

Lanzarote



Lanzarote is an intriguing island that has an extraordinary geology of 300 volcanic cones, and ticks all the right good-time boxes. There are great beaches, intriguing sights and plenty of restaurants and hotels. Its largely volcanic landscape has a stark and otherworldly appearance, with the occasional bucolic, palm-filled valley juxtaposed with surreal crinkly-black lava fields. The island also has a refreshing lack of neon-blazing entertainment, which helps preserve its uniqueness and integrity.

In other ways, however, Lanzarote resembles a giant, albeit tasteful, theme park. The island's approach to tourism has been shaped by the inspiration of artist César Manrique, who saw the commercial potential of the island's striking landscape, and aesthetically developed several sites. The careful adherence to traditional rural architecture, with its distinctive green paintwork, is also largely due to the vigilance of Manrique and his successors. Unfortunately, developers in a couple of the coastal resorts succumbed to greed over such aesthetic ideals and have gone for the pack-in-maximum-punters approach. An exception is the luxurious new harbour in Playa Blanca, which, while not traditional, at least has a cohesive architectural look.

Lanzarote is the fourth-largest and most northeasterly island of the Canaries, measuring around 60km north to south and a mere 21km at its widest east-west point. The island's name is assumed to be a corruption of Lanzarotto (or Lancelotto) Malocello, the Genoese seafarer who landed on the island in the early 14th century.

Unesco has declared the entire island a biosphere reserve.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Surf the waves at **La Caleta de Famara** (p135), a mecca for water-sport fans
- Enjoy heady sweeping views from mountain-top **Mirador del Río** (p135)
- Lace up your walking shoes and explore the magnificent scenery at the **Parque Nacional de Timanfaya** (p136)
- Experience an oasis of green at lush **Haría** (p135)
- Get spiky at Manrique's fabulous **Jardín de Cactus** (p132)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 928

■ POPULATION: 127,457

■ AREA: 845.9 SQ KM

ITINERARY 1

CÉSAR MANRIQUE

Try to visit as many of the following sights as you can and, if you don't have your own wheels, don't worry, you can always join a tour. The best-known of Manrique's famous sculptures marks the entrance of the **Monumento al Campesino** (1; p130), dedicated to the hard grind of the agricultural workers. Not many folk would set up house in a lava field, and the **Fundación César Manrique** (2; p129), in Manrique's former home outside Tahiche, is appropriately extraordinary...as is the **Jardín de Cactus** (3; p132) with its myriad of prickly cacti, north of Guatiza. Many consider Manrique's first project, the **Jameos del Agua** (4; p133), his pinnacle achievement. The take-your-breath-away drama of the **Cueva de los Verdes** (5; p132) comprises a natural work of art. Take in the magnificent views from the **Mirador del Río** (6; p135), experience the awesome force of nature with a trip to the extraordinarily beautiful **Montañas del Fuego** (7; p136) and don't miss out on a milder, more-painterly visit to the **Museo de Arte Contemporáneo** (8; p126), another crowning Manrique project, this time housed in a castle in Arrecife.

0 ————— 10 km
0 ————— 6 miles



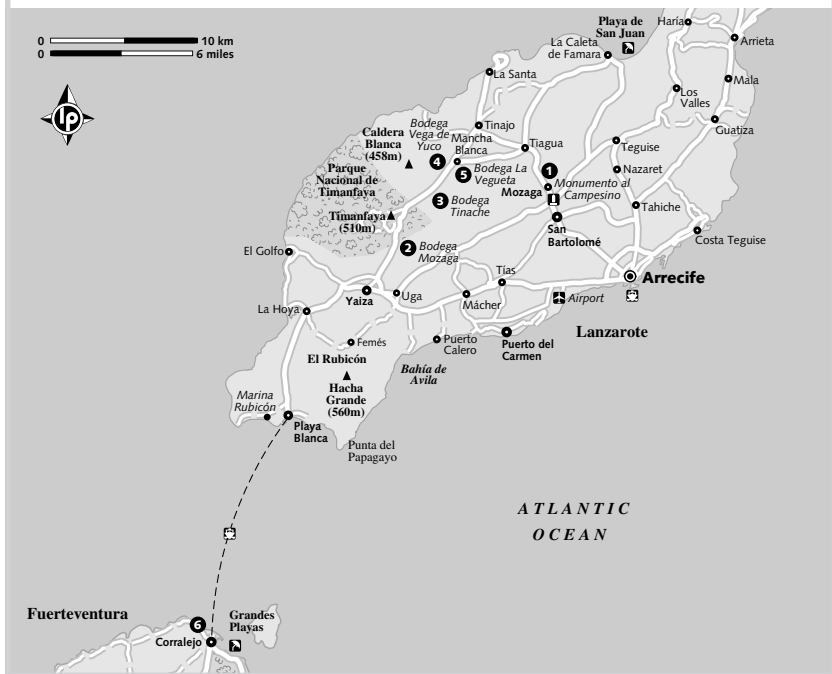
ITINERARY 2

THE WINE (& CHEESE) TRAIL

Lanzarote's volcanic terrain is far removed from your typical lush, green vineyards, but the determined locals have managed to make the black earth work in their favour. These days the local *vino* (wine) is definitely something to get sniffy about.

You could start your tittle trail near San Bartolomé at the **Monumento al Campesino (1; p130)**, with its excellent restaurant serving traditional local cuisine. Close by, **Bodega Mozaga (2; p131)** dates back to 1880 and has won awards for its deliciously fruity *malvasía*. Another excellent wine cellar, **Bodega Tinache (3; p130)**, has 20 hectares of vines en route to Timanfaya; go for the dry Malmsey and Moscatel. A smaller cellar, **Bodega Vega de Yuco (4; p131)**, has its vineyards dug into a hillside near the small town of Tías. Again, white wines are the winners, particularly the dry or semisweet *malvasía*. Founded in 2001, **Bodega La Vegueta (5; p130)** may be the youngster, but goes the traditional wine-making route and has won several prestigious awards. The dry Malmsey liquor is well worth the extra weight in your hand luggage.

The perfect accompaniment, Fuerteventura, is a speedy half-hour ferry ride away, and produces the Canaries' best goat's cheese (see the boxed text, p98) – the only *queso* (cheese) to have earned Spain's prestigious *denominación de origen* label. Pop into the local **Corralejo (6; p106)** supermarket and pick up a wheel of the soft, nutty Majorero, together with a *barra* (loaf) of fresh bread (you've already got the wine!) for a picnic on the glorious white sandy beach – just one more good reason for travelling the high seas to get here.



HISTORY

Lanzarote was the first Canary Island to fall to Jean de Béthencourt in 1402, marking the beginning of the Spanish conquest. Along with Fuerteventura, the island was frequently raided by Moroccan pirates based along the northwest African coast, barely 100km away. The problem accelerated during the 16th century, but the Moroccans weren't the only source of grief. British buccaneers such as Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir John Hawkins and John Poole also plundered the island, as did French bearers of the skull and crossbones such as Jean Florin and Pegleg le Clerc.

By the middle of the 17th century, misery, piracy and emigration had reduced the number of islanders to just 300.

As if they hadn't suffered enough, in the 1730s massive volcanic eruptions destroyed a dozen towns and some of the island's most fertile land. But the islanders were to discover an ironic fact: the character of the volcanic soil proved a highly fertile bedrock for farming (particularly wine grapes), which brought relative prosperity to the descendants of those who had fled from the lava flows to Gran Canaria.

Today, with tourism flourishing alongside the healthy, if small, agricultural sector, the island is home to around 127,000 people, not counting all the holiday blow-ins who, at any given time, can more than double the population.

INFORMATION

Books & Maps

Noel Rochford's *Landscapes of Lanzarote* includes useful suggestions for drives and walks of varying duration around the island.

Michel Houellebecq's *Lanzarote* has a haunting Camus quality. This taut, fictionalised account covers a package tour to the island taken by a Frenchman. In the volcanically charred landscape of Lanzarote the main character appears to see the hint of rebirth; a renewal by fire.

Michelin map No 221, *Lanzarote & Fuerteventura*, is good to have, although the free tourist map will usually suffice and includes functional maps of Arrecife, Puerto del Carmen, Playa Blanca and Costa Tegui. You can pick it up at tourist offices and hotels.

Newspapers & Magazines

The semi-official *Lancelot* (available free), published weekly in Spanish and quarterly in English and German, is available at many newsstands. A monthly glossy, the *Lanzarote Gazette* includes what's-on information.

ACCOMMODATION

Most accommodation is in apartments and bungalows, the majority concentrated in the resorts of Puerto del Carmen, Playa Blanca and Costa Tegui. The main problem for independent travellers is that the majority get block-booked by tour operators months in advance.

Arrecife may not blow you away as a capital, but can make a good base and there are usually rooms available, even in high season.

To assist you with advance booking, check out www.lanzaroteaccommodation.com, <http://lanzaroteisland.com/hotels>, www.lanzaroterural.com (in Spanish), www.lanzaroteisland.com/casas_rurales and www.ecoturismoocanarias.com; the latter three specialise in *casas rurales*.

Among the top recommended accommodation is the beautiful 18th-century hacienda of Finca de Las Salinas (p137); the rustic authenticity of Caserío de Mozaga (p131); Cardona (p126), a particularly good-value *pensión* in the capital; the unparalleled opulence of Hotel Meliá Salinas (p129); and the tranquil location coupled with superb facilities of Finca de la Florida (p131).

ACTIVITIES

If lolling on the beach turning the pages of the local bonkbuster starts to pall, it may be time for something marginally more active. The wild and rugged north coast sports some of Europe's finest surfing beaches. Check out the surf school at La Caleta de Famara (p135) or, if you're confident to go solo, head further east to La Santa, which has a wave-crashing beach just outside town.

The beaches of the south coast are also excellent for kite boarding, windsurfing and diving. The sea temperature rarely drops below 18°C and underwater visibility ranges between 6m and 20m, depending on the season.

Cycling, whether it be a gentle pedal around your resort or a more strenuous outing along the lightly trafficked roads, is also possible, while the best hiking can be found around Parque Nacional de Timanfaya (p136), although you must reserve in advance.



FESTIVALS & EVENTS

February–March

Carnaval Celebrated with gusto, particularly in Arrecife, although it is slightly less rambunctious than the revelry in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and Santa Cruz de Tenerife. Festivities kick off the week before Ash Wednesday.

July

Fiesta de Nuestra Señora del Carmen (16 July)

Takes place annually in Tegüise in celebration of the town's saint, with plenty of dancing in the street and general merriment.

August

Fiesta de la Vendimia (mid-August) A jolly festival that takes place at Bodega La Geria. Newly harvested grapes are poured into a vast vat for everyone to have a good trample upon (fortunately, they don't find their way into a wine bottle!).

Día de San Ginés (25 August) The day of the island's patron saint is a major fiesta in even the smallest *pueblo* (village). In Arrecife, the streets surrounding the Iglesia de San Ginés are home to the most boisterous celebrations.

October

César Manrique-Puerto Calero International

Regatta (mid-October) Prestigious yachting regatta that takes place off the southern coast. It includes the TP 52 racing class – the Formula 1 of the international regatta world.

LANZAROTE FOR CHILDREN

There's plenty going on for children on the island; several of the Manrique sights (see p119) should keep them suitably gob-smacked, while the southern resorts have plenty of kiddie-gear activities. The island's most touted attraction is the Guinate Tropical Park (p135) with its birds, aquarium, botanical garden and various shows. There are plenty of sea-themed activities, aside from the ubiquitous glass-bottom boats. Submarine Safaris (p140) submerge to the watery depths and the company also runs a kids club where, according to the brochure, the children learn how to build a submarine. **Paracraft** (☎ 928 51 26 61; www.lanzarote.com/paracraft; Playa Chica, Puerto del Carmen; ☎ 10am–6pm) offers parascending (10 minutes, €70) and jet-ski rental (20 minutes, €45). If the sea starts to pall, Costa Tegüise's **Aquapark** (☎ 928 59 21 28; Avenida De Tegüise s/n; adult/2–12yr €21/15; ☎ 10am–6pm) has the usual watery assortment of rides and slides.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The following provides a brief overview of air and boat options. For more comprehensive information, see the Getting There & Away sections for specific towns.

Air

From **Guasimeta airport** (☎ 928 84 60 00; www.aena.es), 6km southwest of Arrecife, **Binter** (☎ 902 39 13 92; www.binternet.com) has at least 10 daily flights to Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (45 minutes), at least four daily to Tenerife Norte (50 minutes) and two weekly to Tenerife Sur (50 minutes). Operators from the mainland include **Air Europa** (www.aireuropa.com), **Iberia** (www.iberia.com) and **Spanair** (www.spanair.com).

Budget airlines from various airports in the UK, including **Easyjet** (www.easyjet.com), **Ryan Air** (www.ryanair.com), **Thomson Fly** (www.thomsonfly.com) and **Excel Airways** (www.xl.com), fly to Lanzarote.

Boat

For details on the ferry services from Arrecife to Gran Canaria, see p127. For details on Fred Olsen ferry services between Playa Blanca and Corralejo (Fuerteventura), see p142.

GETTING AROUND

To/From the Airport

Buses 22 and 23 (€1, 20 minutes) connect the airport and Arrecife twice hourly between 7.20am and 10.50pm Monday to Friday. Services run between 8.50am and 10.50pm on weekends. A taxi to/from the airport and Playa Blanca costs around €35.

Bus

Arrecife Bus (☎ 928 81 15 22; www.arrecifebus.com) has a frequent service around the Arrecife area, especially to Puerto del Carmen and Costa Tegüise. Other routes connect with Playa Blanca in the south and inland towns such as Tegüise. Otherwise, services are minimal or nonexistent.

Car

Car-rental offices are widespread. A reasonable local choice is **Cabrera Medina** (☎ 928 51 11 26; www.cabreramedina.com; Calle Ruperto González Negrín 8), which has a central Arrecife office and good prices (from €35 per day). Street parking is relatively easy to find in Arrecife.

Taxi

Recommended only for shorter trips, a **taxi** (☎ 928 52 22 11) will cost considerably more than the average car rental.

ARRECIFE

pop 53,920

Arrecife is a small, manageable city with a pleasant Mediterranean-style promenade, an inviting sandy beach and – it has to be said – a disarming backstreet hotchpotch of sun-bleached, peeling buildings, elegant boutiques, rough bars and good (and bad) restaurants. The sights are scarce yet interesting and include a couple of castles, a fashionable cultural centre and a pretty lagoon. If anything, Arrecife's most notable quality is that it's a no-nonsense working town that earns its living from something other than tourism.

HISTORY

The single biggest factor behind Arrecife's lack of pizzazz is that it only became the island's capital in 1852. Until then, Teguise ruled supreme. Although Teguise is today a relatively modest town, its architectural heritage shows what Arrecife missed out on by being a port for the erstwhile capital.

In 1574 the Castillo de San Gabriel was first constructed (it was subsequently attacked and rebuilt) to protect the port. Its sister further up the coast, the Castillo de San José, was raised in 1771.

By the close of the 18th century, a semblance of a town had taken uncertain shape around the harbour. As its commerce grew and the threat of sea raids dropped off in the 19th century, Arrecife thrived. As the defensive imperatives for keeping the capital inland receded, the move of the island's administration to Arrecife became inevitable.

ORIENTATION

Arrecife is easy to navigate. With the notable exceptions of the Castillo de San José and the port, everything of interest is located in a tight area around the centre. If you arrive by bus, alight at Playa del Reducto and walk eastwards to the centre of town.

The main streets for shops and restaurants are La Marina and the pedestrianised Avenida León y Castillo.

INFORMATION

Emergency

Bomberos (Fire Brigade; ☎ 928 81 48 58)

Cruz Roja (Red Cross; ☎ 928 81 22 22) Ring for an ambulance.

FOOD & DRINK

The Lanzarote cuisine does not vary dramatically from that of its neighbouring islands. The Canary staple, *gofio* (toasted grains), is common here, as are the addictive *papas arrugadas* (wrinkly potatoes) accompanied by a *mojo* sauce, including *mojo verde* (with parsley), *mojo de cilantro* (with fresh coriander) and the classic *mojo picón* (with spicy-hot paprika). An excellent traditional restaurant is La Era (p138) in Yaiza.

San Bartolomé is the geographical centre of Lanzarote and an important agricultural region where vegetables grow in the sandy *jable* soil, unique to the island. The main crops are watermelons, squash and *batatas* (sweet potatoes); the latter were introduced into the Canaries from the Antilles and, owing to a typing error, initially confused with regular potatoes. They are an important ingredient in the ubiquitous black pudding.

Lanzarote has an indigenous seafood, the *lapa*, which is a species of limpet traditionally grilled (which releases the flesh from the shell) and accompanied by a green *mojo*. Note that, although they do not look as appealing, the black-fleshed *lapas* are tastier than the orange variety.

Do try the local wines while you are here (see the itinerary on p120); the vines flourish in the black volcanic soil and are planted in small craters to protect them from the wind. The grapes are planted and harvested manually, resulting in high labour costs. When you buy a bottle of Lanzarote-origin wine you actively contribute to the preservation of a traditional method of viticulture in danger of dying out. Interestingly, Lanzarote vines were not afflicted by the phylloxera disease that destroyed many European vineyards in the mid-19th century. Thus, the Lanzarote grapes you enjoy in your wine today are the very same variety drunk by inhabitants here over 200 years ago.

Tourist Information

Tourist office (☎ 928 81 31 74; www.turismolanzarote.com; La Marina s/n; ☎ 8am–3pm Mon–Fri) Located in a fabulous band rotunda—meets—tourist office building on the promenade and has good city maps.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Converted in 1994 by the Fundación César Manrique into a sleek modern-art museum, the **Museo de Arte Contemporáneo** (MIAC; ☎ 928 81 23 21; Carretera de Puerto Naos; admission free; ☎ 11am–9pm) is housed in the **Castillo de San José**, which was built in the 18th century to deal with pirates and, at a time of famine on the island, to provide unemployed locals with a public-works job scheme. Today it houses the most important collection of modern art in the Canaries. Aside from a couple of early works by Manrique himself (which may help explain why he turned to architecture), artists such as Miró, Millares, Rivera, Gerardo Rueda, Semper and Tapiés are on show. Both gallery and restaurant (opposite) are well worth the 30-minute walk or €3.50 taxi ride from the city centre.

Another vibrant gallery space is the **Centro Insular de Cultura El Almacén** (☎ 928 81 01 21; Calle José Betancort 33; admission free; ☎ 8am–3pm Mon–Fri), a cultural centre housed in a former warehouse that has had a stylish makeover, once again influenced by Manrique. There are exhibitions, a cinema (showing original-version films) and a bar and restaurant named after César's old buddy, Picasso, where you can enjoy live music at weekends.

The city's second castle, the curiously squat 16th-century **Castillo de San Gabriel** was sorely tested on several occasions by Moroccan and European pirates. Today it is home to occasional exhibitions, but generally closed to the public.

The **Iglesia de San Ginés** (Plaza de San Ginés), an attractive church consecrated to the island's patron saint, was built in 1665 and features a statue – which originated in Cuba – of said saint. Opening hours vary. The nearby **Charco de San Ginés** is an attractive lagoon that could be a commercialised, Portofino-style place but, thankfully, it's not (yet). The buildings and restaurants here are a beguiling combo of mildly down-at-heel and freshly whitewashed with blue trim.

If you fancy a dip, **Playa del Reducto** is a superb white sandy beach, a thong's throw from Calle Dr Rafael González Negrín. It's safe for

children, reasonably clean and, generally, surprisingly empty.

Pedal-power aficionados should head to **Ciclomanía** (☎ 928 81 75 35; www.ciclomania.es; Calle Almirante Boado Endeiza 9; mountain bikes per day €10; ☎ closed Sun), which rents out mountain bikes and all the extras, including children's seats and helmets.

SLEEPING

Arrecife can make a handy base, especially given the welcome proliferation of bars and restaurants at the end of a long sightseeing day. Note that business travellers often base themselves here, meaning that accommodation at weekends can be cheaper than midweek.

Budget

Cardona (☎ 928 81 10 08; Calle 18 Julio 11; s/d €27/33) A dapper central *pensión* (guesthouse) with a sparkling marble lobby and bright rooms. The institution-green colour scheme could go, but the staff are gracious and the price is right.

Midrange

Hotel Miramar (☎ 928 80 15 22; www.hmimirar.com; Avenida Coll 2; s/d/tr €48/63/80; ♿ ☎) Waterfront Miramar has been subjected to an adventurous paint palette in the public spaces, while the rooms are more subdued with blue-and-gold décor, fitted carpets and small balconies. Breakfast is a high, with its ocean views from the roof terrace.

our pick Hotel Diamar (☎ 928 81 56 56; www.hoteldiamar.com; Avenida Fred Olsen 8; s with breakfast €59–64, d with breakfast €70–77; ♿ ☎) Opened in 2006, privately owned Diamar has a boutique feel and is a welcome addition to Arrecife's hotel scene. Overlooking the beach, the rooms are good-looking and large and set around a central atrium with traditional Canarian balconies. Those with a sea view cost slightly more. There is wi-fi, a cafeteria and an elegant restaurant (mains from €7).

Hotel Lancelot (☎ 928 80 50 99; hlancelot@terra.es; Avenida Mancomunidad 9; s/d €63/78; ♿ ☎) Recently revamped rooms have a five-star feel with their king-size beds, sexy abstract prints, plush décor and ample balconies with ocean views. There's a rooftop pool and wi-fi access, plus live, smoochy jazz in the bar.

EATING

Mesón La Tinaja (☎ 928 81 44 96; Calle Guenia 2; raciones €3–12; ☎ closed Sun night) This restaurant specialises in traditional Basque dishes like

black pudding from Burgos, red peppers stuffed with codfish and red sausage from Bera. More international fare includes tasty curried rice with vegetables.

Domus Pompeii (☎ 928 81 42 16; Calle José Betancourt 19; mains €7-10; (V)) The owner of this trattoria is from Pompeii so expect faux-Roman surroundings and delicious thin-crust Neapolitan pizza, plus homemade pasta with simple, fresh sauces. The house wine is superb.

Restaurant La Puntilla (☎ 928 81 36 13; El Charco de San Ginés; mains €7-14) The breezy blue-and-white colour scheme adds to the charm of this lake-side restaurant with its view of the bobbing boats. The menu includes seafood dishes like octopus with potatoes in *mojo* and fried squid.

MIAC Restaurant (☎ 928 81 23 21; Castillo de San José; mains €11-43; ☎ 1-3.45pm & 7.30-11pm, bar 11am-midnight) Situated in the Castillo de San José, along with the art gallery (see opposite), is Arrecife's greatest gastronomic-visual experience. Glide down the spiral staircase and order some wonderful meat and fish dishes in the grooviest possible setting. The huge wraparound windows overlook the port and the décor is the usual Manrique mix of airy and inventive. The bow-tied service completes the dress-for-dinner feel.

There's a smattering of breezy outdoor cafés and restaurants on Calle Ruperto González Negrín and La Marina. **La Tavernetta** (☎ 928 80 75 09; cnr La Marina & Calle Tresguerra; mains €5-7; (V)) is a winner with its picture windows and vast menu, including bacon-and-egg breakfasts, healthy salads, fish and meat dishes and a heavenly chocolate soufflé. For self-catering, there's a modest **covered market** (Calle Liebre; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Sat).

DRINKING

There's plenty of nightlife choice in town, ranging from gritty local bars to intimate chill-out cafés – and just about everything in between. The main moving-and-shaking clubs are located on one short strip of central Calle José Antonio.

Bar Andalucía (☎ 928 08 36 07; Calle Luis Martín 5; ☎ closed Sun) Right off the main shopping strut and sporting Andalusian tiles, paintings for sale and straight-from-Seville tapas

like stuffed peppers and *patatas alioli* (fried potatoes with garlic mayonnaise).

Divino Doblón (Calle José Antonio 57; ☎ 11pm-4am) A nautical-themed cavernous place attracting throngs of young revellers with its three bars and energetic mix of music.

La Calle Disco Pub (Calle José Antonio 74; ☎ 10pm-late) has regular live bands along with neighbour **El Convento** (Calle José Antonio 76; ☎ 10pm-late), which has arches and columns but little else ecclesiastical. Both clubs get going around midnight, with DJs spinning a mix of music, including funky house, retro and rocky Latino.

GETTING THERE & AWAY To/From the Airport

Lanzarote's airport is 6km south of Arrecife. Buses 22 and 23 (€1, 20 minutes) run between the airport and Arrecife every 30 minutes or thereabouts between 7.10am and 10.40pm Monday to Friday (between 8.40am and 10.40pm on weekends). A taxi will cost about €9.

There's a **tourist office** (☎ 928 84 60 73; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon & Wed, 9.30am-9.30pm Tue & Thu, 9am-9.30pm Fri & Sat, 10.30am-9.30pm Sun) in the arrivals hall.

To/From the Port

Puerto de los Mármoles is about 4km north-east of central Arrecife. The Arrecife-Costa Teguise bus calls in at the port. A taxi costs about €3.50.

Boat

The weekly **Acciona-Trasmediterránea** (☎ 902 45 46 45; www.trasmediterranea.es) ferry (adult/child €256/128, 28 hours) to Cádiz on mainland Spain stops at Arrecife on the way from Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. Accommodation is in cabins and it leaves at 3pm on Friday. The company frequently has two-for-one special fares.

Naviera Armas (☎ 902 45 65 00; www.navieraarmas.com) has daily ferries (adult/child €40/16, 7¼ hours) to Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. There are seven daily ferries (five on Sundays) from Playa Blanca to Corralejo on Fuerteventura (€16, 25 minutes).

You can get tickets at the *estación marítima* (ferry terminal) or at the **Acciona-Trasmediterránea/Naviera Armas office** (☎ 928 81 10 19; Calle José Antonio 90; ☎ 8.15am-1.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.15-10.45am Sat), or up to one hour before embarkation.

BONO BUS

If you are planning on making a few trips, invest in a **Bono Bus** card, which can save you around 30% off the fare. The cards cost €12 and €22 and are purchased at bus stations. Tell the driver your destination and the amount will be deducted from your card via a stamping machine.

Bus

Arrecife Bus services crisscross the island from the **bus station** (Via Medular). Many west-bound buses also stop at Playa del Reducto. Bus 2 (€1.40, 40 minutes, about every 20 minutes) runs to Puerto del Carmen, while bus 1 (€1, 20 minutes, about every 20 minutes) serves Costa Teguisse. Bus 6 (€2.95, 1½ hours, 12 daily) goes to Playa Blanca via Puerto del Carmen and buses 7 and 9 (€1, 30 minutes, up to nine daily) go to Teguisse via Tahiche. Three buses on weekdays (two daily on weekends) head north for Orzola (€2.95, 1½ hours), from where you can get a boat out to the islet of Graciosa.

Car & Motorcycle

You will find plenty of rental companies, especially around Avenida Mancomunidad and Calle Dr Rafael González Negrin.

GETTING AROUND**Bus**

A couple of *guaguas municipales* (local buses) follow circuits around town, but you're unlikely to need them.

Taxi

There's a taxi rank beside the tourist office on La Marina and another on Calle José Antonio. Otherwise call ☎ 928 80 31 04.

AROUND ARRECIFE

COSTA TEGUISE

Northeast of Arrecife is Costa Teguisse, which is perfectly pleasant, provided you are not expecting cobbled streets and crumbling buildings. This is a purpose-built holiday resort, built on a grid system, with bustling shopping centres, good beaches and water sports, plenty of mediocre (and better) bars and restaurants but, inevitably perhaps, no

real soul. There's not even an original fishing village at its heart.

The most appealing beach is Playa de las Cucharas. Those further south suffer unfortunate views of the port and industry near Arrecife. The Centro Comercial Las Cucharas shopping centre is the resort's focal point.

Information

Clínica Lanzarote (☎ 928 59 02 21; Avenida Islas Canarias 13) A 24-hour medical clinic in the Apartamentos Lanzarote Gardens complex.

Internet Access (☎ 928 34 68 16; Apartamento Celeste, Avenida Islas Canarias; per hr €1.60; ☎ 10.30am-midnight)

Post office (☎ 928 82 72 68; Avenida Islas Canarias 12) In the Centro Comercial Las Maretas.

Tourist office (☎ 928 59 25 42; Avenida Islas Canarias s/n; ☎ 10am-5pm) Has piles of brochures.

Sights

The Thursday **craft and produce market** (Centro Pueblo Marinero; ☎ 11am-4pm) deservedly draws the crowds. The Friday market is more mainstream and naff.

Activities**DIVING**

Sign up at long-established **Calipso Diving** (☎ 928 59 08 79; www.calipso-diving.com; Centro Comercial Calipso; one dive €25) for courses and dives; there is equipment hire for experienced divers. The **Aquatis Diving Center** (☎ 928 59 04 07; www.diving-lanzarote.net; Playa de las Cucharas; dive €25) offers similar.

WINDSURFING

Take advantage of the steady local winds with **Windsurf Paradise Lanzarote** (☎ 928 34 60 22; www.windsurflanzarote.com; Calle La Corvina 8; 1½hr beginner course €35), on Playa Las Cucharas, which also rents out equipment.

CYCLING

For bicycle hire, check out **Bike Station** (☎ 628 10 21 77; www.mylanzarote.com; CC Maretas s/n; rental day/week €11/70), which also arranges tours (from €30) of the island.

GOLF

If you fancy a hit of golf, **Costa Teguisse Golf** (☎ 928 59 05 12; www.lanzarote-golf.com; Avenida Golf s/n) has 18 holes (from €55) and offers lessons (from €180 for nine lessons). Club hire is available.

DETOUR

En route from Tahiche to Teguisse you reach the unassuming small town of **Nazaret**. In the centre, look for a sign to Lagomar. Follow this up through the sleepy side streets until you come to the **Lagomar** restaurant. Stop for a drink in the bar, set around a white puddle of a pool with tunnels and cosy seating. The architecture has a New Mexico-meets-Moroccan look with its towers, cupolas and interesting angles built into the side of a cliff. It was designed by Manrique for Omar Sharif and was supposedly lost by the actor in a spectacularly unsuccessful game of bridge.

WALKING

Olita Treks (☎ 619 16 99 89; www.olita-treks.com; Centro Comercial Mareta; walks from €35) conducts excellent local walks, which cover turf such as Isla Graciosa, the island's volcanoes or various coastal stretches. Walks are either half- or full-day, and the price includes pick-up and transport. English is spoken.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Meliá Salinas (☎ 928 59 00 40; Avenida Islas Canarias 16; www.solmelia.com; s/d €357/462, ste €699-974; villa €1362-2160; P ♿ ♻️ 🚰 ♿) You may not have the funds to stay here, but do drift in for a drink and enjoy the botanical blast of the soaring central atrium with its trees, waterfalls, bridges, flowers and ponds designed by (who else?) César Manrique. The rooms are predictably sumptuous and the villas are glorious. Low-season reductions are available.

There's no shortage of restaurants, although Chinese, Indian and English pub fare are troublingly more prevalent than traditional Canarian cuisine.

Patio Canario (☎ 928 34 62 34; Plaza de Pueblo, Avenida Islas Canarias; mains €6-12) This place specialises in fresh fish and seafood from the Isla de la Graciosa. The outside terrace is set in an attractive courtyard, with a handy German bakery across the way for that a slice of strudel for afters.

Getting There & Away

Bus 1 (€1, 20 minutes, about every 20 minutes) connects with Arrecife (via Puerto de los Mármoles) from 7am to midnight.

TAHICHE

Fundación César Manrique (☎ 928 84 31 38; adult/under 12yr €7.50/free; ☎ 10am-6pm daily Jul-Oct, 10am-6pm Mon-Sat & 10am-3pm Sun Nov-Jun) is an art gallery and a centre for the island's cultural life. Only 6km north of Arrecife, it was home to César Manrique, who enjoys a posthumous status on the island akin to that of a mystical hero. He built his house, Taro de Tahiche, into the lava fields just outside the town. The subterranean rooms are, in fact, huge air bubbles left behind by flowing lava. It's a real James Bond hide-away, with white leather seats slotted into cave-like dens and a sunken swimming pool. There's a whole gallery devoted to Manrique, plus minor works by some of his contemporaries, including Picasso, Chillida, Miró, Sempere and Tàpies. Tragically, in September 1992, only six months after the foundation opened its doors, César Manrique was killed a few yards away in a car accident.

At least seven buses a day stop here on their way from Arrecife to Teguisse. Look for the huge mobile sculpture by Manrique dominating the roundabout, and walk 200m down the San Bartolomé road.

TEGUISE

pop 15825

Teguisse, 12km north of Arrecife, has a North Africa-meets-Spanish-pueblo feel. It is an intriguing mini-oasis of low-rise buildings set around a central plaza and surrounded by the bare plains of central Lanzarote. Firmly on the tourist trail, there are several shops here selling flowing garments and handmade jewellery, plus restaurants, bars and a handful of monuments testifying to the fact that the town was the island's capital until Arrecife took the baton in 1852.

Maciot, the son of Jean de Béthencourt, moved here when it was a Guanche settlement and married Teguisse, daughter of the one-time local chieftain. Various convents were founded and the town prospered. But with prosperity came other problems, including pirates who plundered the town several times, hence the ominously named Calle de la Sangre (Blood Street).

Teguisse has a large and touristy Sunday morning market. Surprisingly, there is a dearth of places to stay in town.

Sights

Sprawling **Palacio Spínola** (Plaza de la Constitución; admission €3; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sun) was built between 1730 and 1780 and passed to the Spínolas, a prominent Lanzarote family, in 1895. Nowadays it serves as both museum (of sorts) and the official residence of the Canary Islands government. It deserves a leisurely perusal, although many of the furnishings are clearly a few decades more modern than their surrounds.

Across the plaza is the eclectic **Iglesia de la Virgen de Guadalupe** (☎ 9am-1.30pm Mon-Sat), which has suffered numerous remodellings since it was first built in the 16th century, leaving it in a rather confused state.

Several monasteries dot the town, and wandering Tegüise's pedestrianised lanes is a pleasure in itself. Keep your eyes peeled for the Franciscan **Convento de Miraflores**, the **Convento de Santo Domingo** and the **Palacio de Herrera y Rojas**.

The **Castillo de Santa Bárbara** is not only the oldest fort on the Canaries, but the only castle that really looks the part. Perched up on Guanapay peak, with sweeping views across the plains, it was erected in the 16th century by Sancho de Herrera, consequently expanded and then fell into disuse. Since being restored, it houses the modest, yet fascinating, **Museo del Emigrante Canario** (☎ 928 84 59 13; admission €3; ☎ 10am-4pm daily summer, 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun winter), a poignant collection relating to the long history of migration from the islands to Spain's American colonies.

Eating

our pick **Casa Leon** (☎ 928 84 59 31; Calle Leon y Castillo s/n; mains €8-10; ☎ closed Mon; (V)) Run by affable Frenchman Philippe and his Canarian partner José, this small restaurant shares its locale with a health-food shop and alternative-therapy centre. The cuisine is essentially Moroccan, with a few healthy international options; there is a generous buffet on Sunday. The ambience is laid-back and cosy with warm colours, Moroccan lamps and provocative artwork.

Acatife (☎ 928 84 50 37; Calle San Miguel 4; mains €8-16) A memorable traditional restaurant; look for the ancient wooden door. The interior continues the rustic theme, with beams and chunky wooden furniture, while the food is down-to-earth and hearty, as befits the surroundings.

Getting There & Away

Numerous buses, including 7 and 9 (€1, 30 minutes) from Arrecife, stop in Tegüise en route to destinations such as Orzola and Haría. There are also Sunday buses to the town's market from Costa Tegüise, Puerto del Carmen and Playa Blanca.

SAN BARTOLOMÉ & AROUND

Starting life as the Guanche settlement of Ajei, San Bartolomé (population 17,452) ended up in the 18th century as the de facto private fiefdom of a militia leader, Francisco Guerra Clavijo y Perdomo, and his descendants.

A couple of kilometres northwest of town, on the Tinajo road, rises up the modernistic, white **Monumento al Campesino** (Peasants' Monument), erected in 1968 by (surprise, surprise) César Manrique to honour the thankless labour that most islanders had endured for generations. Adjacent stands the **Museo del Campesino** (☎ 928 52 01 36; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm), which is more a scattering of craft workshops, including weaving and ceramics, that may or may not be open. Most people come here to eat – ironic for a monument dedicated to those who habitually endured hunger – at the **restaurant** (☎ 928 52 01 36; mains €5-11; ☎ 12.30-4pm). The dining room is vast, circular and sunken, complete with tunnel. There is a good wine and rum list and well-prepared local cuisine, accompanied by Canarian music. Try the stone bass in coriander sauce or chicken casserole with garlic and potatoes.

Three kilometres southwest, en route to pretty Yaiza, is the **Museo del Vino El Grifo** (☎ 928 52 49 51; www.elgrifo.com in Spanish; admission incl glass of wine €3; ☎ 10.30am-6pm). This is the former bodega (old-style wine bar) and winery of the El Grifo company, where you can see wine-making equipment, some of it dating back to 1775, buy all sorts of wine-drinking requisites and indulge in a little wine tasting (€0.90 to €1.10 for a half-filled glass). We recommend grabbing a seat and quaffing through the five different wines on offer (€7.50), as long as you're not driving.

This region has several excellent winery routes, including one between San Bartolomé and Tinajo, which includes the excellent **Bodegas La Vegueta** (jquevedo@faycan.es), **Bodega Tinache** (www.tinache.com), **Bodega Vega de**

Yuco (bodegavegadayuco@hotmail.com) and **Bodega Mozaga** (bodegasmozaga@hotmail.com); see p120.

In San Bartolomé itself, the **Museo Etnográfico Tanit** (☎ 928 52 23 34; www.museotanit.com; Calle Constitución 1; admission €6; 🕒 10am–5pm Mon–Fri, to 3pm Sat), set in an 18th-century Canarian house, concentrates on the last 200 years of local life, with artefacts, equipment and exhibitions. English explanations are available.

Sleeping

If you want to stay in these parts, there are a couple of delightful rural options.

ourpick Caserío de Mozaga (☎ 928 52 00 60; www.caseriodemozaga.com; Calle Mozaga 8; d with breakfast €115; 🕒) Northwest of San Bartolomé, in the village of Mozaga, this 18th-century family home retains its rustic authenticity with a central courtyard complete with original *aljibe* (water system). The rooms have high ceilings and are graced with family heirlooms. The restaurant (mains from €10) has an excellent reputation.

Finca de la Florida (☎ 928 52 11 24; www.hotelfinca delaflorida.com; El Islote 90; s/d with breakfast €66/120, mains from €7; 📍) Located just off the road to Yaiza, this traditional house with decorative wooden balconies has large rooms washed in Canary yellow with wood furnishings and sky-blue textiles. The property is surrounded by vineyards with volcano views. There is plenty to entertain, including a gym, tennis court, spa, sauna and minigolf.

THE NORTH

Lanzarote's northern towns and villages are typically clusters of whitewashed buildings surrounded by a felt-covered landscape of lichen and lava fields. The principal attractions are the combined works of nature and César Manrique: his house (now a gallery), a pair of breathtaking lava caves, cactus

CÉSAR MANRIQUE

Born on 24 April 1919, César Manrique grew up in relative tranquillity by the sea in Arrecife. After a stint as a volunteer with Franco's forces during the 1936–39 Civil War, he enrolled in Madrid's Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in 1945, having already held his first exhibition five years earlier in his home town of Arrecife.

Influenced by Picasso and Matisse, Manrique held his first major exhibition of abstract works in 1954. In the following years, his opus toured most of Europe, and in 1964 he was invited by one of his admirers, Nelson Rockefeller, to the USA where he exhibited in New York's Guggenheim Museum. But Manrique never forgot his birthplace and returned home in 1968, after his successful US tour, brimming with ideas for enhancing what he felt to be the incomparable beauty of Lanzarote.

He began with a campaign to preserve traditional building methods and another to ban the blight of advertising billboards. A multifaceted artist, Manrique subsequently turned his flair and vision to a broad range of projects, with the whole of Lanzarote becoming his canvas. In all, he carried out seven major projects on the island and numerous others elsewhere in the archipelago and beyond. At the time of his death, he had several more on the boil. See p119 for an itinerary of Manrique's sites.

On the grand scale, it was primarily Manrique's persistent lobbying for maintaining traditional architecture and protecting the natural environment that prompted the *cabildo* (government) to pass laws restricting urban development. The growing wave of tourism since the early 1980s has, however, threatened to sweep away all before it. But Manrique's ceaseless opposition to such unchecked urban sprawl touched a nerve with many Conejeros and led to the creation of an environmental group known as El Guincho, which has had some success in revealing – and at times even reversing – abuses by developers. Manrique was posthumously made its honorary president.

As you pass through villages across the island, you'll see how traditional stylistic features remain the norm. The standard whitewashed houses are adorned with green-painted doors, window shutters and strange onion-shaped chimney pots. In such ways, Manrique's influence and spirit endure.

SEEING RED

Fields of cacti, their leaves green, fleshy and the shape of giant rabbit ears, are about all that grows around the small village of Guatiza. And grow they do, in profusion, hemming in the *pueblo* (village). They're a last reminder of what was once a thriving trade on Tenerife and the eastern islands.

Much more than a harsh desert plant, they're home and food to *la cochinita* (cochineal insects). To this day, these tiny insects are collected in the tens of thousands. Each one contributes a blood-red droplet of the dye cochineal, used as a colouring in food and cosmetics.

Elsewhere, the once-thriving cochineal trade has long since withered, killed off by competition from synthetic dyes. But in Guatiza a centuries-old cottage industry still just manages to persist.

gardens and a stunning lookout. We recommend as a minimum the Jameos del Agua cave (opposite).

GUATIZA & CHARCO DEL PALO

Just north of tiny Guatiza is the **Jardín de Cactus** (Cactus Gardens; ☎ 928 52 93 97; admission €5; ☎ 10am-6pm; 📍), signalled by an 8m-high spiky metal cactus, the work of – you've guessed it – César Manrique. Built in an old quarry, it comes over as more a giant work of art than a botanical garden. There are nearly 1500 different varieties of this prickly customer, every single one labelled. The entrance fee includes a hot or cold drink at the on-site restaurant.

If you fancy bathing (or even shopping!) in the buff, a few kilometres north of here is the naturist resort of **Charco del Palo** (d from €55) with pleasant sandy beaches and rocky coves. To get here, take the narrow road to the beach just south of Mala. There is bungalow-style accommodation available if you want to stay a few days with like-minded souls (mainly Germans). Contact **Obona** (☎ 928 17 31 76; Calle Cabrera Peraza 6, Charco del Palo).

ARRIETA

pop 1929

Next northwards is the fishing village of Arrieta. Its main attraction is the small beach, **Playa de la Garita**, a combination of volcanic rock and sand with a congenial beach bar and restaurant, Chiringuito Beach, where you can kick back with a beer and tapas.

You'll find blue-balconied **Apartamentos Arrieta** (☎ 928 84 82 30; Calle Garita 25; 2-person apt €30) on the main street. It's a well-maintained place with good-sized, pine-

furnished apartments and a vast rooftop terrace. Rafael, the elderly owner, only speaks Spanish.

Smack bang on Arrieta's jetty is **Restaurante El Charcón** (☎ 928 84 81 10; Muelle Arrieta; mains €6-10; ☎ closed Wed), which dates from 1988. The menu is fish-based, including grilled octopus for under €8. There is outdoor seating for catching the rays.

Bus 9 (€2.95, 1½ hours, three daily Monday to Friday, two on weekends) from Arrecife to Orzola calls in here.

MALPAÍS DE LA CORONA

The 'badlands of the crown' are the living (or dead) testimony to the volcanic upsurges that shook the north of the island thousands of years ago. Plant life is quietly, patiently, winning its way back, and it is here that you can visit two of the island's better-known volcanic caverns.

Cueva de los Verdes & Jameos del Agua

More obviously than on any of the other islands, lava is the hallmark of Lanzarote. So, unsurprisingly, after the lunar wonders of the Parque Nacional de Timanfaya (p136), the flow of visitors is strongest here, at the site of an ancient lava slide into the ocean. The cavernous Cueva de los Verdes and, further 'downstream', the hollows of the Jameos del Agua – adapted by César Manrique into a kind of New Age retreat-meets-bar – are an easy 1km walk from one another.

Cueva de los Verdes (☎ 928 84 84 84; adult/under 12yr €8/free; ☎ 10am-6pm) is a yawning, 1km-long chasm, which is the most spectacular segment of an almost-8km-long lava tube left behind by an eruption that occurred 5000 years ago. As the lava ploughed down towards the sea (more than 6km of tunnel is above sea level

LOCAL VOICES

Tila Braddock hurtles along the beach on a quad bike for our rendezvous at an Arrieta beach bar. No surprises there; one of Tila's passions is promoting extreme sports in Lanzarote.

'We have to get away from this Lanzagrotty image! Unfortunately, the best-known southern resorts have been overbuilt and exploited, but there is a lot more to this island than sun, sea and karaoke! I am urging those in power to promote Lanzarote as an extreme sports destination as it is perfect, with a dramatic landscape, fantastic beaches and great climate.'

Tila really is a mover and shaker here. He was instrumental in starting both the Dash (see the boxed text, p139) and **Las Tres Islas** (www.lastresislas.com) events; the latter was first held in 2004 and covers four disciplines, three islands and two sea crossings.

'Participants have to swim from Isla Graciosa to the Lanzarote shore, and then run up the cliff to the Mirador del Río. Next, they bicycle to Playa Blanca before canoeing or windsurfing to Fuerteventura. No fuel is allowed and it culminates with a big party on the beach.'

Competitors are urged to raise sponsorship for ADAPH, an independent registered charity based in Morocco that helps disabled children and adults in the Sahara. 'I feel we have an obligation to these people who were abandoned by Spain after the death of Franco.'

Tila arrived in Puerto de Carmen from England 22 years ago as a windsurfing instructor. When he discovered the north of the island, he stayed put. 'I had discovered the *real* Lanzarote. It's greener, the food is fantastic and the locals are so friendly and laid-back.'

Together with his wife, Michelle, and their four children, Tila is slowly restoring a 100-year-old farmhouse just inland from Arrieta. The house uses solar and wind energy and is made from all natural materials, including stones wheelbarrowed in from the surrounding terrain. That doesn't mean any lack of luxury, however, as attested by the outside spa that was happily bubbling away when we arrived there later in the day.

'We're having a barbecue and party tonight, do stay!' Tila enthuses, children and dogs underfoot. A tempting offer indeed...

Check out www.youthsunited.com to learn more about Tila's fund-raising sports events on Lanzarote, together with details about how you can sign up.

today, and another 1.5km extends below the water's surface), the top layers cooled and formed a roof, beneath which the liquid magma continued to slither until the eruption exhausted itself.

You will be guided through two chambers, one below the other. The ceiling is largely covered with what look like mini-stalactites, but no water penetrates the cave. The odd pointy extrusions are where bubbles of air and lava were thrown up onto the ceiling by gases released while the boiling lava flowed; as they hit the ceiling and air, they 'froze' in the process of dripping back into the lava stream.

In spite of the name '*verde*', there's nothing green about this cave – 200 years ago it was considered the property of a shepherd family, the Verdes. At other times it served as a refuge for locals during pirate assaults on the island.

Anyone with severe back problems might think twice about entering the cave – there are a few passages that require you to bend at 90

degrees to get through. Similarly, it's no place for claustrophobes.

The visit is worthwhile in itself for a great visual gag deep inside the cave. No, we're not telling – and urge you in turn to keep it quiet from your friends. Guided tours, lasting about 45 minutes and available in English, take place when there are 50 people waiting, which usually doesn't take long to happen. Concerts of mainly jazz and blues are held here from September to April, organised by **Musical Candelaria** (☎ 649 99 09 56).

The first cavern of the **Jameos del Agua** (☎ 928 84 80 20; adult/under 12yr €8/free) resembles the nave of a vast marine basilica. Molten lava seethed through here en route to the sea, but in this case the ocean leaked in a bit, forming the startling azure lake at the heart of the Jameos. Manrique's idea of installing bars and a **restaurant** (☎ 7.30-11.30pm) around the lake, adding a pool, a concert hall seating 600 (with wonderful acoustics) and the subtly didactic Casa de los Volcanos, was a pure brainwave.

Have a closer look into the lake's waters. The tiny white flecks at the bottom are crabs. Small ones, yes, and the only known examples of *Munidopsis polymorpha* (blind crabs) away from the deepest oceans. Do heed the signs and resist the temptation to throw coins into the water – their corrosion could kill off this unique species. Like the Cueva, access for the mobility impaired is not really possible – there are a lot of steps.

Bus 9 (€2.95, 1½ hours) between Arrecife and Orzola stops at the turn-off for Jameos del Agua, but only runs three times daily Monday to Friday (7.40am, 10.30am and 3.30pm) and twice on weekends (7.40am and 3.30pm). It's better to have your own car or join a tour.

ORZOLA

Most people just pass through this northern fishing town on their way to the Isla Graciosa. Some stop for a food break in one of several restaurants flanking the port, where you can be sure that the seafood is flapping fresh, but relatively few get wind of the **beach** a couple of kilometres west of the town – about the only one in this part of the island, which is otherwise dominated by steep, uncompromising cliffs.

MINOR CANARIES

The string of tiny islets flung out north of Lanzarote are known as the Minor Canaries, and minor they certainly are. All except Isla Graciosa (aka La Graciosa) are part of a nature reserve, with access generally limited to researchers.

Isla Graciosa

This island is recommended for the ultimate stress-busting break. A day should do it, however, with anything longer being strictly for the keenest surfers (and the surfing here is world-class) or for those seeking longer-term peace and quiet.

About 600 people live on the island, virtually all in the village of Caleta del Sebo, where the Orzola boat docks. Behind it stretches 27.5 sq km of largely barren scrubland, interrupted by five minor volcanic peaks ranged from north to south. About a 30-minute walk southwest of Caleta del Sebo is delightful little Playa Francesa; there's also Playa Lambra at the northern end of the islet.

On a windy day Caleta del Sebo can seem a cross between a bare Moroccan village and a sand-swept Wild West outpost. This place is worlds away from the tourist mainstream. There are no sealed roads and the main form of transport seems to be battered old Land Rovers.

There's a smattering of places to stay.

Pensión Girasol (☎ 928 84 21 18; www.graciosaonline.com in Spanish; Avenida Virgen del Mar s/n; d €17-20), about 100m on the left from the ferry, has recently been renovated and offers standard, clean rooms. Those with sea-view balconies are well worth the few extra euros. You'll find a breezy, casual restaurant (mains €7.50 to €10) downstairs; try the delicious grilled parrot fish. Accommodation in nearby apartments (€36) can also be arranged.

Pensión Enriqueta (☎ 928 84 20 51; fax 928 84 21 29; Calle Mar de Barlovento 6; d with/without bathroom €20/17) is a block back from the waterfront. It has simple, clean doubles that leave little lasting impression. The downstairs restaurant (mains €5) is a notch up from the norm, however, with plenty of local atmosphere and good seafood dishes.

Signs offering accommodation are posted in windows throughout town. Generally, you'll get a smart little apartment sleeping up to four people for about €38 to €45 per night.

If you feel like accelerating out of first gear, boogie on down to **Las Arenas** (Calle Mar de Barlovento s/n; ☎ from 12.30am Fri & Sat), a disco pub at the back of the Enriqueta that only opens its steamy doors to revellers after midnight.

Líneas Marítimas Romero (☎ 928 84 20 70; www.geocities.com/lineas_romero; Calle García Escámez 11) runs three boats daily (four between July and September) from Orzola across to the islet (adult/child €15/8, 20 minutes). It can get very rocky between Orzola and Punta Fari-ones, so you may want to pop a seasickness pill. Unless you want to be Robinson Crusoe for the night, take the outbound 10am or noon sailing, which allows time to explore before taking the last boat back at 4pm (6pm July and August).

To get around the island, consider hiring a bike. **Bike Graciosa Island** (☎ 928 84 21 38; Muelle; bike per day from €8; ☎ 10am-1pm) has its office right in the harbour and can provide a rudimentary map to help you find those far-off beaches.

THE NORTHWEST

The island's northwest arguably offers visitors the most rewarding look at Lanzarote's natural beauty. It's a place of attractive, unspoiled towns, some great escapes and stunning panoramic views.

MIRADOR DEL RÍO

About 2km north of Yé, the Spanish armed forces set up gun batteries at the end of the 19th century at a strategic site overlooking El Río, the strait separating Lanzarote from Isla Graciosa. Spain had gone to war with the USA over control of Cuba, and you couldn't be too careful! In 1973 the ubiquitous César Manrique left his mark, converting the gun emplacement into a spectacular bug-eyed lookout point.

Mirador del Río (☎ 928 52 65 51; adult/under 12yr €4.70/free; ☎ 10am-6pm) has a good bar and souvenir shop; a drink is included in the entrance price. There are vertiginous views of the sweeping lava flows – frozen in time – that fall to the ocean, Isla Graciosa and the surrounding volcanic islets. Pay €1 to get up close and personal with a telescope.

GUINATE

The main reason for visiting the village of Guinate, about 5km south of Mirador del Río, is the **Guinate Tropical Park** (☎ 928 83 55 00; www.guinatepark.com; adult/under 12yr €14/5; ☎ 10am-5pm; 🗺), home to around 1300 rare and exotic birds, a cacti garden and some animals, including monkeys and lemurs. The parrot show is best avoided, unless you enjoy birds on bicycles and the like.

Just beyond the park is another fine (and completely free) **lookout** across El Río and the islets.

HARÍA

pop 4894

Possibly the prettiest village in Lanzarote. Set in a lush and bucolic palm-filled valley punctuated by splashes of brilliant colour from (rare) bougainvillea and poinsettia plants, this North African-style oasis was a spa for wealthy Canarios in the past. The central pedestrian avenue, Plaza León y Castillo, is shaded by eucalyptus trees and the site of a Saturday morning craft market.

Dos Hermanos (☎ 928 83 54 09; Plaza León y Castillo; mains €7.50-10) is in a choice location with tables outside on the plaza. The menu has it all, it seems, including traditional goat and lamb dishes and (if you must) cheese omelette with chips. Check out the superb sand sculptures at the craft shop next door.

If it's local atmosphere you seek, head into **Bar Ney-ya** (cnr Calle Cilla & Calle Hoya), in an old-fashioned building with high ceilings, some dark corners and outside tables; inexpensive tapas are available.

Bus 7 (€2.65, 45 minutes) connects Haría to Arrecife via Tegui and Tahiche four times daily Monday to Friday and three times a day on weekends.

LA CALETA DE FAMARA

Years before he hit the big time, Manrique whiled away many a childhood summer on the wild beach of La Caleta de Famara. It's one of the best beach spots on Lanzarote and a place where you don't have to fight for towel space on the sand. This low-key seaside hamlet, with its dramatic cliff views, has a youthful, bohemian vibe and makes few concessions to the average tourist, aside from a few choice restaurants overlooking the surf.

Famara's excellent waves offer some of Europe's finest breaks. Pedro Urrastarazu at **Famara Surf Shop** (☎ 928 52 86 76; www.famara.surf.com; El Marinero 39; 1-day surf school €39; ☎ 10am-8pm) rents boards and offers courses at various levels.

Sleeping & Eating

Apartments Famara Surf (☎ 928 52 86 76; www.famara.surf.com; El Marinero 39; 2 person apt €42) Owned by the surf shop, these are clean, well-equipped apartments with TV and fridge, whether you're here to surf or sunbathe.

Playa Famara Bungalows (☎ 928 84 51 32; www.bungalowsplayafamara.com; Urbanización Famara; bungalows from €55; 🗺) This distinctive complex is located 2km north of the main town, and is a modern step-terraced arrangement of semicircular holiday homes constructed from rock and lots of white stucco. Bungalows sleep between two and six, and longer stays (or low season) equal good discounts.

our pick El Risco (☎ 928 52 85 50; Calle Montaña Blanca 30; mains €6-11.50; ☎ closed Mon) A superb location, with a terrace overlooking the

sea and a nautical blue-and-white interior. Owner Gustavo recommends his fish and goat dishes, but has also introduced a menu of pizzas and savoury crepes to appeal to the less intrepid diner. The result makes this a winner for fussy families. The dining-room is pleasantly informal and there's a small terrace for catching the breeze.

Restaurante Sol (Calle Salvavidas 48; mains €6-13; ☎ closed Mon) Located in a simple blue-and-white building fronting the sea. Try the grilled fish or fried baby squid. This place gets packed out at weekends with noisy local families – always a good sign.

Getting There & Away

Bus 20 (€1.80, 50 minutes) connects Arrecife with La Caleta de Famara. It leaves La Caleta de Famara at 7.30am, 9am and 5.30pm and sets off from the capital at 7am, 8.30am, 2pm and 5pm, Monday to Friday only.

TIAGUA

About 10km south of La Caleta, and 8km northwest of San Bartolomé, the ecologically aware, open-air **Museo Agrícola El Patio** (☎ 928 52 91 34; admission €6; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 2.30pm Sat; ♿) recreates a 19th-century traditional farmer's house (complete with wine cellar!) and provides an insight into traditional aspects of the island's culture. Signage – including some irritatingly edifying texts – is in English. You'll see loads of old equipment and furniture, a windmill and the odd camel or donkey chewing the cud.

Tiagua is on the bus 16 (€1.10, 30 minutes) route from Arrecife to La Santa. Bus 20 (€1.10, 25 minutes) to La Caleta de Famara also calls in here.

PARQUE NACIONAL DE TIMANFAYA

The eruption that began on 1 September 1730 and convulsed the southern end of the island was among the greatest volcanic cataclysms in recorded history. A staggering 48 million cu metres of lava spouted and flowed out daily, while fusillades of molten rock were rocketed out over the countryside and into the ocean. When the eruption finally ceased to rage after six long years, over 200 sq km had been devastated, including 20 villages and 30 hamlets.

The **Montañas del Fuego** (Mountains of Fire), at the heart of this eerie 51-sq-km national park (☎ 928 84 00 57; admission €8; ☎ 9am-

5.45pm, last bus tour at 5pm), are appropriately named. When you reach the Manrique-designed lookout and **Restaurante del Diablo** (note his wonderful light fittings in the form of giant frying pans) at a rise known as the *Islote de Hilario*, try scrabbling around in the pebbles and see just how long you can hold them in your hands. At a depth of a few centimetres, the temperature is already 100°C; by 10m it's up to 600°C. The cause of this phenomenon is a broiling magma chamber 4km below the surface.

Some feeble (or rather, given the harsh environment, decidedly robust) scraps of vegetation, including 200 species of lichen, are reclaiming the earth in a few stretches of the otherwise moribund landscape of fantastic forms in shades of black, grey, maroon and red. Fine copper-hued soil slithers down volcanic cones, until it's arrested by twisted, swirling and folded mounds of solidified lava – this is one place where you really must remember to bring your camera.

The people running the show at *Islote de Hilario*, near the restaurant, gift shop and car park, have a series of endearing tricks. In one, they shove a clump of brushwood into a hole in the ground and within seconds it's converted by the subterranean furnace into a burning bush. A pot of water poured down another hole promptly gushes back up in explosive geyser fashion; you have exactly three seconds to take that impressive snap.

The **Restaurante del Diablo** (☎ 928 84 00 56; menú del día €15; ☎ noon-3.30pm; ♿) is a gag in itself – whatever meat you order you can watch sizzling on the all-natural, volcano-powered BBQ out back. The food's none-too-impressive but, hey, who's here for the cuisine? Vegetarians might feel a bit left out, though, what with all the smoking rabbit, T-bones and chicken. In the midst of all this carnivorous activity, there's a good list of local wines, some available by the half-bottle.

Included in the admission price of the national park, tan-coloured buses take you along the exciting 14km **Ruta de los Volcanes**, an excursion through some of the most spectacular volcanic country you are ever likely to see. The trilingual taped commentary includes a fascinating eyewitness account by local priest Don Agustín Cabrera including the following truly surreal-sounding scene: '...the earth suddenly opened near Timan-

FIRE WALKS

It is possible to walk within Parque Nacional de Timanfaya – but you'll need to plan in advance and you'll be part of a select group of just seven people. The 3.5km, two-hour Tremesana guided walk (Spanish and English) leaves from the **Mancha Blanca Visitors Centre** (☎ 928 84 08 39; Carretera de Yaiza a Tinajo Km11.5; 🕒 9am-5pm) at 10am on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Reserve a spot by phone or in person – at the time of research, you needed to reserve at least three weeks in advance if you wanted to walk in the summer high season. Try calling a day or two before and see if there's been a cancellation. The much more demanding Ruta del Litoral (9km, six hours) takes place once a month (no fixed date) and you need to reserve in person and be judged fit enough to handle the pace and the terrain. Both walks are free.

faya. The first night an enormous mountain rose up from the depths of the earth and from its point issued flames which continued to burn for 19 days'.

Buses leave every hour or so and the trip takes about 30 minutes. By about 10am there can be long queues to get into the park, so you may find yourself waiting for a tour.

North of the park, on the same road, is the informative **Mancha Blanca Visitors Centre** (☎ 928 84 08 39; www.mma.es; Carretera de Yaiza a Tinajo Km11.5; 🕒 9am-5pm), which has excellent audiovisual and informative displays about the park.

INLAND & WEST COAST

The interior and west coast of Lanzarote are within easy reach of popular tourist haunts to the south, but can seem a world away in terms of crowds, infrastructure and activities. These are reasons enough to explore this area, along with its striking abstract landscape of towering black mountains and odd stone circles that have more to do with growing vines than any pagan cult.

LA GERIA

Near San Bartolomé (p130) the LZ-30 winds through the southwest, passing what has to be one of the oddest-looking vine-growing regions around. The viticulturists of Lanzarote have found the deep, black lava-soil, enriched by the island's shaky seismic history, perfect for the grape. The further south you go, the more common are these unique vineyards consisting of little dugouts nurtured behind crescent-shaped stone walls, known as *zocos*, implanted in the dark earth.

The *malvasía* (Malmsey wine) produced here is a good drop and along the road you pass a good half-dozen bodegas where you can buy the local produce at wholesale prices.

Try **Bodega La Geria** (☎ 928 17 31 78; www.lageria.com), where you can pick up bottles of dry or semi-*dulce* (sweet) *malvasía* (among others) for around €5.50. There's also a good little bar/café.

ourpick El Chupadero (☎ 659 59 61 78; www.el-chupadero.com; tapas €4-8.50), which lies 4km north of Uga on the LZ-30, is one stunning little place you should head for. This German-owned farm/bodega does great tapas like garlicky prawns, which can be washed down with dry local *malvasía* wines from a terrace overlooking the vineyards. The simple whitewashed décor, with beamed ceilings and black-and-white photos, is one of the most stylish in these parts.

YAIZA

pop 9664

Yaiza is something of a southern crossroads, so you'll probably pass through on your travels. There's no specific reason for hanging about, but if you arrive at lunchtime and are feeling peckish, you'll be able to find a few pleasant-enough restaurants, including one excellent place (you'll need to book ahead).

It's a tidy, whitewashed town and the recipient of numerous awards for cleanliness. For sights, try the local church, **Nuestra Señora de los Remedios**, which was built in the 18th century and features a lovely blue-white-and-gold painted altarpiece and a folkloric painted wooden ceiling.

Sleeping & Eating

Finca de las Salinas (☎ 928 83 03 25; www.fincasalinas.com; Calle La Cuesta s/n; s/d €142/218, ste €266-328;

(P) (☎) (📍) This beautifully converted 18th-century hacienda is a definite treat. The vibrant colours and cactus gardens give it a Mexican feel. The rooms are spacious and tasteful, with several located in converted stables. There is a gym, spa, sauna, tennis courts and bicycle hire on offer.

La Era (☎ 928 83 00 16; www.la-era.com in Spanish; Calle El Barranco 3; mains €10-15; 🕒 closed Mon) Reservations are essential at this atmospheric restaurant set in a converted 300-year old farmhouse with the dining rooms set around a central courtyard. Another Manrique project, the dishes are firmly traditional and include de-boned rabbit with dates and César Manrique *torrijas* (a type of pancake with cane syrup and pumpkin jam), apparently from an old family recipe.

EL GOLFO & AROUND

This former fishing village has a laid-back, bohemian feel with its cluster of traditional buildings and lack of tourist-gear tat for sale. It's a fabulous place to come at sunset, with several bars overlooking the sea.

Just south of the village begins a string of small black-sand beaches. The one fronting the **Charco de los Clicos** is popular with sightseers. The Charco itself is a small, emerald-green pond, just in from the beach and overshadowed by wonderfully colourful and textured volcanic rocks. It is not safe to swim here though, as it can get very rough.

Along the coast road, which eventually leads to La Hoya, stop by **Los Hervideros**, a pair of caves through which the sea glugs and froths. After about 6km you reach the long Playa de Janubio, behind which are **Las Salinas de Janubio**, salt pans from where sea salt is extracted.

There is just one hotel in El Golfo and it's the charming **Hotelito del Golfo** (☎ /fax 928 17 32 72; Avenida Marítima 10; d €55; 📍), a friendly, family-run hotel and restaurant (mains from €6) that hasn't raised its prices in years. Tuck into a bowl of seafood soup for just €3 before bedding down in one of the bright, well-kitted-out rooms.

You will find no shortage of eating options beyond the hotel. On the waterfront there is a string of inviting bars and restaurants, including **Casa Torano** (☎ 928 17 30 58; Avenida Marítima), **Lago Verde** (☎ 928 17 33 11; Avenida

Marítima 46), where you can also enquire about renting an apartment, and **Mar Azul** (☎ 928 17 31 32; Calle Mayor 42).

THE SOUTH

The island's south is home to the most popular resorts and attracts family groups after an easy-going, sunny time punctuated with a deep-sea-fishing excursion or boozy night out.

PUERTO DEL CARMEN

With sunshades four lanes deep, this is the island's most popular beach and its oldest purpose-built resort. That said, if you are seeking an iota of Canarian atmosphere, head for the El Varadero harbour, at the far west of the beachfront, which still has a faint fishing-village feel with its bobbing boats and uninterrupted ocean views. Otherwise the centre remains a primarily Brit-gear resort with restaurants and bars competing for the cheapest bacon-and-eggs breakfast or largest (and loudest) Sky Sports screen.

Orientation

Lanzarote's premier resort straggles for 6km beside mostly golden sand. Its main street is Avenida Playas, a gaudy ribbon hugging the beach with shops, bars and restaurants.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Bookswop (Calle Timanfaya 4; 🕒 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 1.30pm Sat) The best source for new and secondhand English-language books.

EMERGENCY

Policía Local (Police; ☎ 928 84 52 52; Avenida Juan Carlos I) Directly behind the post office.

INTERNET ACCESS

Most amusement arcades, including the Centro Comercial La Peñita near the El Varadero harbour, have internet terminals.

Network Xpress (☎ 928 51 52 54; Centro Comercial Marítimo, Avenida Playas; per hr €2)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Clínica Lanzarote (☎ 928 51 31 71; Avenida Playas 5) A well-staffed 24-hour medical centre.

POST

Post office (☎ 928 51 03 81; Avenida Juan Carlos I s/n) Beside the roundabout at the junction of Avenida Juan Carlos I and Calle Guardilama, in the western part of town.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist office (☎ 928 51 53 37; www.puertodelcarmen.com; Avenida Playas s/n; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) Halfway along Playa Grande.

Activities

The main activities seem to be kicking back with a beer or flaking out on the beach, but there's no lack of opportunity for something less supine. Diving is popular, as well as jet skiing and banana and paracraft rides.

CYCLING

For bicycle hire, contact **Renner Bikes** (☎ 629 99 07 55; www.mountainbike-lanzarote.com; Centro Comercial Marítimo, Avenida Playas s/n; per day €24).

DIVING & SURFING

Among several enterprises, tried and trusted operators are **Safari Diving** (☎ 928 51 19 92; www.safaridiving.nl; Playa de la Barrilla 4), **Canary Island Divers** (☎ 928 51 54 67; www.canaryislanddivers.com; Calle Alemania 1) and **Manta Dive Centre** (☎ 928 51 68 15; www.manta-diving-lanzarote.com; Calle Juan Carlos I 6). Prices start at around €25 per dive with your own equipment, and €35 including rental.

You can rent surfboards (€6 per hour) and buy the latest colour-coordinated lycra

at **El Niño** (☎ 928 59 60 54; CC La Hoya), just up from the harbour.

HORSE RIDING

Horseback rides are available from **Lanzarote a Caballo** (☎ 928 83 03 14; www.lanzaroteacaballo.com; Carretera Arrecife-Yaiza; rides per hr €30). It's a great way to see the landscape, and hotel pick-up is available.

Sleeping

At last count there were around 200 hotels, apartment blocks and bungalow complexes in Puerto del Carmen. Many only deal with tour operators but may oblige the independent blow-in – if there is a room free.

Pensión Magec (☎ /fax 928 51 38 74; www.pensionmagec.com; Calle Hierro 11; s/d €25/30) There's just one standard *pensión* in Puerto del Carmen and it's a good one. Housed in a blue-and-white traditional house there are sea views from several rooms; go for No 21, with its private balcony, if you can. There are a few cheaper rooms available with shared facilities.

Apartamentos Isla de la Graciosa Lanzarote (☎ 928 51 33 86; Calle Reina Sofia 20; apt €55) These two-star modern apartments are located in the older part of town. They are spotlessly clean and the kitchens have pale wood fittings. There are reductions for stays of more than a night.

Hotel Los Fariones (☎ 928 51 01 75; www.grupofariones.com; Calle Roque del Este 1; s/d €95/145; P ♻️ 🚰 🚿) This is the *grande dame* on the hotel scene;

THE DASH

Described as 'a great sailing adventure' by former Spanish windsurf champion, Nino Navarro, the Dash from Lanzarote to Tarfaya Sahara in Morocco was initiated in 2003, in part by Tila Braddock (see the boxed text, p133), to 'create a bridge between Christian and Muslim, rich and poor and two continents'.

The owners of large yachts were approached and asked whether they would be interested in sailing to the former Spanish colony of Tarfaya Sahara, a mere 100km across the ocean. More than just a race, the boats were loaded up with wheelchairs and equipment for the disabled, as well as clothing, baby supplies and just about anything that could be collected and carried.

'These people are very poor,' laments Tila. 'The Spanish left the region 30 years ago. One of the motivations behind the Dash is to create an interest again, so people will see the potential in the Sahara and invest. We have already been instrumental in setting up a windsurfing school in Tarfaya called Surfaya.'

Initially, participants stayed just one night in large Saharan tents in North Africa, but this has been increased to two or three as the people have grown to fully appreciate just what Tarfaya has to offer with its beautiful beaches and the wonderful hospitality of the local people.

Currently an annual event, there are plans to increase the frequency of the race. For more information, check www.youthsunited.com.

the very first hotel to be built here, around 40 years ago. The rooms are comfortable, if old-fashioned, with the main perk being the location right on the beach and close to the more atmospheric older part of town. Facilities include tennis courts and minigolf.

Eating

Among all the sauerkraut, fish and chips and other delights on offer along the Avenida Playas pleasure zone, you'll occasionally stumble across a place offering some local cuisine. For a cluster of worthwhile restaurants serving essentially Spanish cuisine, take a walk to the old port.

Casa Roja (☎ 928 51 58 66; Avenida Varadero s/n; mains €8-18) Enjoying possibly the best location in town, this is a low-key place overlooking the pretty harbour. The menu is appropriately seafood-based, with the obligatory tank of potential dinner mates at the entrance.

Puerta Bahía (☎ 928 51 37 93; Avenida Varadero 5; mains €9-18) Come here for the uninterrupted sea views from a vast terrace and a menu that is predictably multinational but includes some treats, such as vegetable risotto with mushrooms and seaweed, and an above-average seafood *zarzuela* (stew).

Restaurante La Cañada (☎ 928 51 04 15; Calle César Manrique 3; mains €12-15; ☹ closed Sun) Located just off the Avenida Playas, this restaurant lovingly prepares Canarian specialities, including oysters (from €3.60 each), roasted goat and delicious *papas arrugadas* (wrinkly potatoes).

Drinking & Entertainment

The bulk of the bars, discos and nightclubs in Puerto del Carmen are lined up along the waterfront Avenida Playas. If you're after maximum-density partying, try the Centro Comercial Atlántico, where you'll find such bars and disco pubs as Waikiki, Paradise and Dreams.

Cervecería San Miguel (☎ 928 51 52 65; Avenida del Varadero s/n; ☹ 10.30am-3am) A good spot for a plate of steamed mussels washed down with a cold beer, of which there are several available on tap, including Guinness, Fosters and John Smith's Bitter.

César's (www.cesars.net; Avenida Playas 14; ☹ 10pm-6am) A very popular nightclub that attracts a breezy, hedonistic young crowd that appreciates populist DJs, flashing lights and lots of shooters amid a faux-Roman décor.

Buddy's (Calle Tenerife 18; ☹ 10pm-3.30am) A cool, laid-back club that attracts a mixed-age clientele with its nightly live jazz and blues.

Getting There & Around

Buses run the length of Avenida Playas, making frequent stops and heading for Arrecife (€1.80) about every 20 minutes from 7am to midnight.

A free **Fred Olsen** (☎ 901 10 01 07; www.fredolsen.es) bus leaves from the Varadero (the port jetty) in Puerto del Carmen at 9am and 5pm, linking with the ferry (adult/child/12 to 16 years €21/10/15, 20 minutes), which runs from Playa Blanca to Corralejo on Fuerteventura. In the reverse direction, free buses for Puerto del Carmen meet the 9am and 5pm ferries from Corralejo on their arrival in Playa Blanca. The morning run continues to Lanzarote's airport.

PUERTO CALERO

A few kilometres west of Puerto del Carmen, and its complete antithesis, Puerto Calero is a pleasant, relatively tranquil yacht harbour lined with cafés and restaurants sporting a jaunty maritime vibe that sees plenty of locals in deck shoes.

Sights & Activities

One of the newest worthwhile sights on the island, the **Museo de Cetáceos** (☎ 928 84 95 60; www.museodecetaceos.org; ☹ 10am-6pm; ♿) is a natural history museum devoted to 24 species of whales to be found in the surrounding waters. The exhibit includes audiovisual displays, life-size exhibits, photographs and whale sounds.

You can book a range of activities, including kayaking, bungee jumping and caving, at the Puerto Calero glass-surrounded **office** (☎ 928 84 95 39; ☹ 9am-9pm) in the centre of the marina.

SUBMARINE

The yellow sub of **Submarine Safaris** (☎ 928 51 28 98; www.submarinesafaris.com; adult/2-14yr €48/28; ☹ 10am, noon, 2pm & 4pm) makes one-hour dives, reaching a depth of 27m.

DEEP-SEA FISHING

Skipped by the well-regarded Tino García, **Mizu I** (☎ 609 88 69 80; www.sportfishinglanzarote.com; angler/companion €75/50) will transport you to the nearby depths as you search for

mako sharks and other big fish. You'll be picked up from your hotel and taken to Puerto Calero. All equipment is included in the price.

DIVING

The English-run **Squalo Diving Center** (☎ 928 84 95 78; www.squalodiving.com) offers PADI courses, including a night diver course (€270) and a digital underwater photography course (€190).

Eating

Keep walking with your nose in the air, past all the English-themed bars and restaurants, until you reach **Amura** (☎ 928 51 31 81; mains €10-25) with its vast terrace commanding sweeping sea views. The menu includes quietly gourmet treats like a salad of prawns, scallops and sautéed artichokes, and suckling pig with gnocchi and green-apple foam.

PLAYA BLANCA

If you are looking for sand between the toes rather than a rollicking nightlife, Playa Blanca is not a bad choice. Despite the presence of an American fast-food chain at the beach, it is a quiet resort that has not yet spiralled completely out of control. That said, you're better off crossing the ocean to Corralejo on Fuerteventura, where the beaches and dunes easily outclass Playa Blanca's. The best beaches here are at Punta del Papagayo to the east (p142), which are pretty and relatively isolated. Check out also the new swanky port, Marina Rubicón, to the west of the town centre, which must have emptied the municipal piggy bank.

The **tourist office** (☎ 928 51 77 94; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-12.30pm Sat) in the port, at the rear of the ferry booking office.

Activities

BOAT TOURS

The 33m-long **César II** (☎ 928 81 36 08; adult/under 12 yr €47/23) sails to the Isla de Lobos off Fuerteventura from Monday to Friday. Tours run between 10.15am until 5.45pm and include a light lunch.

Marea Errota (☎ 928 51 76 33; mareaerrota@retemail.es; adult/child €42.50/24) is a handsome swash-buckling galleon that does twice-daily coastal cruises down to the Papagayo beaches. Pick-

up from your accommodation is included in the price.

Rubicat (☎ 928 51 90 12; Marina Rubicón; adult/under 12yr €55/free) has day-long tours on a catamaran, including lunch, drinks and a 50% discount for the second passenger.

DIVING

Friendly and extremely professional, **Calablanca** (☎ 928 51 90 40; www.calablanca.com; Centro Comercial el Papagayo) offers individual dives, courses and a charmingly named 'Sea Baptism' option (€50) for absolute beginners.

At the new marina, the **Rubicon Diving Center** (☎ 928 34 93 46; www.rubicondiving.com) has courses at all levels, including a six-dive package for €200.

Sleeping

Apartamentos Gutiérrez (☎/fax 928 51 70 89; Plaza Nuestra Señora del Carmen 8; apt €40) Just by the town church, and one of the cheapest places to stay in this area. Tidy, attractive apartments (six in all) are available, but no English is spoken, so brush up on your Spanish or your sign language.

Apartamentos Bahía Blanca Rock (☎ 928 51 70 37; www.h10.es; Calle Janubio s/n; apt per person €58; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) For something more stylish, this place has natty, well-run, Canarian-style apartments (sleeping up to four) in a complex just off Avenida Papagayo and a 100m stroll from the main beach. The Daisy Mini Club keeps the kiddies amused, while you can enjoy a snooze in the solarium. Prices vary hugely, according to season.

Princesa Yaiza (☎ 928 51 92 22; www.princesayaiza.com; Avenida Papagayo s/n; s/d €180/250, s/d ste from €210/280; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Distinctive for its domes, cupolas, towers and exotic greenery, the whole complex oozes good taste, with sensitive architectural flourishes and silky-smooth service. The list of amenities could fill a slim volume. Low-season discounts knock about 30% off the above rates.

Villas Kamezi (☎ 928 51 86 24; Calle Mónaco s/n; bungalow for up to 8 people €230-290; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) A discreet, environmentally friendly complex of 31 stunning villas with two to four bedrooms and tastefully decorated with real *Ideal Home*-style décor. It's within easy strolling distance of the Papagayo beaches, if you can be bothered tearing yourself away from the private saltwater pool. Fabulous.

Eating

Restaurante Casa José (Plaza Nuestra Señora del Carmen 8; mains €5-11; ☎ closed Sun lunch) Opposite the church, this modest restaurant with its traditional green paintwork has a kitchen-sink informal atmosphere and excellent seafood dishes.

El Maño (☎ 928 51 87 12; Marina Rubicón; mains €10-15) Trip along the long wooden bridge to reach this rare Spanish restaurant, which includes dishes from all over the country, including *salmorejo* (a thick, garlicky gazpacho) from Cordoba, black pudding from Burgos and a Valencian-style paella.

El Almacén de la Sal (☎ 928 51 78 85; Paseo Marítimo 12; mains €12-35; ☎ closed Tue; ♿) An excellent waterfront restaurant, with fish dishes being the pick of the bunch (although a good vegetarian selection is also tempting). It's about halfway between the port and the main beach and has a cheaper lunchtime menu.

Getting There & Away

Bus 6 (€3, 1½ hours) runs at least six times daily between Playa Blanca and Arrecife via Puerto del Carmen.

Fred Olsen (☎ 902 53 50 90; www.fredolsen.es) ferries (adult/child/12 to 26 years €21/10/15, 20 minutes, four to five times daily) link Playa Blanca with Corralejo on Fuerteventura. **Naviera Armas** (☎ 902 45 65 00; www.navieraarmas.com) has five to six sailings daily (adult/child/12 to 26 years €16/8/13, 25 minutes).

Free Fred Olsen buses leave Puerto del Carmen (9am and 5pm) to connect with the 10am and 6pm ferry departures. A free service also meets the 9am and 5pm ferries from Corralejo. The morning run continues to Lanzarote's airport.

PUNTA DEL PAPAGAYO

The southeast coast leading up to Punta del Papagayo is peppered with a series of pretty golden-sand coves. The promontory is a *reserva natural protegido* (protected nature reserve). The road beyond the rickety toll barrier (€3 per vehicle) is dirt, but quite manageable even in a small car. Or take the easy way and hop aboard the **Princess Yaiza Taxi Boat** (☎ 928 51 43 22; adult/child €15/7.50), which sets out four times daily from Playa Blanca.