €4000 less than men's. Also, the region leads Spain in the number of part-time contracts for women, with 53% of all women working in possibly unstable, part-time jobs.

POPULATION

The archipelago's total population is scraping two million, with 83% of inhabitants living on the two main islands, Tenerife and Gran Canaria. Immigration from the EU, Africa and South America is responsible for the population boom the islands are experiencing; Tenerife gained more than 14,000 inhabitants between 2005 and 2006 alone, nearly all of them non-Spaniards. All the other islands experienced at least some population growth as well, though on a smaller scale. In 2006, populations of the smaller islands ranged from 89,700 in Fuerteventura to 10,670 in El Hierro.

SPORT

The Canary Islands are a sport-friendly destination, as they have a balmy, sunny climate, plenty of coastline and a laid-back, outdoor lifestyle that rewards activity. As part of Spain, there are no prizes for guessing the top sport here: football (soccer).

Lucha Canaria

The Guanches of Tenerife were a particularly robust and warlike crowd who loved a trial of strength. Any island party was an excuse for indulging in tests of manhood. Apart from jumping over steep ravines and diving into the ocean from dizzying heights, one favourite pastime was wrestling. Rooted in this ancient diversion lies the essence of the modern *lucha canaria* (Canarian wrestling).

One member of each team faces off his adversary in the ring and, after a formal greeting and other signs of goodwill, they set about trying to dump each other into the dust. No part of the body except the soles of the feet may touch the ground, and whoever fails first in this department loses. Size and weight are not the determining factors (although these boys tend to be as beefy as rugby front-row forwards), but rather the skill with which the combatants grapple and manoeuvre their opponents into a position from which they can be toppled.

If you want to find out if any matches are due to be held locally, ask at the nearest tourist office.

EMIGRATION

The Canarios have long looked across the Atlantic to further shores, and a high proportion of Cubans and continental Americans can claim a Canarian gene or two.

Following in the wake of Christopher Columbus, Canarios were among the earliest colonisers. In the early days, the most popular destinations were Cuba, La Española (today's Dominican Republic and Haiti) and Puerto Rico in the Caribbean. On the mainland, pioneers settled around Buenos Aires in Argentina, Montevideo in Uruguay and Caracas in Venezuela. Further north, Canarios were well represented in Florida, Louisiana, Yucatán and Nueva España (Texas) – it was a group of Canaries emigrants who, on 9 March 1731, founded San Fernando (today's San Antonio, Texas).

The Roque Cinchado, one of the rock formations at the Roques de García, used to be featured on Spain's 1000 peseta banknote.

The average age of Canary residents is 37. The average age of Herreños (El Hierro residents) is 42, making it the 'oldest' island. More than 12% of the Spanish population on the islands is older than 65.

Find out about the latest lucha canaria matches at www.federaciondelucha.canaria.com.

There were two later surges in emigration, both spurred as much by poverty on the islands and the need to escape as by hope of a new life and new deal over the waters. In the Canaries, the 1880s are called the decade of *la crisis de la cochinilla* (the cochineal crisis), when synthetic dyes swamped the international market and killed off the local cochineal cottage industries. Later, the hard times that Spain endured following the Spanish Civil War and WWII were even harder on the archipelago, and lasted right through until the 1960s.

In the Franco era, many Canarios left without a passport or papers and arrived illegally in the new land (the Americas). Here, they were interned in camps and then set to work, cutting cane in the sugar plantations in order to earn their keep – arduous labour from which they escaped to better-paid work at the first opportunity.

MULTICULTURALISM

Nowadays the Canary Islands, for so long a region of net emigration, admit more people than they export. Workers in the hotel, restaurant and construction industries, and migrants from northern Europe seeking a place in the near-perpetual sun, all bolster the islands' population figures.

With nearly 400,000 tourist beds in hotels, apartments and houses across the islands, there is a steady influx of people from across the world, mainly Europe. Some of those tourists decide to stay and make a life here; nearly two-thirds of the archipelago's 9.3 million tourists are German or British, so it should be no surprise that these are also the largest expat communities.

A newer phenomenon are the immigrants from the Americas, many of them family members of Canarios who emigrated to Venezuela or other South American countries who are now returning to the islands of their ancestors. The number of African immigrants is also significant. Overall, about 12% of the population is non-Spanish.

Recent Immigration

Since the Canary Islands are so close to the coast of Africa, thousands of people searching for a better life and livelihood make dangerous journeys across the Atlantic each year. While tourists picnic and sunbathe on Canary beaches, simple fishing boats (packed with up to 150 sub-Saharan Africans) arrive on those same beaches almost daily, more often than not accompanied by authorities who immediately begin the long process of returning them to their home countries; a process that is often left unfinished. These immigrants have faced 10-day trips across the ocean, and they often arrive weak and dehydrated.

The islanders, while sensitive to the immigrants' plight, insist that there is simply not space for so many people – unemployment is already high and there aren't enough jobs to go around, they say. In 2005 the permanent African population on the islands was only about 26,000, but that number does not reflect the hundreds who arrive almost daily in hopes of making a new life in Europe. The issue is constantly debated in the press and among politicians.

RELIGION

One of the primary concerns of the conquistadors from Spain was to convert what they perceived to be the heathen of these far-flung islands to the one true faith. As the conquest proceeded, the indigenous inhabitants were swiftly converted to Christianity, usually as part of the terms of surrender.

Catholicism has left a deep-rooted impression on the Canaries. Although the depth of the average Canario's religiosity may be a subject of speculation,

the Church still plays an important role in people's lives. Most Canarios are baptised and confirmed, have church weddings and funerals and attend church for important feast days – although fewer than half regularly turn up for Sunday Mass. Many of the colourful and often wild fiestas that take place throughout the year have some religious context or origin.

ARTS

Architecture

Any pre-Hispanic architecture you can spot on the islands is either a reconstruction or heavily restored; the Guanches lived more often than not in caves, and virtually nothing of the rudimentary houses they built remains today outside museums like El Hierro's Ecomuseo de Guinea (p242).

The colonial period architecture reflects the influences of the Spaniards, Portuguese, French, Flemish, Italian and English. By the time the conquest of the islands was completed at the end of the 15th century, the Gothic and *mudéjar* (a type of Islamic architecture) styles already belonged more to the past than the present. The interior of the Catedral de Santa Ana (p69) in Las Palmas is nevertheless a fine example of what some art historians have denominated Atlantic Gothic. The bell tower of the Basílica de la Virgen del Pino (p79) in Teror, Gran Canaria, retains its Portuguese Gothic identity.

Only a few scraps of *mudéjar* influence made it to the islands. Probably the best examples are the fine wooden ceilings (known as *artesonado*) in the Iglesia de Nuestra Señora la Concepción (p157) in La Laguna, Tenerife. Not far behind are those of the Iglesia de Santa Catalina (p160) in Tacoronte, Tenerife, and those of the Iglesia del Salvador (p213) in Santa Cruz de la Palma.

You can get the merest whiff of *plateresque* (meaning silversmith-like, so called because it was reminiscent of intricate metalwork) energy at the Catedral de Santa Ana in Las Palmas and the Iglesia de Nuestra Señora la Concepción – the latter a veritable reference work of styles from Gothic through *mudéjar* to *plateresque*. Baroque, the trademark of the 17th century, left several traces across the archipelago and is best preserved in the parish church of Betancuria (p101), Fuerteventura.

Neoclassical, neogothic and other styles demonstrating a perhaps less creative, more derivative era are represented from the late 18th century onwards in imposing public buildings in the bigger cities. The Iglesia de San Juan (p80) in Arucas is an impressive piece of neogothic architecture – a shame it's not the genuine article.

Modernism makes an appearance along the Calle Mayor de Triana and in the private houses of the Triana district of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

Modern Canary architecture's greatest genius is, without doubt, Lanzarote native César Manrique. His ecologically sensitive creations, often using volcanic stones and other Canary materials, are found throughout the islands, but especially on Lanzarote. His designs are so compelling that some people base an entire trip around visiting them all. For details, see p119.

The icon of contemporary Canary architecture is Santiago Calatrava's 'wave', the multifunction Auditorio de Tenerife (p155) dominating the waterfront of Santa Cruz de Tenerife with its unmistakable profile of a wave crashing onto shore. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria is another architectural hot spot; interesting architectural spaces include the interior of the Atlantic Modern Art Centre by Sáenz de Oiza, the Auditorio Alfredo Kraus (p74) by Óscar Tusquets, and the Woermann Tower by Iñaki Abalos and Juan Herreros.

Although architect César Manrique is no longer living, his cultural foundation (www.fcmanrique.org) is still active on the islands.

Literature

Until the arrival of the conquering Spaniards in the 15th century, the Guanches appear not to have known writing. Very much a frontier world

even after the conquest, the Canaries were not an immediate source of world-renowned writers, and little local literature made it into English translation.

The first writer whose work became known beyond the islands was the Tinerfeño writer José de Viera y Clavijo (1731–1813), an accomplished poet known above all for his painstaking history of the islands, *Noticias de la Historia General de Canarias*. His contemporary Tomás de Iriarte (1750–91), born in Puerto de la Cruz, was for years something of a dandy in Madrid court circles. He wrote several plays but his *Fábulas Literarias*, poetry and tales charged with a mordant wit, constituted his lasting work.

Nicolás Estévez (1838–1914) spent much of his life outside the Canaries, first as a soldier and politician in Madrid and then in exile for 40 years in France. His poems, in particular ‘Canarias’, marked him as the motor behind the so-called Escuela Regionalista, a school of poets devoted to themes less universal and more identifiable with the archipelago.

Another of the islands’ great historians emerged about the same time. Agustín Millares Torres (1826–96) is remembered for his monumental *Historia General de las Islas Canarias*.

Benito Pérez Galdós (1843–1920) grew up in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, moving to Madrid in 1862. A prolific chronicler of his times, he produced 46 novels and numerous other books and plays.

The poet Josefina de la Torre (1907–2002) first achieved fame in the late 1920s. As the 20th century wore on, the poets of the Vanguardia took centre stage. Among the Canaries’ exponents were Pedro Perdomo Acedo (1897–1977) and Felix Delgado (1904–36).

Carmen Laforet Díaz’s (1921–) *Nada*, written in the wake of the civil war, is the partly autobiographical account of a young girl’s move from her home in the Canary Islands to study in post-civil war Barcelona, where she is obliged to live in squalor with her grandmother. She has followed this up with other novels of lesser impact and, in 1961, *Gran Canaria*, a guide to her home island.

One of the most creative talents to emerge among the postmodern poets of the 1980s was Yolanda Soler Onís (1964–). *Sobre el Ámbar*, written from 1982 to 1986, is a collection of pieces with images sourced largely from an exploration of the islands’ poetic traditions.

Other contemporary novelists to look out for are Roberto Cabrera and E Díaz Marrero.

Music

The symbol of the Canarios’ musical heritage is the *timple*, a ukulele-style instrument of obscure origin. Although many thought it was a variation of the Italian mandolin or the Spanish and Portuguese *guitarillo*, it now appears that Berber slaves, shipped in for farm work by the early Norman invaders under Jean de Béthencourt, might have introduced it to the islands.

It’s a small, wooden, five-stringed instrument with a rounded back (it is said the original Berber version was made of a turtle shell) and a sharp tone. There is also a four-string version known as the *contra* or *requinto*, prevalent in Lanzarote.

The *timple* has travelled widely, as emigrants from the islands took it with them to Latin America, where it was incorporated into their instrumental repertory.

Whenever you see local traditional fiestas, the *timple* will be there accompanying such dances as the *isa* and *folía* or, if you’re lucky, the *tajaraste* – about the only dance said to have been passed down from the ancient Guanches.

The Canaries’ best-loved folk group, Los Sabanderos, has been singing and strumming since 1966, when these Tinerfeños banded together in an effort to

Isaac de Vega was one of the 20th century’s outstanding Canaries novelists. His *Fetasa* (1957) is a disturbing study of alienation and solitude and is without doubt the book that kick-started other typically ‘Canarian’ works of the period.

recover and popularise Canary culture across the islands. It's impossible to quantify the effect this group of nearly 25 men (including a few new recruits) has had on the islands. Its CDs of light, melodic music are widely available.

Over the centuries there has been no shortage of immigration from Andalucía in the south of Spain, and with it came another musical tradition. Popular Andalusian dances such as the *malagueña* have become part of the local island folk tradition.

Rosana Arbelo, born in Lanzarote in 1962, is a fine *cantautor* (singer-songwriter) whose lyrics tend to the melancholy, accompanied by an appealing mix of Cuban, Spanish and African rhythms. However, the islands' most established *cantautor*, and one appreciated across all Spain, is Tenerife's Pedro Guerra.

Visual Arts

In the 17th century, Gaspar de Quevedo from Tenerife was the first major painter to emerge from the Canary Islands. Quevedo was succeeded in the 18th century by Cristóbal Hernández de Quintana (1659–1725), whose paintings still decorate the Catedral in La Laguna (p157) in Tenerife. More important was Juan de Miranda (1723–1805), among whose outstanding works is *La Adoración de los Pastores* (The Adoration of the Shepherds) in the Iglesia de Nuestra Señora de la Concepción (p152) in Santa Cruz de Tenerife. His best known acolyte was Luis de la Cruz y Ríos (1776–1853), born in La Orotava and above all a portraitist.

In the 19th century, Valentín Sanz Carta (1849–98) was among the first Canaries to produce landscapes. Others of his ilk included Lorenzo Pastor and Lillier y Thuillé, whose work can be seen in the Museo de Bellas Artes (p151) in Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

The Canaries' main exponent of impressionism was Manuel González Méndez (1843–1909), whose *La Verdad Venciendo el Error* (Truth Overcoming Error) hangs in the *ayuntamiento* (town hall) of Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

Néstor Martín Fernández de la Torre (1887–1938), whose speciality was murals, is best represented by his *Poema del Mar y Poema de la Tierra* (Poem of the Sea and Poem of the Earth).

The Cuban-Canario José Aguiar García (1895–1976), born of Gomero parents, grew up in Cuba. A prolific painter, he too reached the apogee of his craft in his murals. His works are spread across the islands; the *Friso Isleño* (Island Frieze) hangs in the casino in Santa Cruz de Tenerife.

All the great currents of European art filtered through to the Canary Islands. Of the so-called Coloristas, names worth mentioning include Francesco Miranda Bonnin (1911–63) and Jesús Arencibia (1991–93), who created the big mural in the Iglesia de San Antonio Abad (p69) in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

The first surrealist exhibition in Spain was held on 11 May 1935 in Santa Cruz de Tenerife. The greatest local exponent of surrealism, Tinerfeño Óscar Domínguez (1906–57), ended up in Paris in 1927 and was much influenced by Picasso. Others of the period include Cubist Antonio Padrón (1920–68), Felo Monzón (1910–89) and Jorge Oramas (1911–35).

Leading the field of abstract artists is Manuel Millares (1921–72), native of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. Lanzarote's César Manrique (1919–92) also enjoyed a considerable degree of international recognition.

Canarios currently working hard at the canvas include Cristino de Vera (1931–), who lives in Madrid and displays elements of a primitive expressionism in his paintings, María Castro (1930–) and José Luis Fajardo (1941–), who uses just about any materials that come to hand in his often-bizarre works.

Download songs from the Canaries' best-loved folk group, Los Sabandeiros, at www.sabanda.org.

Environment

THE LAND

The seven islands and six islets that make up the Canary Islands archipelago are little more than the tallest tips of a vast volcanic mountain range that lies below the Atlantic Ocean. Just babies in geological terms, the islands were thrown up 30 million years ago when great slabs of the earth's crust (called tectonic plates) collided, crumpling the land into mammoth mountains both on land, as in the case of Morocco's Atlas range, and on the ocean floor, as in the case of the Cape Verde islands, the Azores and the Canaries. These Atlantic islands are collectively referred to as Macronesia. After the initial creation, a series of volcanic eruptions put the final touches on the islands' forms.

There is still plenty of activity across the floor of the Atlantic Ocean, and many peaks lie out of sight below the surface. Occasionally, new volcanic islands are puffed up into the light of day, but they are generally little more than feeble mounds of loose ash and are quickly washed away.

These days in the Canary Islands, you can best get a feel for the rumblings below the surface on Lanzarote, where the Montañas del Fuego (p136) still bubble with vigour, although the last eruptions took place way back in 1824. Of the remaining islands, not an eruptive burp has been heard from Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, La Gomera or El Hierro for centuries; Tenerife's most recent display was a fairly innocuous affair in 1909; and it was La Palma that hosted the most recent spectacle – a fiery outburst by Volcán Teneguía in 1971.

The seven main islands have a total area of 7447 sq km. Their size may not be great, but packed into them is just about every imaginable kind of landscape, from the long, sandy beaches of Fuerteventura and dunes of Gran Canaria to the majestic Atlantic cliffs of Tenerife and mist-enveloped woods of La Gomera. The easternmost islands have an almost Saharan desertscapes, while corners of La Palma and La Gomera are downright lush. The highest mountain in Spain is 3718m Pico del Teide (El Teide; p170), which dominates the entire island of Tenerife.

None of the islands has rivers, and lack of water remains a serious problem. Instead of rivers, webs of *barrancos* (ravines) cut their way from the mountainous interiors of most of the islands to the coast. Water flows along some, but others remain dry nearly year-round.

Lanzarote and Fuerteventura, the two most easterly islands, would be quite at home if attached to the nearby coast of continental Africa (which is just 115km away). Lanzarote takes its present appearance from a series of massive blasts in 1730. The lava flow was devastating in many ways, but it created fertile ground where before there was nothing. Today, Lanzarote produces a wide range of crops grown mostly on volcanic hillsides. Another by-product of that eruption are the Montañas del Fuego (Mountains of Fire) in the Parque Nacional de Timanfaya, where volcanic rocks still give off enough heat to sizzle a steak (literally – see it being done at the Restaurant del Diablo, p136). North of the island are clustered five of the archipelago's six little islets (the other is Isla de Lobos, p108, just off the northern tip of Fuerteventura).

Gran Canaria is roughly a circular-based volcanic pyramid. Its northern half is surprisingly green and fertile, while south of the 1949m peak of Pozo de las Nieves (p79) the territory is more arid and reminiscent of Gran Canaria's eastern neighbours. For the variety of its geography, flora and climate, the island is often dubbed a 'continent in miniature'.

La Palma is the steepest island in the world, relative to its height and overall area.

Gran Canaria's big brother, at least in terms of size, is Tenerife – every bit as much a mini-continent. Almost two-thirds of the island is taken up by the rugged slopes of the volcanic peak and crater El Teide, which is not only Spain's highest peak but also the third-largest volcano in the world, after Hawaii's Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea. A further string of mountains, the Anaga range, spreads along the northeastern panhandle. The only real lowlands are around La Laguna and alongside parts of the coast. The staggering cliffs of the north coast are occasionally lashed by Atlantic rain squalls, which are arrested by the mountains, giving the southwest and southeast coasts a more serene weather picture.

The remaining western islands share much in common. Better supplied with spring and/or rainwater, they are green and ringed by rocky, ocean-battered coastlines. La Palma's dominant feature is the yawning funnel known as the Caldera de Taburiente (p224), where the highest peak is the Roque de los Muchachos (2426m). The centre of La Gomera's high *meseta* (plateau) is covered by a Unesco World Heritage-listed laurel forest, the Parque Nacional de Garajonay (p195). El Hierro, the smallest of the Canary Islands and a Unesco-listed biosphere reserve (see the boxed text, p231), is mountainous – the highest peak is Malpaso at 1501m – with a coastline that seems designed to be a fortress.

El Teide is the highest peak in all of Spain.

El Teide & Other Volcanoes

El Teide is what's known as a shield volcano – huge and rising in a broad, gently angled cone to a summit that holds a steep-walled, flat-based crater. Although seemingly quieter than Italy's Vesuvius, Etna and Stromboli, all of which still have it in them to cause quite a fright, Teide is by no means finished.

Wisps of hot air can sometimes be seen around Teide's peak. Where the lava is fairly fluid, steam pressure can build up to the point of ejecting lava and ash or both in an eruption through the narrow vent. The vent can simply be blown off if there is sufficient pressure.

Stratovolcanoes, similar to the shield volcanoes, are also found on the islands, and sometimes they literally blow their top. Massive explosions can cause the whole summit to cave in, blasting away an enormous crater. The result is known as a caldera, within which it is not unusual for new cones to emerge, creating volcanoes within volcanoes. There are several impressive calderas on Gran Canaria, most notably Caldera de Bandama (p79). Oddly enough, massive Caldera de Taburiente (p224) on La Palma does not belong to this group of geological phenomena, although it was long thought to.

When volcanoes do erupt, they belch out all sorts of things: ash, cinders, lapilli (small, round bombs of lava) and great streams of molten rock. Volcanic eruptions, however, don't just come through one central crater. Often subsidiary craters form around the main cone as lava and other materials force fissures into the mountain and escape that way.

The Volcanoes of the Canary Islands by Vivente Araña and Juan Carracedo is a series of three volumes about – what else? – Canary Island volcanoes. Lovely photos and informative text.

WILDLIFE

Animals

Perhaps 'wildlife' is a little misleading. Sure, there are wild lives out there in the natural areas of even the most populated islands, but they tend to be small and shy and largely undetected by the untrained eye. Bugs abound, and lizards and birds are the biggest things you'll see – in some cases they are quite big indeed, like the giant lizard of El Hierro (p242). There are around 200 species of birds on the islands, though many are imports from Africa and Europe. Among the indigenous birds are the canary (those in

VOLCANIC ORIGINS

You don't have to be long in the Canary Islands to notice the astonishing variety of volcanic rock. Towering cones, tiny lightweight pebbles, rough untameable badlands (deeply eroded barren areas), smooth and shiny rock, red rock, black rock...they're all scattered about, blasted out of the earth's surface by the countless eruptions that have rocked the archipelago over its history.

The way a volcano erupts is largely determined by its gas content. If the material seething beneath the surface has a high gas content, the effect is like shaking a bottle of fizzy drink; once the cap's off, the contents spurt out with force. In the case of volcanoes, what are called pyroclasts – cinders, ash and lightweight fragments of pumice – are hurled high into the air and scattered over a wide area.

If the mix is more viscous, the magma wells up, overflows a vent, then slows as it slithers down the mountain as lava, cooling all the while until its progress is stopped. You'll see several such congealed rivers, composed of spiky and irregular clinker (volcanic slag), in the Parque Nacional de Timanfaya on Lanzarote and around the slopes of Teide. Look also for obsidian (fragments or layers of smooth, shiny material, like black glass) and scoria (high in iron and magnesium and reddish-brown in colour since it's – quite literally – rusting).

the wild are a muck-brown colour, not the sunny yellow colour of their domesticated cousins) and a few large pigeons.

The ocean is home to more thrilling wildlife (no offence to the birds). The stretch of water between Tenerife and La Gomera is a traditional feeding ground for as many as 26 species of whales, and others pass through during migration. The most common are pilot whales, sperm whales and bottlenose dolphins.

Whale watching is big business around here, and 800,000 people a year head out on boats to get a look. A law regulates observation of sea mammals, prohibiting boats from getting closer than 60m to an animal and limiting the number of boats following pods at any one time. The law also tries to curb practices such as using sonar and other devices to attract whales' attention. Four small patrol boats attempt to keep a watchful eye on these activities.

Still, many environmentalists argue that boats disrupt whales feeding patterns and can be harmful. If you decide to take a whale-watching tour, join up with a reputable company, like Katrin (p174) on Tenerife or the Club de Mar (p204) on La Gomera.

Aside from the majestic marine mammals, there are many other life forms busy under the ocean. The waters around the Canary Islands host 350 species of fish and about 600 species of algae. You can see them up close by going scuba diving or snorkelling. See the activities sections of individual island chapters for more information.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

The giant lizard of El Hierro (p242) was once common on the island, though its numbers began seriously dwindling in the early 1900s. By the 1940s nary a trace was to be found, and the species was given up for lost. Miraculously, a tiny population of the lizards managed to survive on a precipice, and a pair was discovered and captured by a local herdsman. Now there is a recovery program working to breed the lizards in captivity and slowly introduce them into the wild.

Plants

The islands' rich volcanic soil, varied rainfall and dramatic changes in altitude support a surprising diversity of plant life, both indigenous and introduced. The Canary Islands are home to about 2000 species, about half of them en-

The pamphlet-style *Whales and Dolphins of the Canary Islands* by Volker Boehlke is a great introduction to common species and likely behaviours.

The giant lizard of El Hierro grows as long as 45cm.

demic to the islands. The only brake on what might otherwise be a still-more-florid display in this largely subtropical environment is the shortage of water. Even so, botanists will have a field day here, and there are numerous botanical gardens scattered about where you can observe a whole range of local flora.

Up to an elevation of about 400m, the land is home to plants that thrive in hot and arid conditions. Where farmland has been irrigated, you'll find bananas, oranges, coffee, sugar cane, dates and tobacco. In the towns, bougainvillea, hibiscus, acacia, geraniums, marigolds and carnations all contribute to the bright array. Of the more exotic specimens, the strelitzia, with its blue, white and orange blossoms, stands out. These exotics have all been introduced to the islands. The dry, uncultivated scrublands near the coast, known as *tabaibales*, host various indigenous plants such as *cardón* (*Euphorbia*).

At elevations of around 700m, the Canaries' climate is more typical of the Mediterranean, encouraging crops such as cereals, potatoes and grapes. Where the crops give way, stands of eucalyptus and cork take over. Mimosa, broom, honeysuckle and laburnums are also common.

Higher still, where the air is cooler, common plants and trees include holly, myrtle and laurel. The best place to explore forest land is in La Gomera's Parque Nacional de Garajonay (p195), host to one of the world's last remaining Tertiary-era forests and declared a Unesco World Heritage site. Known as *laurisilva*, it is made up of laurels, holly, linden and giant heather, clad in lichen and moss and often swathed in swirling mist.

Up to 2000m in altitude, the most common tree you're likely to encounter is the Canary pine, which manages to set down roots on impossibly steep slopes that would defeat most other species. It is a particularly hardy tree, with fire-resistant timber that makes fine construction material.

Up in the great volcanic basin of the Parque Nacional del Teide (p170) on Tenerife are some outstanding flowers. Apart from the feisty high-altitude Teide violet (the highest-altitude flower in Spain), with its seemingly delicate blossom thriving in the volcanic soil at the peak of El Teide, one of the floral symbols of the Canaries is the flamboyant *tajinaste rojo*, or Teide viper's bugloss (*Echium wildpretii*), which can grow to more than 3m high. Every other spring, it sprouts an extraordinary conical spike of striking red blooms

If you're interested in getting involved with marine conservation, in particular the protection of whales, get in touch with the Atlantic Whale Foundation (www.whalenaion.org), a group that organises educational trips, volunteer opportunities and conservation campaigns on Tenerife. The website is a mine of information.

More than half of Spain's endemic plant species are found in the Canary Islands.

NOT-SO-FRIENDLY FIDO

If you come across a solid-looking dog with a big head and a stern gaze, you are probably getting to know the Canary dog, known in Spanish as the *presa canario*. This beast is right up there with the pit bull as a tenacious guard dog, loyal and chummy with its owners but rarely well disposed to outsiders.

The breed is also known as the *verdino* (from a slightly greenish tint in its colouring) and opinion is divided regarding its origins. Probably introduced to the islands in the wake of the Spanish conquest in the 15th century, and subsequently mixed with other breeds, the Canary dog has been used for centuries to guard farms and cattle. When it comes to stopping human intruders, no other dog is so full of fight. It is prized by owners for its fearlessness and loyalty.

One can only speculate about the dogs mentioned in Pliny's description of ancient King Juba's expedition to the islands in 40 BC. These dogs were said to be exceptionally robust and there are those who are convinced that the *verdino*'s ancestors were indeed present on the islands 2000 years ago. But as usual, the accounts are conflicting.

Some academics maintain that the conquistadors were none too taken with these animals, considering them wild and dangerous, and eventually set about having the majority of them destroyed.

Other accounts suggest that the Spaniards found no such animals on their arrival and, hence, later introduced their own. Whatever the truth, the Canary dog is now prized as a local island breed.

www.canarias.org has extensive information on the archipelago's flora, fauna and volcanic origins.

National Parks and Flora of the Canary Islands, published by Otermin Ediciones, is an easy-to-read overview of the Canaries' four national parks and the plants found in them.

The Parque Nacional del Teide is Spain's most-visited national park, receiving around 3.3 million visitors a year. Most of them, however, barely wander beyond the highway snaking through the park.

like a great red poker. After its brief, spectacular moment of glory, all that remains is a thin, desiccated, spear-shaped skeleton, like a well-picked-over fish. Leave well alone; each fishbone has thousands of tiny strands that are as itchy as horsehair.

Although much of the vegetation is common across the islands, there are some marked differences. Fuerteventura, Lanzarote and the south of Gran Canaria distinguish themselves from the rest of the islands with their semidesert flora, where saltbush, Canary palm and other small shrubs dominate. Concentrated in a couple of spots – the cliffs of La Caleta de Famara on Lanzarote, and Jandía on Fuerteventura – you will find more abundant flora. This includes the rare, cactuslike *cardón de Jandía*, several species of daisy and all sorts of odd cliff plants unique to these islands.

NATIONAL PARKS

With more than 40% of its territory falling under one of eight categories of parkland, the Canary Islands are one of the most extensively protected territories in Europe.

At the top of the park pyramid are the four *parques nacionales* (national parks), administered at state level from Madrid. The regional government handles the other seven varieties of protected spaces, which range from rural parks to the more symbolic 'site of scientific interest'.

Only since the late 1980s have real steps been taken to protect the islands' natural diversity. A series of laws establishing and then enforcing protected spaces pushed the effort from merely good intention to a solid structure of parks and protected spaces.

The islands' four national parks, for instance, are largely protected from human interference by rules banning visitors from free camping or straying from defined walking paths. You can contribute by obeying the rules on where you are permitted to hike and keeping all your rubbish with you – what you take in you should also take out.

There are also several World Heritage sites, declared and protected by Unesco.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

As in mainland Spain, the 1960s saw the first waves of mass sea-and-sun tourism crash over the tranquil shores of the Canary Islands. The government of the day anticipated filling up the state coffers with easy tourist dollars,

THE TREE WITH A LONG, SHADY PAST

Among the more curious trees you will see in the Canary Islands is the *drago* (dragon tree; *Dracaena draco*), which can reach 18m in height and live for centuries.

Having survived the last ice age, it looks different – even a touch prehistoric. Its shape resembles a giant posy of flowers, its trunk and branches being the stems, which break into bunches of long, narrow, silvery-green leaves higher up. As the plant (technically it is not a tree, though it's always referred to as one) grows, it becomes more and more top-heavy. To stabilise itself, the *drago* ingeniously grows roots on the outside of its trunk, eventually creating a second, wider trunk.

What makes the *drago* stranger still is its red sap or resin – known, of course, as 'dragon's blood' – which was traditionally used in medicine.

The plant once played an important role in Canary Island life, for it was beneath the ancient branches of a *drago* that the Guanche Council of Nobles would gather to administer justice.

The *drago* is one of a family of up to 80 species (*Dracaena*) that survived the ice age in tropical and subtropical zones of the Old World, and is one of the last representatives of Tertiary-era flora.

CANARY NATIONAL PARKS & UNESCO RESERVES

Park Name	Features	Activities	For Kids	Page
Parque Nacional del Teide, Tenerife	Spain's highest mountain, the volcanic peak of Teide, volcanic landscapes	Riding the cable car to the peak, hiking around Roques de García	The little ones will love the cable car	170
Parque Nacional de Garajonay, La Gomera	A prehistoric laurel forest, horizontal rain, pines	Hiking to the top of the Alto de Garajonay, cycling down from the summit	The La Laguna Grande has a playground and recreational area	195
Parque Nacional de Timanfaya, Lanzarote	Volcanic activity, warm volcanic rocks due to molten lava beneath the surface	Eating at the Restaurant del Diablo, touching and walking on hot volcanic lava	A camel ride at the Museo de las Rocas	136
Parque Nacional de la Caldera de Taburiente, La Palma	Towering rock walls, slopes of pines	Hiking into the cauldron-like Caldera in the park's centre	The walks around La Cumbrecita are ideal for short legs	224
Gran Canaria Biosphere Reserve (In 2005 Unesco declared one-third of the island a biosphere reserve)	Water basins, beaches and marine areas where unique vegetation (around 100 species are unique to the island) thrives	Scuba dive or snorkel off the coast	Hunt for crabs at the beach	58
Lanzarote Biosphere Reserve (Unesco has declared the entire island a biosphere reserve)	Unique plants, marine reserve, volcanic landscape	Walking among some of the archipelago's most dramatic volcanic landscapes, relaxing on volcanic beaches	Older kids will gawk at César Manrique's weird architecture	118
La Palma Biosphere Reserve (In 2002 Unesco declared the entire island a biosphere reserve)	The laurel forest of Los Tiles, ancient rock carvings, pine forests, endemic flora and fauna	Hiking in Los Tiles or along the Ruta de los Volcanes	Easy-access lookouts let the little ones enjoy the view too	206
El Hierro Biosphere Reserve (Unesco has declared the entire island a biosphere reserve)	Bimbache etchings, pine forests, twisted juniper trees	Driving through El Pinar, walking among the junipers in El Sabinar	Stop in the Hoya del Morcillo recreation area	229

and local entrepreneurs enthusiastically leapt aboard the gravy train. Few, however, gave a thought to what impact the tourists and the mushrooming coastal resorts might have on the environment.

The near-unregulated building and expansion of resorts well into the 1980s has created some monumental eyesores, particularly on the southern side of Tenerife and Gran Canaria. Great scabs of holiday villas, hotels and condominiums have spread across much of the two islands' southern coasts. And the problem is not restricted to the resorts – hasty cement extensions to towns and villages mean that parts of the islands' interiors are being increasingly spoiled by property developers and speculators.

The massive influx of visitors to the islands over recent decades has brought or exacerbated other problems. Littering of beaches, dunes and other areas of natural beauty, both by outsiders and locals, remains a burning issue. Occasionally, ecological societies organise massive rubbish cleanups along beaches and the like – worthy gestures but also damning evidence of the extent to which the problem persists.

Spot the Canaries' otherworldly volcanic landscapes in films like *Star Wars*, *The Ten Commandments* and the original *Planet of the Apes*, all shot (in part) on the islands. Parque Nacional del Teide is an especially popular film location.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM – WATER CONSERVATION

Though the use of desalinated sea water is on the rise, all visitors should do their part to conserve water, starting with some common-sense strategies, such as limiting shower time, turning off the tap when not using water and requesting that hotel towels not be laundered every day – instead, hang them up to dry and reuse.

For the islands' administrators, it's a conundrum. Tourism has come to represent an essential pillar of the Canaries' economy, which quite simply it cannot do without. They argue that profits from the tourist trade are ploughed back into the community. However, this is still fairly haphazard and there have long been calls for more regional planning – and, every year more insistently, for a total moratorium on yet more tourism development. Short-term moratoriums are at times established on an island-by-island basis. Some of the damage done over the years, especially to the coastline, is irreversible.

One of the hottest issues of recent years is the proposed port of Gandilla, a huge commercial port slated to be built in southeastern Tenerife. While politicians argue that the port is necessary for the island economy, there's no denying its severe impact on the land. Environmentalists say 5km of coastline would be destroyed by the port.

The basic issue is prosperity (or perceived prosperity) versus preservation, and it's repeated across the islands. In La Palma, politicians have proposed building five new golf courses, some on protected land, while ecologists say the golf courses would unnecessarily destroy natural resources. On Gran Canaria, a new shopping centre in Gáldar is causing concern, while around Lanzarote and Fuerteventura the buzz about possible offshore petroleum deposits is stirring the environmentalists.

One island that's taken steps toward conservation is El Hierro, where, in 2007, the government unveiled a plan to become the world's first island able to meet all its energy needs with renewable sources (wind, water and solar) alone.

Water

One of the islands' greatest and most persistent problems is water, or rather the lack of. Limited rainfall and the lack of natural springs have always restricted agriculture, and water is a commodity still in short supply.

Desalination appears the only solution for the Canaries; pretty much all potable water on Lanzarote and Fuerteventura is desalinated sea water.

In summer, the corollary of the perennial water problem is the forest fire. With almost clockwork regularity, hundreds of hectares of forest are ravaged every summer on all the islands except the already-bare Lanzarote and Fuerteventura.

Environmental Organisations

The islands are swarming with environmental action groups, some more active than others. Most are members of **Ben Magec – Ecologistas en Acción** (Ben Magec – Ecologists in Action; ☎ 928 36 22 33; www.benmagec.org). A few of the myriad individual groups you'll find on the islands are listed below.

Aire Libre (☎ 922 49 33 06; www.airelibrelapalma.org; La Palma)

Asociación Canaria Para Defensa de la Naturaleza (☎ 928 26 24 66; www.ascanasociacion.com; Gran Canaria)

Asociación Tinerfeña de Amigos de la Naturaleza (☎ 922 27 93 92; www.atan.org; Tenerife)

El Guincho (☎ 928 81 54 32; www.benmagec.org/elguincho; Lanzarote)

Guanil (☎ 928 87 07 43; www.ecologistasenaccion.org; Fuerteventura)

Tagaragunche (☎ 679 60 01 10; www.tagaragunche.com; La Gomera)

For the latest on what's riling ecologists on the islands, check into www.atan.org, containing a treasure trove of passionate articles denouncing poor ecological practices on Tenerife.

Outdoors

Being outdoors is what the Canary Islands are all about. With temperatures ranging from about 18°C in winter to 24°C in summer, and an average rainfall hovering around 250mm, you're almost guaranteed the perfect weather for whatever activity suits your fancy. And the astonishing variety of landscapes here – from La Gomera's humid and verdant Parque Nacional de Garajonay to the vast lunar landscapes of Lanzarote – means that the same pursuit will be different on each island.

Most trekkers and adventure seekers gravitate toward the smaller islands, especially La Gomera, La Palma and, for water sports, Lanzarote, but it's possible to get away from the crowds and test your adventuresome spirit on any of the seven islands. All boast excellent hiking and biking trails and the abundance of water sports is obvious. Countless outfitters offer guidance (details are provided in the individual island chapters), but if you decide to set out on your own it's essential to be well-informed about possible dangers, route length and difficulty, and to have the appropriate gear and clothing.

WALKING & HIKING

Hundreds of trails, many of them historic paths used before the days of cars and highways, crisscross the islands. A good place to start is the national parks – the Parque Nacional del Teide (p170) on Tenerife, the Parque Nacional de Garajonay (p195) on La Gomera and the Parque Nacional de la Caldera de Taburiente (p224) on La Palma all have excellent hiking. Each of these parks offers a variety of walks and hikes, ranging from easy strolls ending at lookout points to multi-day treks across mountains and gorges.

To get a feel for the destruction and power of volcanoes, head to El Teide. Here you can walk across the barren *cañadas* (flatlands) that surround the base of the volcanic peak, or you can hike up to the mouth of El Teide itself, where on clear days you'll gasp at the views of the valley below, the ocean and the islands in the distance. For something in between, take the 1½-hour walk

Discovery Walking Guides, which publishes guidebooks and accompanying maps to El Hierro, La Palma, La Gomera and Tenerife; and Sunflower Books, which has books about all the islands, are both great resources for hikers.

RESPONSIBLE WALKING

- Carry out *all* your rubbish. Don't overlook easily forgotten items such as silver paper, orange peel, cigarette butts and plastic wrappers. Empty packaging should be stored in a dedicated rubbish bag. Make an effort to carry out rubbish left by others.
- Never bury your rubbish: digging disturbs soil and ground cover and encourages erosion. Buried rubbish will likely be dug up by animals, which may be injured or poisoned by it. It may also take years to decompose.
- Cut down on waste by taking minimal packaging and no more food than you will need. Take reusable containers or stuff sacks.
- Sanitary napkins, tampons, condoms and toilet paper should be carried out despite the inconvenience. They burn and decompose poorly.
- Contamination of water sources by human faeces can lead to the transmission of all sorts of nasties. Where there is a toilet, please use it. Where there is none, bury your waste. Dig a small hole 15cm (6in) deep and at least 100m (330ft) from any watercourse. Cover the waste with soil and a rock. In snow, dig down to the soil.
- Ensure that these guidelines are applied to a portable toilet tent if one is being used by a large trekking party. Encourage all party members to use the site.

The islands' hiking trails are divided into three categories: GR (long-distance, multiday trails), PR (shorter, one-day routes) and SL (local paths under 10km). All are signposted.

For many people, La Palma is considered the best island for walking. The website www.tourlapalma.com details many of the island's best routes, with detailed hiking maps available to download.

around the Roques de García, just south of the peak, where the landscape is varied and not too challenging.

If you like some shade every now and again, try Garajonay, home to one of the last vestiges of the ancient *laurisilva* forest that once covered southern Europe. Thanks to a near-permanent mist (called horizontal rain), this green forest is dripping with life and moss. It's beautiful, but the dampness makes walking downright cold, so be sure to bring a jacket. From the park's highest point, the Alto de Garajonay, you can see Tenerife and El Teide – if the clouds don't interrupt the view.

The Caldera de Taburiente offers a landscape somewhere between the verdant Garajonay and the stark Teide. You can hike along the rock walls of the park's interior or meander among the pine forests on the outer slopes of the park. Visiting the caldera's interior is a bit more complicated than accessing other parks, simply because no road runs through it. Be prepared to commit at least a half-day if you want to do anything more than drive up to a *mirador* (lookout point) and walk around.

National parks aren't the only spots with good hiking trails. Among our other favourites are the Ruta de los Volcanes (p221) and the walk to the Marcos and Cordero Springs in the Unesco-protected Los Tiles biosphere reserve (p227), both on La Palma. Also highly recommended are the Camino de Jinama (p238) on El Hierro, and the dunes of Maspalomas (p83) on Gran Canaria. For a truly spectacular walk, sign up for the 'Tremesana' guided hike (p137) in the Parque Nacional de Timanfaya; you'll have to plan in advance, but the effort will be well rewarded.

You can walk in the Canary Islands any time of year, but some trails become dangerous or impossible in rainy weather, and others (like the trek up to the peak of El Teide) are harder to do in winter, when parts of the trail are covered in snow. Be aware that while along the coast and in the lowlands it's normally warm and sunny, as you head into higher altitudes, the wind, fog and air temperature can change drastically, so always carry warm and waterproof clothing. Don't forget to take water along with you, as there are few water sources or vendors out along the trails.

SCUBA DIVING & SNORKELLING

The variety of marine life and the warm, relatively calm waters of the Canary Islands make them a great place for scuba diving or snorkelling. You won't experience the wild colours of Caribbean coral, but the volcanic coast is made up of beautiful rock formations and caves. As far as life underwater goes, you can spot around 350 species of fish and 600 different kinds of algae.

Scuba schools and outfitters are scattered across the islands, so you won't have trouble finding someone willing to take you out. A standard dive, with equipment rental included, costs around €30, but a 'try dive' (a first-timer diving with an instructor) can be double that. Certification classes start at €220 and generally last between three days and a week, though they can be much more expensive depending on the certification level. Many scuba outfitters also offer snorkelling excursions for nondivers, and prices tend to be about half the cost of a regular dive.

The southern coast of El Hierro is considered one of the top spots for scuba diving. There is a wealth of marine life there, thanks in part to the lack of development on the island. Also, the waters in the Mar de las Calmas (p239) are among the warmest and calmest of the archipelago, which increases visibility and makes the whole experience more enjoyable.

Lanzarote offers enviable diving conditions as well, with visibility up to 20m and especially warm waters. One word of warning – all divers here must be registered, though the permit price is usually included with

Diving in Canaries by Sergio Hanquet is a big hardback book with lush photographs of the underwater life you'll find around the Canaries.

your equipment rental. One of the best areas for diving is along Puerto Calero (p140), where you will find marlin, barracuda and a host of other fish. There are spots of orange coral and interesting underwater caves nearby too.

On Tenerife, most diving outfitters are congregated around the southern resorts, though the area around Los Gigantes (p174) has the reputation of having the best diving conditions of the lot. It's possible to do wreck dives (where you explore sunken boats and the like), cave dives and old-fashioned boat dives. Marine life in these waters ranges from eels to angel sharks and stingrays.

On Gran Canaria, Puerto de Mogán (p89) is the main dive centre, and there are plenty of boats heading out to dive in and around the caves and wrecks that lie not far offshore.

Get a rundown on dive sites around Tenerife and Lanzarote at www.divesitedirectory.co.uk/canary_islands.html.

BOATING

Ah, so much ocean, so little time! There's no reason to stay landlocked when it's so easy to hire a sailing boat, take a day cruise or paddle a sea kayak. The water conditions around the islands vary greatly, and some places may be too rough for a novice navigator, but there are areas where you'll have no problem.

In Tenerife, rent a boat or sign up for an excursion with companies in Puerto Colón (p180) and navigate the waters between Tenerife and La Gomera with the shadow of El Teide behind you.

In La Gomera, daily cruises setting off from the Las Vueltas port in Valle Gran Rey (p202) float past kilometre after kilometre of impenetrable rock cliffs before arriving at one of the island's most unique sites, Los Órganos (The Organs), a rock formation seen only from the water that does indeed look just like an enormous pipe organ carved into the rock.

RESPONSIBLE DIVING

Please consider the following tips when diving and help preserve the ecology and beauty of the reefs.

- Never use anchors on a reef, and take care not to ground boats on coral.
- Avoid touching or standing on living marine organisms or dragging equipment across the reef. Polyps can be damaged by even the gentlest contact. If you must hold on to the reef, only touch exposed rock or dead coral.
- Be conscious of your fins. Even without contact, the surge from fin strokes near the reef can damage delicate organisms. Take care not to kick up clouds of sand, which can smother organisms.
- Practise and maintain proper buoyancy control. Major damage can be done by divers descending too fast and colliding with the reef.
- Take great care in underwater caves. Spend as little time within them as possible, as your air bubbles may catch within the roof and thereby leave organisms high and dry. Take turns to inspect the interior of a small cave.
- Resist the temptation to collect or buy corals or shells or to loot marine archaeological sites (mainly shipwrecks).
- Ensure that you take home all your rubbish and any litter you may find as well. Plastics in particular are a serious threat to marine life.
- Do not feed fish.
- Minimise your disturbance of marine animals. *Never* ride on the backs of turtles.

Deep-sea-fishing buffs will enjoy the trips out of Puerto Calero (p140), Lanzarote, where daily cruises combine fishing with shark spotting.

Plan a surfing holiday on the eastern islands at www.surfcanarias.com.

SURFING, WINDSURFING & KITE BOARDING

Surfing, windsurfing and kite boarding are popular water sports on most of the islands. Schools offering classes and equipment rental are scattered around the windier coasts and there are a variety of spots to choose from, ranging from the beginner-friendly sandy beaches of Fuerteventura to the wilder waves of eastern Tenerife. Classes and equipment rental for all three sports are widely available in popular resort areas.

La Caleta de Famara (p135) and Isla Graciosa (p134) on Lanzarote offer world-class surf breaks. There's great windsurfing around the Bahía de Pozo Izquierdo (p85) on Gran Canaria, and the Las Palmas area offers decent waves for surfers too. On Fuerteventura, head to the area around El Cotillo (p111), Corralejo (p106) and the Isla de Lobos (p108), where waves really start pumping around late September and continue throughout the winter. The southern coast of Fuerteventura, in particular Playa de Sotavento de Jandía (p113) and Playa de Barlovento de Jandía (p116), are also great windsurfing spots.

On Tenerife, Las Galletas (p184) is a popular windsurfing spot, and nearby El Médano (p176) is considered one of the best places in the world for windsurfing. International competitions are held here every year, and enthusiasts from all over the globe converge on the long, sandy beaches to test the waters. Beginners beware – it's harder than it looks, and before renting equipment invest in one of the classes offered by numerous local companies. Courses last between two days and a week and prices vary widely according to how much you're aiming to learn.

True thrill seekers can try the latest surfing trend, kite boarding, which involves being connected to a huge, parachutelike kite, standing on a short board and letting the wind take you where it will. Watching the boarders with know-how leap and flip is amazing, but you have to be a real dare-

SWIMMING

Year-round sun and warm water (18°C to 26°C) makes swimming an obvious activity in the Canary Islands. From the golden beaches of the eastern islands to the volcanic pools of the western islands, there are plenty of splashing opportunities.

Beaches come in every shape and size – long and golden, intimate and calm, windy and wavy, rocky and picturesque, solitary and lonely, action-packed and family-friendly. Our list of favourite beaches is on p21.

You do need to be cautious, especially when swimming in the ocean. The first rule is never, ever swim alone. There can be very strong currents and undertows in the Atlantic, and rip currents can be so strong that they can carry you far from shore before you can react. If you're caught in a current, swim parallel to the shore (don't try to get to the beach) until you're released. Then make your way to shore.

The water quality around the Canary Islands is generally excellent. The only place you may find pollution is near ports (the occasional small oil spill is not unheard of) and on overcrowded tourist beaches. Smokers seem to think of some beaches as a huge ashtray, so you may need to watch out for butts, especially if you have kids.

There are two jellyfish species you should watch out for: the Portuguese man-of-war and the luminescent purple stinger. Both can sting. If you're stung, first remove any tentacles stuck to the skin (using gloves) then apply vinegar to the skin. If you're stung on the face or genitalia, or have difficulty swallowing or breathing, contact a doctor.

ACTIVITIES FOR THE LITTLE ONES

If the kids are all beached out, there are plenty of island attractions to capture their attention, not least the islands' natural spaces. Canarios love to picnic, and rural parks and road-side picnic spots, more often than not with a kids' play area, are dotted throughout the islands. On the western islands, national parks are a good place to look for easy hikes, while the flatter eastern islands are ideal for bike rides with older kids.

The ideas below are just to get you started. See individual island chapters for more information on kid-friendly activities.

Water & Theme Parks

On the big islands especially, water parks abound. On Lanzarote, Costa Teguisse's **Aquapark** (p123) keeps kids happy with rides and slides, and Fuerteventura's sprawling **Baku Water Park** (p96) has all the usual rides plus dry activities like crazy golf.

Zoos

Wildlife parks are a resort staple, and there are plenty of them here. Southern Tenerife boasts **Camel Park** (p184) and **Jungle Park** (p181), while **Loro Parque** (p163) in Puerto de la Cruz is a favourite in the north of the island. You'll find similar parks near Maspalomas, on Gran Canaria.

Boats

Whale- and dolphin-watching cruises, available on Tenerife and La Gomera, are good options for older kids with decent attention spans (bear in mind that you might not spot something immediately). For something a bit different, hop on Lanzarote's Submarine Safaris (p140) to explore the depths of the Atlantic.

devil to try it. Areas with several windsurfing outfitters are also likely to be home to a kite-boarding school or two.

GOLF

In the past decade, southern Tenerife has become the Canary Islands' golf hot spot. Golfers who love the balmy temperatures that let them play year-round have spawned the creation of a half-dozen courses in and around the Playa de las Américas (p178) alone. The courses are aimed at holiday golfers and are not known for being particularly challenging.

You'll also find a few courses around Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, and a course or two dotted around Lanzarote and Fuerteventura.

The lack of water on the islands makes golf a rather environmentally unfriendly and difficult sport to sustain. Golf course owners say the water for those lush greens comes from runoff and local water purification plants, but environmental groups say the golf courses take water from agriculture. The truth is in there somewhere, and local politicians, golfers, environmentalists and farmers are still arguing about where.

In winter, green fees hover around €80, but in midsummer they could be half that. Renting a golf cart will cost you up to €40 and club rental can cost up to €25.

CYCLING

If you've got strong legs, cycling may be the perfect way to see the Canary Islands. Bike rental is available across the islands, and numerous companies offer guided excursions of a day or even longer. If you think you're in very good shape, try the climb up to El Teide or the Alto de Garajonay. If constantly heading uphill on a bicycle isn't your idea of a good time, sign up with a guided excursion; they'll often cart your bike up to the top of

For an overview of golfing on Tenerife, see www.tenerifegolf.es.

Cycling routes, including photos, are online at www.amigosdelciclismo.com in Spanish.

the hill then turn you loose to zip down. Recommended outfitters can be found on Tenerife (see p164) and La Gomera (see p188).

Less-extreme routes can be found on the eastern islands, especially Gran Canaria, which has a strong cycling community. Outside Maspalomas on Gran Canaria there are a few excellent bike trails, and Fuerteventura also has decent cycling areas.

The price of renting a bike depends largely on what kind of bike you get – suspension and other extras will cost more. In general, a day's rental starts at about €15, and a guided excursion will be around €40.

For cycle touring information, see p261.

Food & Drink

Canary cuisine is all about simple pleasures. Grilled fish served with a zesty herb sauce. Boiled potatoes with crinkly, salted skin. Juicy grilled kid. Green salads served with buttery avocado grown in the neighbouring town. The islands' traditional dishes are those made with ingredients produced on the islands, and although restaurants can now get any and every kind of exotic ingredient flown in, there is still no beating unfussy traditional cooking.

The single best advice we can offer is to eat local, fresh food whenever possible. If you're not picky, you might as well just set aside the menu and ask your server for the *plato del día* (daily special) or *pescado del día* (catch of the day); these dishes are almost sure to be the house's best offering.

Through the years, traditional Canary dishes have rubbed shoulders with mainland Spanish cuisine and even South American specialities, giving way to unique Canary spins on recipes from elsewhere. And, of course, these days you'll find everything from Chinese to Italian to pub fare in the big resorts. The very best dining experiences, however, are usually to be had away from the tourist swarms and in the cosy, farmhouse restaurants that dot the islands' interiors.

STAPLES & SPECIALITIES

The staple product *par excellence* is *gofio*, a uniquely Canario product. A roasted mixture of wheat, maize or barley, *gofio* takes the place of bread in the traditional Canary diet. There is no shortage of bread these days, but *gofio* remains common. It is something of an acquired taste and, mixed in varying proportions, is used as a breakfast food or combined with almonds and figs to make sweets.

Other basic foods long common across the islands are bananas and tomatoes, but nowadays the markets are filled with a wide range of fruit and vegetables. Beef, pork and lamb are widely available (more often than not, imported), but the traditional *cabra* (goat) and *cabrito* (kid) remain a staple animal protein. Most local cheeses also come from goats' milk.

Canarian cuisine owes a lot to the New World; it was from South America that elementary items such as potatoes, tomatoes and corn were introduced. From there also came more exotic delights such as avocados and papayas, while sweet mangoes arrived from Asia. Look out for all three in the valleys and on supermarket shelves.

The most-often-spotted Canarian contribution to the dinner table is the *mojo* (spicy salsa sauce made from coriander, basil or red chilli peppers). This sauce has endless variants and is used to flavour everything from chicken legs to cheese.

Papas arrugadas (wrinkly potatoes) are perhaps the next-best-known dish, although there is really not much to them. They're small new potatoes boiled and salted in their skins. They really come to life when dipped in one of the *mojos*.

Of the many soups you'll find, one typically Canarian variant is *potaje de berros* (watercress soup). Another is *rancho canario*, a kind of broth with thick noodles and the odd chunk of meat and potato – it's very hearty.

Some of the classic mainland Spanish dishes widely available include paella (saffron rice cooked with chicken and rabbit or with seafood – at its best with good seafood), tortilla (omelette), gazpacho (a cold, tomato-based soup usually available in summer only), various *sopas* (soups) and *pinchos morunos* (kebabs).

Pleasures of the Canary Islands: Wine, Food, Beauty, Mystery by Ann and Larry Walker is one of the few introductions to Canarian cuisine in English.

Todos los Mojos de Canarias by Flora Lilia Barrera Álamo and Dolores Hernández Barrera is a book to look out for if you get hooked on *mojo* (salsa sauce). The various recipes, which will let you practise your skills when you get back home, are to be treasured.

Potatoes were introduced to the Canary Islands from Peru in the 1600s, and connoisseurs identify at least 23 varieties.

Dining in the Canary Islands

Breakfast (*desayuno*) is usually a simple meal, with juice, coffee or tea, cereal or *gofio*, and toast with ham or cheese. Many hotels serve heartier, German-style breakfasts. Locals may have a simple coffee at home and then have a midmorning *bocadillo* (baguette sandwich) when out. Breakfast can be served up until around 10am.

The serious eating starts with lunch (*la comida* or, less commonly, *el almuerzo*). While Canarios tend to eat at home with the family, there is plenty of action in the restaurants too, starting at about 1pm and continuing until 4pm. In many restaurants, a set-price *menú del día* (see the boxed text, below) is served at lunchtime.

Dinner is served late, from about 9pm until 11pm (perhaps later on weekends). If you turn up for dinner mid-evening, you'll be eating alone – if the restaurant is even open. Of course, in the most popular tourist areas the restaurants cater for the strange habits of foreigners, but you'll be unlikely to see a single Canario dining in them. At-home dinners tend to be light for locals, but on weekends and special occasions they eat out with gusto.

Snacks are an important part of the Spanish culinary heritage. You can usually pick up a quick bite to eat to tide you over until the main meal times swing around. Standard snacks (or *meriendas*) include tapas and *bocadillos*. Typically, this will be a rather dry affair with a slice of *jamón* (ham) and/or *queso* (cheese), or a wedge of *tortilla española* (potato omelette).

Desserts

Canarios have a real sweet tooth. Some of the better-known sticky sweets are *bienmesabes* (a kind of thick, sticky goo made of almonds and honey – deadly sweet!), *frangellos* (a mix of cornmeal, milk and honey), *tirijaras* (a type of confectionery), *bizcochos lustrados* (a type of sponge cake) and *turrón de melaza* (molasses nougat).

Don't miss the *quesadillas* from El Hierro – they've been making this cheesy cinnamon pastry (sometimes also made with aniseed) since the Middle Ages. *Morcillas dulces* (sweet blood sausages), made with grapes, raisins and almonds, are a rather odd concoction; perhaps the closest comparison is the Christmas mince pie.

DRINKS

Coffee

The Canary Islanders like coffee strong and bitter, then made drinkable with thick sweetened condensed milk. It takes some getting used to, and many visitors consider the coffee here downright vile.

A *café con leche* is about 50% coffee, 50% hot milk; ask for *sombra* if you want lots of milk. A *café solo* is an espresso (short black); *café cortado* (or just *cortado*) is an espresso with a splash of milk. If you like your coffee piping hot, ask for any of the above to be *caliente*.

MENÚ DEL DÍA

The travellers' friend in the Canary Islands, as in mainland Spain, is the *menú del día*, a set meal available at most restaurants for lunch and occasionally in the evening too. Generally, you get a starter (salad, soup or pasta) or side dish followed by a meat, fish or seafood dish and a simple dessert, which can include local specialities (see Desserts, above) or Spanish favourites such as *flan* (crème caramel), *helado* (ice cream) or a piece of fruit. Drinks and coffee may or may not be included.

There are some local variations on the theme: *cortado de condensado* is an espresso with condensed milk; *cortado de leche y leche* is the same with a little standard milk thrown in. It sometimes comes in a larger cup and is then called a *barraquito*. You can also have your *barraquito con licor* or *con alcohol*, a shot of liquor usually accompanied by a shred of lemon and sometimes some cinnamon – this is the authentic *barraquito*, as any Canario will tell you. In the easternmost islands you may be asked if you want your milk *condensada* or *liquida*.

For iced coffee, ask for *café con hielo*: you'll get a glass of ice and a hot cup of coffee to be poured over the ice – which, surprisingly, doesn't all melt straight away.

Wine

The local wine-making industry is relatively modest, but you can come across some good drops. Wine comes in *blanco* (white), *tinto* (red) or *rosado* (rosé). Prices vary considerably. In general, you get what you pay for and can pick up a really good tittle for about €5.

One of the most common wines across the islands is the *malvasía* (Malmsey wine, also produced in Madeira, Portugal). It is generally sweet (*dulce*), although you can find the odd dry (*seco*) version. It is particularly common on La Palma.

Tenerife is the principal source of wine, and the red Tacoronte Acentejo was the first Canarian wine to earn the grade of DO (*denominación de origen*; an appellation certifying high standards and regional origin). This term is one of many employed to regulate and judge wine and grape quality. Other productive vineyards are in the Icod de los Vinos, Güimar and Tacoronte areas of Tenerife. In Lanzarote, the vine has come back into vogue since the early 1980s, and in late 1993 the island's *malvasías* were awarded a DO.

Beer

The most common way to order a beer (*cerveza*) is to ask for a *caña*, which is a small draught beer (*cerveza de barril* or *cerveza de presión*). La Dorada, brewed in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, is a very smooth number. Tropical, which is produced on Gran Canaria and is a little lighter, is a worthy runner-up and the preferred tittle of the eastern isles.

Spirits

Apart from the mainland Spanish imports, which include the grape-based *aguardiente* (similar to schnapps or grappa), *coñac* (brandy) and a whole host of other *licores* (liqueurs), you could try some local firewater if you come across it. One to try is *mistela* from La Gomera, a mixture of wine, sugar, rum and sometimes honey – a potent taste!

WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

Café culture is a part of life here, and the distinction between cafés and bars is negligible; coffee and alcohol are almost always available in both.

Bars take several different forms, including *cervecerías* (beer bars, a vague equivalent of the pub), *tabernas* (taverns) and *bodegas* (old-style wine bars). Variations on the theme include the *mesón* (traditionally a place for simple home cooking).

Sitting inside rather than on the outdoor terrace can often save you 10% to 20% of the bill. Inside or outside, you should leave a tip, simply rounding up if the bill is very small, but leaving up to 10% in a nice place.

Restaurants generally open for lunch and dinner, from 1pm to 4pm and then 9pm to midnight, unless they have a bar attached, in which case they

The La Dorada brewing company makes a thoroughly local beer from *goñio* called Volcan.

The Best of Canary Island Cooking, produced by the Centro de la Cultura Popular Canaria, is a great little volume that is readily available at various shops around the islands in a number of languages.

may be open right through the day. Most restaurants close one day per week and advertise this fact with a sign in the window.

VEGETARIANS & VEGANS

The Canary Islands may seem like paradise to some, but they can be more like purgatory for vegetarians, and worse still for vegans. This is meat-eating country, so you will find your choices (unless you self-cater) a little limited. Salads are OK, and you will come across various side dishes such as *champiñones* (mushrooms, usually lightly fried in olive oil and garlic). Other possibilities include *berenjenas* (aubergines), *menestra* (a hearty vegetable stew), *espárragos* (asparagus), *lentejas* (lentils) and other vegetables that are sometimes cooked as side dishes.

Restaurants that cater particularly well for vegetarians are noted in this book with a **V**.

EATING WITH KIDS

Eating with children is no hassle in the Canary Islands. Places will often include a children's menu (especially in tourist resorts) at a very reasonable price (say, €6 for a burger with chips or portion of spaghetti). Children are treated with a mix of indulgence and respect – like special little adults, really. Many rural or isolated places will not have highchairs, although tourist resorts will be able to accommodate them and set them up for you at the table. All the usual baby-food products are readily available at the supermarkets and pharmacies.

EAT YOUR WORDS

Want to know the difference between a *salchida* and a *salchichón*? Get behind the cuisine scene by getting to know the foodies' language. For pronunciation guides, see the Language chapter (p266).

Useful Phrases

Table for..., please.

oo-na me-sa pa-ra..., por fa-vor

Una mesa para..., por favor.

Can I see the menu please?

pwe-do ver el me-noo, por fa-vor

¿Puedo ver el menú, por favor?

Do you have a menu in English?

tye-nen oon-a kar-ta en een-gles

¿Tienen una carta en inglés?

What is today's special?

kwal es el pla-to del dee-a

¿Cuál es el plato del día?

What's the soup of the day?

kwal es la so-pa del dee-a

¿Cuál es la sopa del día?

What do you recommend?

ke me re-ko-myen-da

¿Qué me recomienda?

I'll try what she/he's having.

pro-ba-ray lo ke e-lya/el es-ta ko-myen-do

Probaré lo que ella/él está comiendo.

What's in this dish?

ke een-gre-dyen-tes tye-ne es-te pla-to

¿De qué es este plato?

Can I have a (beer) please?

oo-na (ser-ve-sa) por fa-vor

¿Una (cerveza) por favor?

Is service included in the bill?

el ser-vee-syos es-ta een-kloo-ee-do en la kwen-ta

¿El servicio está incluido en la cuenta?

Thank you, that was delicious.

moo-chas gra-syas, es-ta-ba bwe-nee-see-mo

Muchas gracias, estaba buensísimo.

The bill, please.

la kwen-ta, por fa-vor

La cuenta, por favor.

I am a vegetarian.

soy ve-khe-ta-rya-na/o

*Soy vegetariana/o.***Do you have any vegetarian dishes?**

tye-nen al-goön pla-to ve-khe-ta-rya-no

*¿Tienen algún plato vegetariano?***I'm allergic to ...**

ten-go a-lair-jee-ya a

*Tengo alergia a ...***Food Glossary**

Deciphering a menu in the Canaries is always tricky. However much you already know, there will always be dishes and expressions with which you're not familiar. The following list should help you with the basics at least.

PESCADO & MARISCOS (FISH & SHELLFISH)

almejas	al-me-khas	clams
anchoas	an-cho-as	anchovies
atún	a-toon	tuna
bacalao	ba-ka-lao	salted cod
bonito	bo-nee-to	tuna
boquerones	bo-ke-ro-nes	raw anchovies pickled in vinegar
calamares	ka-la-ma-res	squid
cangrejo	kan-gre-kho	crab
gambas	gam-bas	shrimps
langostinos	lan-gos-tee-nos	large prawns
lenguado	len-gwa-do	sole
mejillones	me-khee-lyo-nes	mussels
ostra	os-tra	oyster
pez espada	pes es-pa-da	swordfish
pulpo	pool-po	octopus
vieira	vee-ey-ra	scallop

CARNE (MEAT)

cabra	ka-bra	goat
cerdo	ser-do	pork
chorizo	cho-ree-so	spicy red cooked sausage
conejo	ko-ne-kho	rabbit
cordero	kor-de-ro	lamb
hígado	ee-ga-do	liver
jamón	kha-mon	ham
lomo	lo-mo	pork loin
pato	pa-to	duck
pavo	pa-vo	turkey
riñón	ree-nyon	kidney
salchicha	sal-chee-cha	fresh pork sausage
salchichón	sal-chee-chon	peppery cured white sausage
sesos	se-sos	brains
vacuno	va-koo-no	beef

FRUTAS & NUECES (FRUIT & NUTS)

aceituna	a-sey-too-na	olive
aguacate	a-gwa-ka-te	avocado
almendras	al-men-dras	almonds
cacahuete	ka-ka-we-te	peanut
cereza	se-re-sa	cherry
fresa	fre-sa	strawberry
lima	lee-ma	lime

limón	<i>lee-mon</i>	lemon
mandarina	<i>man-da-ree-na</i>	tangerine
manzana	<i>man-sa-na</i>	apple
melocotón	<i>me-lo-ko-ton</i>	peach
naranja	<i>na-ran-kha</i>	orange
piña	<i>pee-nya</i>	pineapple
plátano	<i>pla-ta-no</i>	banana
sandía	<i>san-dee-a</i>	watermelon
uva	<i>oo-va</i>	grape

HORTALIZAS (VEGETABLES)

calabacín	<i>ka-la-ba-seen</i>	zucchini, courgette
cebolla	<i>se-bo-lya</i>	onion
champiñones	<i>cham-pee-nyo-nes</i>	mushrooms
espárragos	<i>es-pa-ra-gos</i>	asparagus
espinaca	<i>es-pee-na-ka</i>	spinach
guisante	<i>gee-san-te</i>	pea
haba	<i>a-ba</i>	broad bean
lechuga	<i>le-choo-ga</i>	lettuce
lentejas	<i>len-te-khas</i>	lentils
pimiento	<i>pee-myen-to</i>	pepper, capsicum
puerro	<i>pwe-ro</i>	leek
zanahoria	<i>sa-na-o-rya</i>	carrot

TARTAS & POSTRES (CAKES & DESSERTS)

flan	<i>flan</i>	crème caramel
galleta	<i>ga-lye-ta</i>	biscuit, cookie
helado	<i>e-la-do</i>	ice cream
pastel	<i>pas-tel</i>	pastry, cake
torta	<i>tor-ta</i>	round flat bun, cake
turrón	<i>too-ran</i>	almond nougat

TÉCNICAS (COOKING TECHNIQUES)

a la brasa	<i>a la bra-sa</i>	to barbecue
a la plancha	<i>a la plan-cha</i>	grilled
al horno	<i>al or-no</i>	baked
asar	<i>a-sar</i>	to roast
frito	<i>free-to</i>	fried
rebozado	<i>re-bo-so-do</i>	battered
relleno	<i>re-lye-no</i>	stuffed

Drinks Glossary**CAFÉ (COFFEE)**

café con leche	<i>ka-fe kon le-che</i>	50/50 coffee and hot milk
café cortado	<i>ka-fe kor-ta-do</i>	short black with a splash of milk
café solo	<i>ka-fe so-lo</i>	a short black
café con hielo	<i>ka-fe kon ye-lo</i>	iced coffee

REFRESCOS (SOFT DRINKS)

agua potable	<i>a-gwa pot-ab-le</i>	drinking water
agua mineral	<i>a-gwa mee-ne-ral</i>	bottled water
con gas	<i>kon gas</i>	fizzy
sin gas	<i>sin gas</i>	still
batido	<i>ba-tee-do</i>	flavoured milk drink/milk shake
zum de naranja	<i>soo-mo de na-ran-kha</i>	orange juice

VINO (WINE)

blanco	<i>blan-ko</i>	white
de la casa	<i>de la ka-sa</i>	house
rosado	<i>ro-sa-do</i>	rosé
tinto	<i>teen-to</i>	red

CERVEZA (BEER)

botellín	<i>bo-tel-yin</i>	bottled
caña	<i>ka-nyah</i>	draught
jarra	<i>kha-ra</i>	in a pint glass

OTHER ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

aguardiente	<i>a-gwa-dyen-te</i>	grape-based spirit (similar to schnapps or grappa)
coñac	<i>ko-nyak</i>	brandy
licor	<i>lee-kor</i>	liqueur
ron	<i>ron</i>	rum
sangría	<i>san-gree-a</i>	a wine and fruit punch usually laced with red wine

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