

# CANARY ISLANDS

Sustainability is Responsibility



In collaboration with

**Newsweek**





**ZURAB  
POLOLIKASHVILI**

Secretary-General  
United Nations World  
Tourism Organization  
(UNWTO)

**How do you assess the challenges the Canary Islands' government and private sector will have to face in the near future? What key factors should they take into consideration for a successful comeback strategy?**

As a sector, tourism has consistently proven its resilience and ability to bounce back from adversity, including financial concerns, political instability and natural disasters. Indeed, at such times of uncertainty, tourism is a constant, and will continue to be so in the case of the Canary Islands. As with destinations around the world, private and public sector collaboration will be key to

helping the Canary Islands' tourism to thrive. Diversification is also key. Increasingly, tourists are looking for more authentic and unique experiences. Offering diverse experiences such as gastronomy tourism or sports tourism can not only help attract tourists, it can also spread further the economic and social benefits that tourism can bring much wider. As UNWTO celebrates our Year of Tourism and Rural Development throughout 2020, we are keen to see destinations do more to ensure tourism creates jobs and opportunities in rural communities, and, as the islands work to build tourism back up, we are confident this will happen on the Canaries.



# WHY TOURISM MATTERS

Tourism's growth across all regions strengthen the sector's potential to contribute to a sustainable development agenda

International tourist arrivals grew by a further 4% between January and September of 2019, the latest issue of the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer indicates. Tourism's growth continues to outpace global economic growth, bearing witness to its huge potential to deliver development opportunities across the world but also its sustainability challenges.

Destinations worldwide received 1.1 billion international tourist arrivals in the first nine months of 2019 (up 43 million compared to the same period of 2018), in line with its forecast of 3-4% growth for this year.

The global economic slowdown, rising trade, geopolitical tensions and prolonged uncertainty around Brexit weighed on international tourism, which experienced a more moderate pace of growth during the summer peak season

in the Northern Hemisphere (July-September). UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said last December: "As world leaders meet at the UN Climate Summit in Madrid to find concrete solutions to the climate emergency, the release of the latest World Tourism Barometer shows the growing power of tourism, a sector with the potential to drive the sustainability agenda forward. As tourist numbers continue to rise, the opportunities tourism can bring also rise, as do our sector's responsibilities to people and planet."

## Tourism now world's third largest export category

Generating US\$1.7 trillion in revenues as of 2018, international tourism remains the third largest export category behind fuels (US\$ 2.4 trillion) and chemicals (US\$ 2.2 trillion). Within advanced economies, tourism's remarkable performance after years of sustained growth has narrowed the gap with automotive product exports.

International tourism accounts for 29% of the world's services exports and 7% of overall exports. In some regions these proportions exceed the world average, especially the Middle East and Africa where tourism represents over 50% of services exports and about 9% of exports overall.

This highlights the importance of mainstreaming tourism in national export policies to broaden revenue streams, reduce trade deficits and ensure sustainable development on the long run.

The world's top ten earners saw mixed results in international tourism receipts through September 2019, with Australia (+9%), Japan (+8%) and Italy (+7%) posting the highest growth, while China, the United Kingdom and the United States recorded declines. Mediterranean destinations were among the strongest performers in terms of earnings, both in Europe and the Middle East and North Africa region. ●







## SETTING THE PACE IN SUSTAINABILITY

The leadership of the Canary Islands has put sustainability at the heart of its strategy for tourism & socioeconomic development

**L**ocated in the mid-Atlantic Ocean off the west coast of Africa but an integral part of the Kingdom of Spain for more than 500 years, the Canary Islands have long prospered from their unique geographical position.

Along with a subtropical climate, clear skies and stunning landscapes, the archipelago benefits from the political stability and the open, democratic culture of a European country. Over the centuries the islands have become a natural



staging point for traders on their way to and from three continents. They have also always been one of Europe's most popular destinations for a vacation, especially in the winter months. Now the Canary Islands are looking to build on their position at the crossroads of the Western hemisphere to become leaders in sustainable development.

"With our strategic location between three continents and the renewable energy potential of our sun, winds and seas, we have all the conditions to become leaders in sustainable tourism and in the fight against climate change," the region's new president Ángel Víctor Torres said at the end of last year.

On assuming office, he immediately prioritized the implementation of the UN's Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the pursuit

of what he calls "the three Ss – social, solidary and sustainable."

Torres has put the tourism sector at the center of his strategy for sustainable development. Contributing 35% of the archipelago's GDP and 40% of employment, tourism is by far the Canary Islands' largest industry and a recognized global leader. A more sustainable tourism sector in the Canary Islands would set a powerful example for other countries to follow, helping to reduce the environmental impact and carbon footprint of this fast-growing and increasingly controversial industry.

"I want the Canary Islands to be a true world leader and an example of sustainability and the fight against climate change," says Yaiza Castilla, the islands' councilor for tourism, industry and trade. "The tourism sector in the

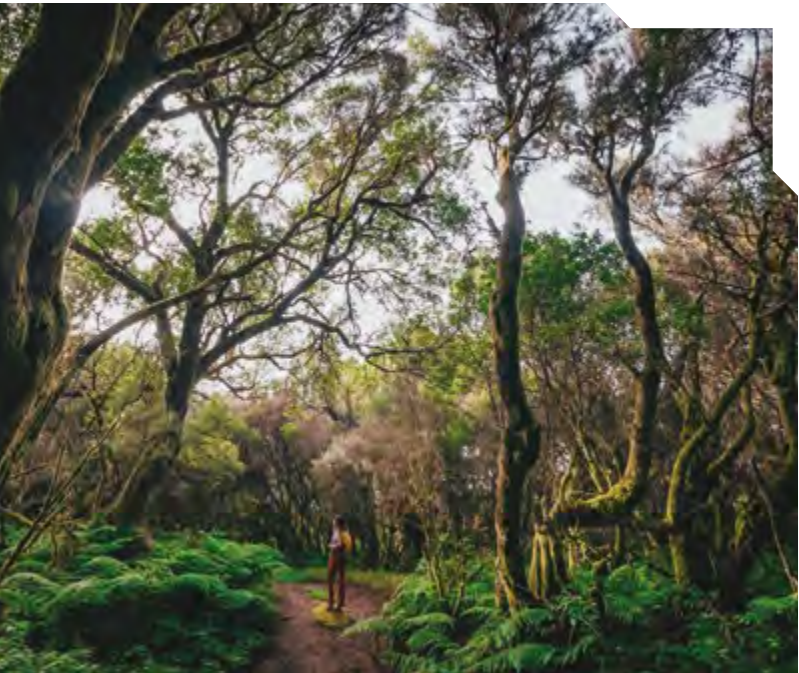




Canary Islands is already a pioneer in using recycled materials and in reducing water consumption.”

With the implementation of a more sustainable model of tourism, the islands will appeal to more sophisticated visitors, with greater interests than just swimming and sunbathing.

By tightening environmental standards across the region and developing high-value segments such as cultural tourism and gastronomic tourism, the government aims to attract higher-spending tourists than those visitors who arrive on all-inclusive beach packages. These new travelers will spend their money more widely in the islands, helping to share the benefits of tourism with the population and



to create a fairer and more equitable economy.

“We want to diversify our offer and attract tourists who will spend more money in the archipelago, because doing so generates more wealth, employment and social welfare,” Castilla says.

In response to rising concerns about the carbon footprint of flying, the islands will give visitors the option of offsetting their emissions by contributing to green projects in the archipelago, such as reforestation and renewable energy plants.

“We have to show tourists what we are doing to fight climate change, even before they come here,” Castilla explains.

Torres believes that the Canary Islands have the potential to become a model for sustainability not only in tourism but also in renewable energy. Already one of the eight major islands – El Hierro – can rely on renewable electricity for 100% of its power requirements. Neighboring island La Gomera is also making significant progress towards zero-carbon electricity, thanks to investment in wind farms and solar power. Torres’ ambition is for all the Canary Islands to use 100% renewable energy by 2050.

“We have excellent natural, reusable resources here,” says Carolina Darias, the islands’ former councilor for economy, knowledge and employment and current Spanish Minister of Territorial Policy & Civil Service. “There are a lot of companies that are interested in this sector since our natural environment is conducive to

renewable and sustainable energy.”

At the same time, the islands are investing in the development of green mobility, supporting the spread of electric taxis across the islands and buying electric, hybrid and even hydrogen cars for use by the public sector.

Later this year, Torres’ government will approve the Canary Islands’ first ever law against climate change, which will estimate the carbon footprint of each island and map out the measures to be taken to fight against climate change.

Also this year, Torres is confident of achieving a dramatic early victory in his campaign to position the Canary Islands as a global leader in sustainability.

One example of its advances in sustainability and technology is the international consortium behind a giant €1.2 billion Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) project that has signaled it may switch the location of the facility from Hawaii to the Canarian island of La Palma, whose clear skies have made it home to more than a dozen world-leading telescopes.

If the TMT project does transfer to the Canary



Islands, it would convert the archipelago into one of Spain’s undisputed centers of cutting-edge science and research. That in turn would make the archipelago the natural location for Spain’s proposed national climate change laboratory, positioning the Canary Islands on the cutting edge not only of sustainable tourism but also of climate science in general.

“Our islands are true laboratories,” Torres said in his end-of-year address. “For centuries we Canarians have relied on our own resources and our inventiveness. Now is the time to confront the certainty of climate change...and turn these islands into a fairer, more modern and more sustainable territory.” ●



## GRAN CANARIA

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- Great **quality of life** and low cost of living







## AIMING TO BE A MODEL FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH



**CAROLINA DARIAS**

Minister of  
Territorial Policy  
& Civil Service  
Spain  
Former Councilor for  
Economy, Knowledge  
& Employment  
Canary Islands

### FACTS

**+2.1 million**  
TOTAL POPULATION  
OF THE ISLANDS

**80%**  
SERVICE-BASED  
ECONOMY

**4%**  
CORPORATE TAX  
RATE

#### What are the government's current priorities?

The current government of the Canary Islands, in office since July 2019, started working on a strategy to strengthen the economy right away and an equitable and fair economic growth is its goal and priority.

The Canary Islands' economy is largely based on the service industry, reaching 80%, while in most European countries it is about 20% lower. The tourism industry is the most relevant sector, but agriculture also has an important role in our economy so it's pertinent to revive the rural economy.

However, we cannot continue to grow economically in the same way we did before, without thinking about our limited resources and the current inequality of workers. We have to use our resources wisely, because our resources are limited. This concept fits well within the 2030 Agenda goals.

#### What do the Canary Islands offer the world?

The islands are very safe, our healthcare system is very respected and appreciated in the EU, we are committed to a safe environment and are dedicated to improving our infrastructure. So the Canary Islands offer a quality of life equal to that in Europe. Also, we are part of Spain and the European Union and although we are quite remote from the continent, our geographical position near Africa gives our islands an important advantage.

Our proximity to the African continent with good maritime and aerial connections facilitate business between Africa and the Canaries and offer good conditions to attract business.

But we are not only a business hub, but also a hub for solidarity. The UN World Food Program recognizes the potential the Canary Islands has for helping continental Africa and a lot of solidarity programs and NGOs that help Africa have a base here, many near the Port of Las Palmas.

#### Who are your preferential partners at the moment?

Africa is the continent that is going to grow the most in the near future. It is our future and our present, so we are focusing mostly on countries close to us with a good export potential - namely Morocco, Mauritania, Cape Verde and Senegal. We are also beginning to work with Ghana and Cotê d'Ivoire.

#### You already mentioned some of the advantages for doing business here. What about tax rates?

You can't find a lower tax rate than ours in any other place in Europe. Our corporate tax rate is 4%, something very attractive to many businesses. We also have a special economic and fiscal regimen (REF) which allows us to have a free port. And our REF was recently updated (December 2018) with special conditions, being a remote EU region, to make the Canaries an even more attractive place for business.

#### The recent bankruptcy of Thomas Cook demonstrated that now more than ever it's important to diversify the economy.

Our economic growth and diversification must come from the knowledge we have. We have a highly qualified investigative workforce and an important network of private and public centers dedicated to investigation, research and innovation, especially working with the universities here. The local administration has important R&D centers, there's also the Public Institute of Technology, Investigation Institute of Canarias, the Foundation of Health Research, PLOCAN - the Ocean Platform of the Canary Islands, and the Astrophysics Institute of Canarias.

The Canaries are leaders in astrophysics and

marine science, especially marine biology. Many people come to study their masters or have internships in our marine sciences programs. We are also a world reference for biotechnology, biomedicine, neuroscience and neurotechnology.

So we will be able to diversify our economy as we gain and increase our knowledge in other areas.

#### 30% of the electricity in Canary Islands is renewable. Can this percentage be even higher?

We have excellent natural, reusable resources here. Our climates are varying and excellent, our biodiversity is different from any other place in Macaronesia and one of the most diverse in the world. These are key natural elements for sustainable development. We have many solar panels and wind turbines, as well as hydroelectricity and



thermal energy storage. There is already one island, El Hierro, that runs on 100% renewable energy. The idea is to keep maximizing on this in order to permit self-sufficiency in small environments.

#### Sustainability is key for the new government. Can you tell us more about that?

A plan for sustainable development for the islands has been put into place even before this government came to power. I was President of the Parliament then. With political and social dialogue, all political parties along with public and private institutions were able to come to a consensus on what we felt we needed to do to help the Earth and our islands.

This government has now set our own goals and targets, based on the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals, focusing directly on local problems and the solutions we propose. We need to keep our promise to the Canarian people to make sure our islands are preserved.

#### How is innovation changing the Canary Islands?

There are currently 29 nuclei of R&D&I across the islands connected by a network of expertise. Each nucleus has a different level of collaboration and a distinct goal. The network between these groups is strong and very important, as well as their contributions.

Our role is to help with the knowledge and expertise of these groups by making sure that they connect and grow together for the greater good, not only for businesses, but for public entities as well.

Right now, we have more than 40 centers of investigation and an Institute of Excellence, the Astrophysics Institute of Canarias, which has the Severo Ochoa Center of Excellence where we have two observatories. This makes us one of the best centers for astrophysics in the world. The skies in Canary Islands are one-of-a-kind and in fact many of our telescopes have partnerships with other countries. ●





**YAIZA CASTILLA  
HERRERA**

Councilor for Tourism  
Industry & Trade  
Canary Islands

FACTS

**15.6 million**

TOTAL VISITORS  
TO THE CANARY  
ISLANDS IN 2018

**+35%**

TOURISM'S  
CONTRIBUTION  
TO REGION'S GDP

**+40%**

OF POPULATION  
DIRECTLY EMPLOYED  
IN THE SECTOR

**Why is tourism in the Canary Islands so successful and often a winner of travel and tourism awards?**

I believe that it is the result of the natural surroundings we have in the archipelago itself, the environment we have created for the tourists, our resources which are our greatest asset, and the hard work of the entire business sector and all the workers who strive to make this destination great. These workers are, in fact, the great ambassadors of what the archipelago stands for; all the tourists we receive, and the great image of the Canary Islands abroad image is thanks to them.

**What are your current priorities as head of three important portfolios: tourism, industry and trade?**

Fundamentally, our priority is to continue advancing and improving. My goal is to evolve positively, although we are currently facing negative circumstances such as the general economic slowdown at an international level, the recent bankruptcy of Thomas Cook, the imminence of Brexit, and so on. Since I started my term, I have been wanting to unite the aspects in which tourism, industry and commerce can coincide to strengthen one another.

In the case of tourism, the model that has been developed so far may be slightly depleted and outdated, so we need a new flow of ideas and disruptive changes that can generate another type of wealth that is maintained over time. Tourism is the sector that makes the greatest

contribution to the Canarian economy, more than 35% of GDP and more than 40% of the employment generated in the archipelago. Therefore, we have to take good care of the tourism sector.

We want to promote the diversification of the tourist offers. Although the Council is the only brand of the Canary Islands, within that brand there are 8 absolutely different islands, each with its idiosyncrasies. We have to show each of these 8 jewels with their singularities before the world so they can see how unique we are. The policies and investments related to the tourism sector in modeling tourism infrastructures will have sustainability and the fight against climate change as a cross-cutting pillar.

**The German government in its fight against climate change is considering ending the tax exemption for kerosene in a bid to reduce the aviation sector's impact on carbon emissions. How do you see this issue when tourism in the Canaries depends on air arrivals and the German market?**

There is a German legislative initiative that plans to fight against climate change by taxing airlines. We do not see that badly, but if they impose it on the airlines that travel to the Canary Islands or other places that are connected to the world by air travel, it would be harmful for us as people would start considering travelling to places that don't require air travel. I have requested that these taxes be exempted from the Canary Islands or that a reduction be made. I met with the German Ambassador in Spain in October to discuss it and hopefully will discuss it again with other German authorities when the opportunity presents itself.

We want to fight against climate change too, but as an archipelago, this measure would not be fair to us. Tourists in the Canary Islands enter and leave by plane, if it becomes more expensive, we lose out to other tourist destinations. Unfortunately, we cannot do without airplanes. If we do not have airplanes, tourists can not enter, nor our residents. We have a commitment to both the private and public sectors to carry out actions that fight against climate change and that mitigate or erase the carbon footprint from airplanes. We here in the Canary Islands have to show the tourists before coming and while they are here what are our proposed

actions against climate change. Many companies in the tourism, industrial, and commercial sectors are already implementing sustainability measures internally. For example, being more cautious with water consumption and the use of recyclable materials in their establishments. The tourism sector in the Canary Islands is a pioneer in this regard.

**Where do your tourists come from?**

Our three biggest markets are British, German and Scandinavian. But the bankruptcy of Thomas Cook has made us rethink the tourism model we want to develop and the need to open new markets. We already have it clear which markets we can develop because we know we can grow there. One of them is the Spanish market itself, which is important, and then France, Italy and Portugal. We can try and enter the American market too. The truth is that we have many markets still to explore.



We need to study and analyze what are the tourist products that those who come to the Canary Islands want: only sun and beach, or also gastronomy, culture, history, art, heritage, and so on.

**Will your tourist arrivals continue to increase in the near future?**

We can increase the number of tourists, but that isn't our goal. Our goal is to increase the quality of tourism and also of the tourist activities we offer. We want them to spend money in the archipelago, because doing so generates more wealth, employment and social welfare.

**Can you tell us about the investment opportunities in the archipelago?**

The business sector has a great opportunity to invest in the Canary Islands in its ZEC (Special Canary Zone) that has tax advantages and a series of conditions that make us more competitive in tax rates than in the rest of peninsular Spain. The Canary Islands are an important nucleus so that companies can be established or move their productive capital here and have many benefits. This government is fully open to facilitate the conditions for companies that settle in the archipelago. I would like to tell the business community that they should come and talk to this government and in particular with our council, which deals with tourism, industry and commerce. I am looking forward to seeing investments in the Canary Islands and we will do everything we can to help with the bureaucracy, to facilitate and inform, since many times what is missing is information on how to invest in the Canary Islands and what facilities, advantages and competitive benefits there are.

**How would you like to see the Canary Islands at the end of this term?**

I want to see the Canary Islands as a true world leader. We are already European leaders and I want us to be world leaders too. I want us to be a reference, for the Canary Islands to be known throughout the world, each of the 8 islands. That everyone wants to come to visit us. And we will continue working on that. I also want us to be an example of sustainability and in the fight against climate change. ●





## AN ISLAND LABORATORY FOR THE REGION

The Technological Institute of the Canary Islands (ITC) is the regional leader in the fields of research, development & innovation

**W**hen it comes to science and technology, the Canary Islands have long punched above their weight. From the astronomical observatory on La Palma to the Teide-HPC supercomputer on Tenerife and renewable energy and desalination systems across the archipelago, scientists, researchers and engineers are on the cutting-edge of global innovation.

In this small, geographically isolated community, sustainability is one of the main drivers of scientific research and development. Many innovations which have emerged from the islands in areas such as water treatment and solar power have been successfully implemented in other countries which face similar natural challenges as the Canary Islands.

"We are converting the disadvantages that we face as a region which is located far from the

European continent into a competitive advantage," explains Gabriel Megías, the General Director of the ITC. "We develop solutions that work in isolated territories such as the Canary Islands and then transfer that know-how to similar regions, such as countries in West Africa."

Across Africa, many communities are already enjoying the benefits of Canarian innovation. A flagship project of the ITC is a solar-powered desalination plant that provides clean drinking water around the clock to villages in the Sahara. Another team has helped introduce renewable energies into Moroccan villages and is encouraging the use of traditional designs to improve energy efficiency and accessibility.

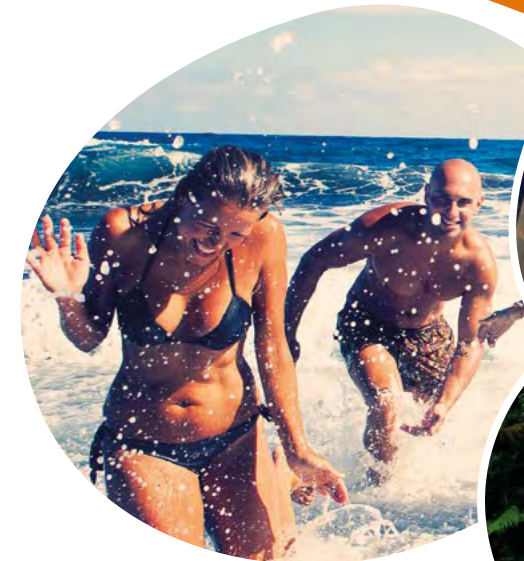
Supported by the ITC, Canarian companies have installed micro-grids and renewable energy systems in Cape Verde, an isolated island nation in the Atlantic which faces similar geographical challenges to the Canary Islands.

At the start of 2020, with partners from Senegal, Mauritania and Cape Verde, the ITC launched a project which will help the African agricultural sector improve the quality of degraded soil and better respond to climate change.

"With our experience and our expertise, we are exporting solutions that can help poorer countries in our region increase their sustainability and accelerate their development," Megías says. ●



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## HEADING TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE ENERGY FUTURE



**ANTONIO  
MORALES MÉNDEZ**  
President  
Gran Canaria Council

### FACTS

**843,000**  
POPULATION

**+1,700**  
HOSPITAL BEDS

**+195**  
BILINGUAL SCHOOLS

**115**  
DIRECT DESTINATIONS  
FROM GRAN CANARIA

**+ 1 million**  
CONTAINERS  
THROUGH THE PORTS  
OF THE ISLAND

**You said that your re-election allows you to continue working on a thrilling project: that is, to make the island of Gran Canaria more sustainable. Can you talk a little more about this?**

Before I became the president of the Gran Canaria Council, I was the mayor of Agüimes and back then, together with the mayors of Santa Lucia and Ingenio, we formed the Commonwealth of Municipalities for the South East of Gran Canaria. This commonwealth was a reference in sustainability issues and recognized as a model to follow by the UN on several occasions. So when I became president of the Gran Canaria Council, I wanted to implement this experience and concept to the whole island regarding sustainable development and so we created the Eco-island Project. This project was based on several fundamental aspects from the UN's sustainable development goals. One of them was to reach energy sovereignty. During our current term we want to make considerable headway towards this goal and are working on building a hydro-electric power plant as well as a wind-hydro power station plus facilities to store the clean energy we produce. Construction of these plants is about to start. Even though clean energy production on the island has grown 10%, we still lack the means to store it and this is something we have to work on. Another pillar of our Eco-island Project concerns climate change. We've been

working with several mayors on a program to deal with and manage climate change in Gran Canaria. We are even working with UNESCO on the implementation of a center to measure the climate change impact in Macaronesia. We also have sustainable tourism as part of the project which is extremely important. Right now we need to diversify our tourism offer. We cannot only rely on sun and sand tourism; we need to develop nature tourism, sports tourism, active tourism, medical tourism, etc. And then we need to boost our blue economy. We've made some progress in this area like the creation of Bioasis, a hub of blue biotechnology and aquaculture.

**What else do you still need to work on to make sure the Eco-island Project changes the future of Gran Canaria?**

Another goal of the Eco-island project is food sovereignty. In the past, only 10% of what we consumed was produced here. Today we are at 20% and has grown considerably. Nevertheless, the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) states that the ideal is to be between 40 to 50%, which is our objective. We are also encouraging the consumption of 'zero-kilometer' food products to boost production of 100%-local products in both agriculture and livestock farming and if possible, organic. Regarding livestock farming there has been a 30% increase in the past few years. Our objective is to produce locally and not to depend on what doesn't come from our island. Moreover, we are taking steps towards sustainable mobility by encouraging the use of public transport. To start with, we have introduced three different travel cards that helped increase the number of users. However, we still need to improve our traffic because there are far too many private cars on the island. And to continue to improve this, we are moving forward with a project for a train that will depart from Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and go all the way to the south of the island, our tourist center. We are now at the stage of finding the necessary funding for this project. Another priority is to recuperate and reforest our laurel forests; we are one of the few places in the world where one can still find them.



**You mentioned that sustainable tourism is one of the pillars of the Eco-island project. How will the bankruptcy of tour operator Thomas Cook change the tourism model in Gran Canaria? Will it be more sustainable?**

In October I inaugurated the Overbooking Gran Canaria Summit 2019 which discussed the marketing and technological innovation



in tourism. There we learned that today, 30% of holiday and travel bookings are made online. Traditionally, the Canary Islands depended heavily on tour operators; they operated in a monopolistic way determining not only the destinations but also the prices. With the closure of Thomas Cook, it is our obligation - and intention, to favor and encourage the direct contact and purchase of our tourism products. But to make this a reality we need to be better connected with the final consumer. Connectivity is key and needs to be further developed, not only because of Thomas Cook but other factors, like Brexit or the German recession, to name a few. The fall of Thomas Cook also triggered new negotiations with different airlines and some of them have already announced that they will increase their flights during the winter. It is also very important to diversify the markets where our clients come from. Up to now, most of the tourists that come to Gran Canaria are from the Nordic countries, Germany and Great Britain. But in recent years we have seen an increase of those coming from the Spanish mainland and other places. Also, we need to have a sustainable offer due to the rise of those tourists that demand a place with clean energy and hotels that were built in a sustainable way.

**As the President of the Gran Canaria Council, how would you best describe the island & its people?**

For centuries, both our community and territory have been a melting pot of cultures from Europe, Africa and America. This has helped to define us culturally and today we are a confident people ready to embrace the future. ●





Currently, the large majority of the more than 4.5 million tourists who come to Gran Canaria each year buy their flights and accommodation through a package operator, mostly on all-inclusive deals bought in their home country, and rarely leave their hotel and beach to make purchases in the community.

“Tourism can become a real driver of economic development in Gran Canaria, supporting the growth of rural communities and the production of local goods and services for foreign tourists.”

“Our plan is to make sure that those who come spend more here on the island,” agrees Pablo Llinares, General Manager of the Gran Canaria Tourist Office. “For that to happen, our strategy is to develop a more diverse tourist offer.

“We are looking for tourists who are culturally active, who relate to the population, who want to try and experience the local gastronomy. We want our tourism development to benefit all the population of island, not just those working in tourism-related businesses.

While many of today’s tourists spend their time in the southern part of the island, Gran Canaria’s attractions are among the most diverse of the entire archipelago. Known as a “continent in miniature,” this is the most scenically diverse of the islands and a paradise for hikers and mountain bikers as well as for lovers of watersports.

Additionally, the island’s cosmopolitan capital Las Palmas is the largest city in the Canary



Islands and is the ideal place to sample Gran Canaria’s indigenous wines and local cuisine. Every February, the city becomes home to one of Europe’s most colorful and diverse festivals: the Carnival of Las Palmas.

It is not only the tourism sector that is steering Gran Canaria in a more sustainable direction. The local government’s Eco-Island project aims to put the island’s entire economy on a more sustainable basis and reduce its carbon footprint, by investing in clean energy, energy storage, public transport and local food production. ●

# NEW HORIZONS FOR GRAN CANARIA

A pivot to sustainable tourism that will support economic development & social inclusion across the island

More than 60 years after the first charter flight from northern Europe landed at Gran Canaria Airport, heralding the start of the era of mass tourism, a new chapter is opening in the history of tourism on the island. Spearheaded by Antonio Morales Méndez, who was re-elected head of the island’s government in 2019, Gran Canaria is pivoting away from sun-and-sand tourism and all-inclusive packages and moving towards sustainable, experi-

ential tourism that attracts independent travelers who will spend more in the community. “We need to diversify our tourism offer,” President Morales says. “While sun and sand tourism is important, we understand that we cannot rely just on this segment. We have much more to offer and we need to develop nature tourism, sports tourism, active tourism, medical tourism as well as others.” The collapse of British tour operator Thomas Cook in 2019, combined with Brexit and a German economic slowdown, illustrated the island’s dependence on this one model of tourism. “We cannot just focus on increasing tourist numbers,” Morales says. “As we develop new offerings for tourists such as agritourism, we will be able to increase the amount of money they spend on our island.



Almost half of the land surface area of Gran Canaria was declared a Biosphere by Unesco in 2005 in recognition of the priceless richness of its species and its state of preservation, which has reduced man’s interference to the bare minimum. Be it at the coast or up in the mountains, each portion of land contains genuinely beautiful touches.

This spectacular scenery lives in a silent slumber, and is the perfect excuse to get up close to the living heritage that the Macaronesia region provided as a legacy. The flora of Gran Canaria has earned the respect of the scientific community for centuries now. Over one hundred kinds of plant species live here that cannot be appreciated anywhere else on the planet. Laurel tree forests and awesome pine trees invite us to delve into a truly blessed environment and a privileged climate.

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## GRAN CANARIA A FAIRYTALE ISLAND



**PABLO LLINARES**  
General Manager  
Gran Canaria  
Tourist Office

### FACTS

**30%**

OF GDP COMES  
DIRECTLY FROM  
TOURISM

**7**

SUCCESSIVE YEARS OF  
CONTINUOUS GROWTH

**4.5 million**

TOURISTS IN 2018

**1,560**

SQUARE KILOMETERS

**+820,000**

POPULATION

**What roles does tourism play, both from the social and the economic point of view, in Gran Canaria?**

Tourism is the backbone of the economy in Gran Canaria. More than 30% of the gross domestic product is directly related to tourism. And, indirectly, it reaches 70%. This means that more than 70% of the island's economy is connected, somehow, to the tourism sector. The tourism industry started 50 years ago at a time when tourism wasn't a developed or thriving sector, neither in Gran Canaria nor in any other destination in the world. In the Canary Islands it started being developed in both islands, Tenerife and Gran Canaria. This 50-year long development has changed the economic landscape of Gran Canaria. Nowadays, tourism is very important due to the number of job opportunities it creates; all the services and industries related to it; how certain areas of Gran Canaria were developed, specifically in the south of the island; and the high level infrastructure development it brought, like hotels, marinas and golf courses. All the infrastructure that was developed has had a positive impact on our territory and, even more, on the lives of the people who live in Gran Canaria.

**Tourism has been growing in Gran Canaria for the past 7 years. Has it been a sustainable growth?**

Indeed we have had 7 successive years of continuous growth. We had an unparalleled growth year after year reaching over 4.5

million tourists in Gran Canaria last year. Five years ago, we only received 2.8 million tourists. This has been an exponential, high and fast growth. Right now, we are in the middle of a changing cycle. We are facing some challenges concerning our air connectivity with airlines no longer servicing us, the fall of an important tour operator, the weak sales of holidays by some tour operators; all of these factors are changing the extremely positive economic and touristic environment we had in the past few years. We understand that the number of tourists coming to Gran Canaria will drop slightly this year, and it is ok because our plan is to make sure we stay at the figures from 2017 and focus, from now on, on the tourists' expenditure during their stay. Our plan is to make sure that those who come spend more here on the island. Bear in mind that the expenditure of a tourist that travels to Gran Canaria is made both before they travel, at home and that money stays in their country of origin, and then here, in the destination, which is the amount they spends while in Gran Canaria. Our strategy now is that the tourist spends more here and in order to make sure that happens, we must have a better tourist offer.

**What type of tourist is currently visiting the island? And what kind of tourist would you like to attract?**

As I just mentioned our aim is to raise the amount of money the tourists spend here on the island, so we are looking to attract those tourists who are willing to travel around, get to know the whole island and experience several things. They can spend time in the residential areas in the south, where most of the hotels and houses are, but then we want them to move and visit the center and north of Gran Canaria where there are also things to see and do. We are looking for a tourist who is culturally active, who relates to the population, who wants to try and experience the local gastronomy. We would prefer not to have those that stay at a hotel all the time and don't leave to explore the island.

**What is the local gastronomy like? What is special about it?**

Our gastronomy is completely different and indigenous, and it cannot be enjoyed elsewhere because it is not possible to export

it, since its production is limited and made with local fresh produce. However, you can taste it here while it is fresh, recently made. It is always prepared in very unique way. There are also a lot of local wines and cheeses. In the most recent World Cheese Awards, 22 of our chesses were awarded. Our cheeses are certainly among the best ones in the world. But we believe it's not just about trying the cheese and buying it; we want the tourists to have the whole experience: we want them to visit the cheese shops, learn how the cheese is produced, interact with the locals, enjoy the entire process and in the end, buy the cheese and savor it. Gastronomy should be much more than just eating. It has to be one of the tourist experiences during a trip. Tourists are increasingly looking for different kinds of experiences and gastronomy can provide some. For example, the only coffee plantation in Europe is located on the island of Gran Canaria, specifically in Agaete, in the north. Visiting a coffee plantation in Europe is a unique tourist experience that you can only have while in Gran Canaria.



**So you want to diversify away from just the all-inclusive kind of guest and have a more varied tourist arrivals?**

Correct. We can offer much more than just a hotel for a whole week where you get all you need. We are part of Europe, with European infrastructure, healthcare, roads, telecommunications which guarantee a stress-free and safe holiday. The tourist will encounter no problem if he wants to venture out of the hotel with their family, children, partner or friends on their own. He can easily rent a car and drive around on his own. We want the tourist to have the freedom to experience the feeling of being a traveler and not a tourist. This is changing nowadays because people are becoming more and more independent when they travel. Now a lot of people book their holidays themselves and don't always depend on an agency or tour operator - they plan their trips according to what they want, they tailor make their trips and no longer have to buy a package tour. Gran Canaria is the perfect holiday spot for those who want to have a unique holiday where they can decide what they want to do and when they want to do it. And we want them because they are the ones that spend more money at the destination. And these tourists will also benefit the locals. Our aim is that our tourism development benefits the population, those living on the island, and not just those working in tourism related businesses.

**What message would you like to send to our readers inviting them to visit Gran Canaria?**

I would like to recommend Gran Canaria as their next holiday destination because they will find it a welcoming and safe place with quality and top-notch infrastructure and where they will be able to do many things and have a wonderful time. Especially because the people of Gran Canaria are very warm people who welcome everyone with open arms. ●





## GRAN CANARIA OPEN TO BUSINESS



**COSME GARCÍA  
FALCÓN**

Managing Director  
SPEGC  
Economic Promotion  
Office  
Gran Canaria Council

### FACTS

**4%**  
CORPORATE  
TAX RATE

**2021**  
OPENING OF TWO  
INDOOR FILMING SETS

**120**  
LANDED BUSINESS  
PROJECTS  
(ASSISTANCE, LOCAL  
INTEL, SOFTLANDING)

#### What is Gran Canaria's appeal to both domestic and foreign investors?

Gran Canaria is today a sound destination for direct investment and economic ventures. It's a dynamic, well-positioned and connected geo-strategic center, open to business, hosting what could be considered the single-most attractive onshore tax regime to be found in Europe, fully authorized and supported by the European Commission.

We see ourselves as a trusted growth partner for operations- and innovation-based projects, far beyond the core sectors of our economy: tourism and maritime/port industries.

The Canary Islands offers competitive taxation on corporate profits (4% rate at the Canary Islands Special Zone), whereas consumption taxation is restricted to a 7% VAT-equivalent. Other significant benefits apply: deductions on investments (25%), no withholding tax for dividend repatriation, subsidies for transport and recruitment of young professionals, substantial direct incentives for industrial projects, custom-duties exemptions within Free Trade Zones, etc.

Equally, a whole set of tailored tax-incentive are currently in force, mimicking same deduction and tax rebate figures enforced in mainland Spain, but with increased rates. These are specifically aimed at activities in the audiovisual (40% eligible costs), industrial, R&D (75%) and technological innovation (45%) subsectors, making the Canary Islands one of the most comprehensive, safe, tax-friendly

and interesting economic environments in Europe.

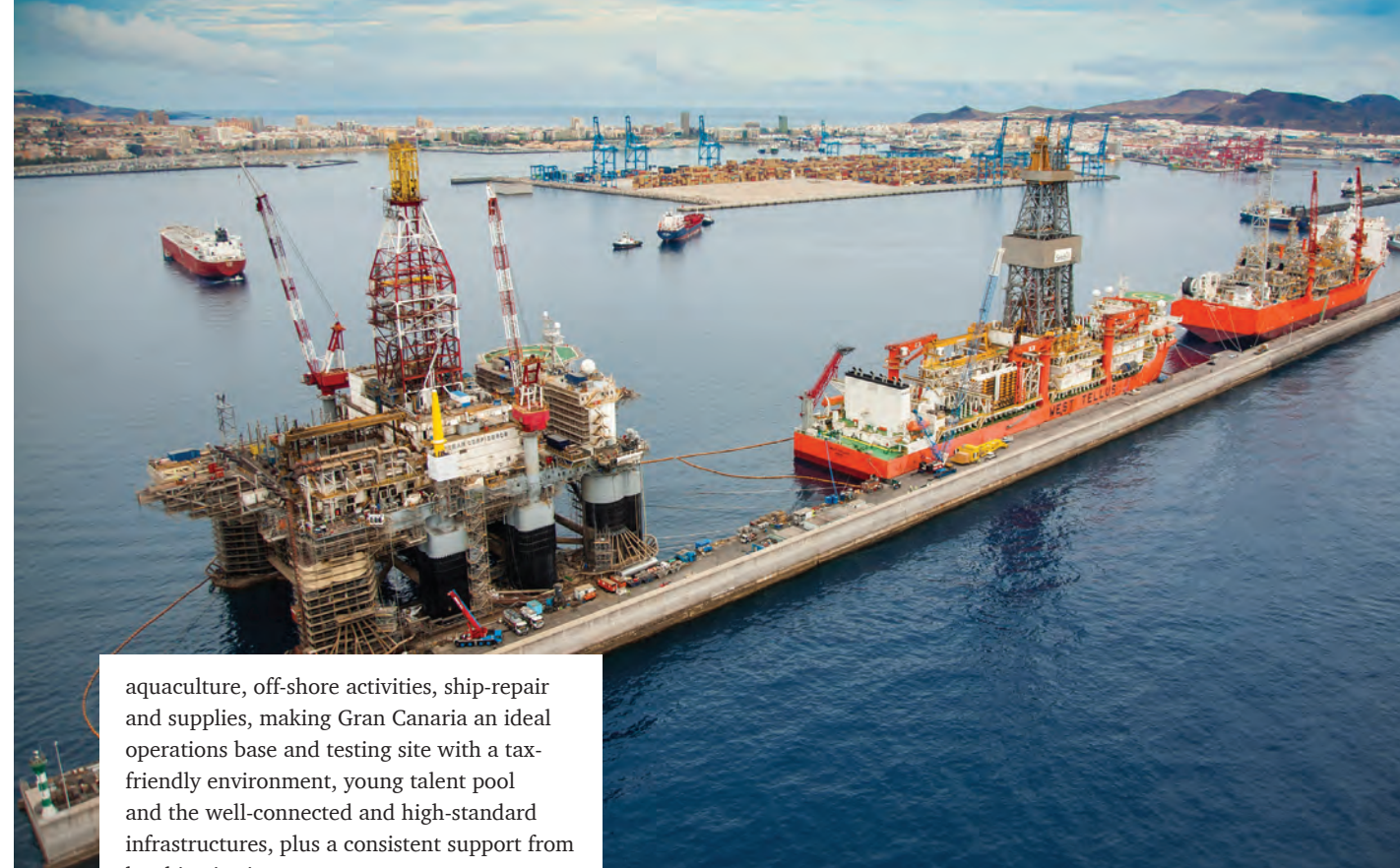
Gran Canaria is more than magnificent sights or a tourist destination worth a visit, which it indeed is thanks to an excellent climate, magnificent natural surroundings and extensive range of leisure opportunities. Gran Canaria offers conditions to satisfy business needs, comply with innovative projects, run pilots ('Lab Island'), exploit locational and market opportunities, hire local talent, and support professional and personal growth, while it remains a great place to live, at a competitive cost of living which is about half of main European cities.

#### What are the main challenges for the island's diversification and how can it reduce its dependence on tourism?

Although Gran Canaria is a tourism destination with 4.5 million tourists a year and reports the highest RevPAR (revenue per available room) of the islands, thinking it is just a top sun-seeker destination is highly misleading. It is the least construction- and tourism-dependent Canarian island, thanks to two other traditionally strong economic sectors that are interchangeably connected: the maritime and logistics activities in and around the Port of Las Palmas, and the transformation and commercial activities.

Gran Canaria is a natural service and transformation platform for the European and African markets, serving as a connection between both of them and the Americas. Gran Canaria boasts from transformation/blending oil terminals to call-centers with global reach, Spanish, German and Nordic markets being the core clients. Other opportunities are being tapped in various subsectors: centralized procurement centers, trading houses (energy, commodities, publicity), back-office support, etc. Software development, smart technologies and digital activities are also ideally suited to the island – apart from the attractive taxation, there is a strong talent base drawing from young highly-qualified professionals for these technologies. Gran Canaria has a 'Laboratory Island' strategy specifically aimed at those sectors, facilitating test, live pilots and product development.

Other sectors that also benefit from the abovementioned tax advantages are the blue economy, marine biotechnology and



aquaculture, off-shore activities, ship-repair and supplies, making Gran Canaria an ideal operations base and testing site with a tax-friendly environment, young talent pool and the well-connected and high-standard infrastructures, plus a consistent support from local institutions.

#### What is the role of the blue economy in the economic development of your island?

Gran Canaria has the ideal conditions for the sustainable use of marine resources. The quality of its waters, weather conditions and natural resources make it a true oasis for business projects in the biotechnology and aquaculture.

Physical conditions, combined with tax advantages and the related public strategies have an outstanding effect on activities linked to our ports network, the offshore energies and the biotech.

Several research centers are already at the disposal of international investors to initiate



studies and pilots, including BEA (National Algae Collection), ECOAQUA and PLOCAN (Oceanic Platform of the Canary Islands).

#### How do you assess the potential of the audiovisual sector with the Gran Canaria Film Commission?

The audiovisual, film, digital animation and post-production industries enjoy excellent operating conditions. For example: year-round filming availability for live action featured films and series; attractive tax reliefs – 40% tax payback on all eligible costs incurred during international productions; and excellent and wide-ranging conditions and facilities for production and post-production. As a matter of fact, the first indoor filming sets of the Canaries – one with 1,500-square meters and the other with 1,800, are currently being constructed in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and are due to open early 2021

#### What are your current initiatives to promote the economy of the island?

SPEGC, being the economic-development agency and investing entity of the Gran Canaria Council, provides tailored training and education to around 1,500 professionals with 100 yearly courses, seminars, masterclasses and workshops. Most of the time we work upon private sector demand to cover the gaps and improve the skills and abilities needed for their activities.

The island council is also involved in increasing the infrastructure of Gran Canaria, from extending the film shooting/audiovisual infrastructures to the development of an experimental business area for biotechnology, circular economy and aquaculture, which will be located in the southeast of the island. In addition, SPEGC is already working on the creation of a Port-Center for companies, start-ups and projects related to the maritime, offshore and port operations, in which we will also manage a start-up incubator. We share with the Port Authority of Las Palmas a strategy that paves the road to smart logistics, Port IoT, applied blockchain and further into a prosperous and sustainable future. Public efforts and public-private partnerships are supporting the technological transition and spreading the benefits of a becoming a Smart Island. ●





## BECORDIAL: COMMITTED TO SUSTAINABILITY



**NICOLÁS  
VILLALOBOS  
MESTRES**  
General Director  
beCordial  
Hotels & Resorts

### FACTS

**2004**  
GROUP FOUNDED

**25**  
PROPERTIES

**7**  
TRAVELIFE  
SUSTAINABILITY  
GOLD AWARDS

#### Please introduce us to beCordial Hotels & Resorts.

We are a fairly young company as we were founded in 2004. It was created by industry leaders here in Gran Canaria: the beer brewers, the producers of the local water, chocolate, ice cream, etc. Initially, most of the shareholders were members of the food and beverage industry here on the island. They recognized that there was an opportunity for investment in the hospitality sector because hotels were their main clients. So they joined forces with the dealers of Audi and Mercedes cars to create the beCordial investment group. When we started, we owned three apartment properties in Playa del Ingles and Maspalomas. By the end of 2004, we opened the Cordial Mogán Playa Hotel, which is the flagship of our hotel chain. It's a beautiful and charming resort that we have in the south of the island, which has the best climate. That's not an exaggeration, the southwest part of Gran Canaria is protected from the wind and always has blue skies and no humidity. But it's not just the climate that makes this area attractive, it was a fishing village and it has kept its authenticity, so it's less like a resort and more an area where the locals and the tourists can mingle.

In 2008, we opened Apartments Cordial Mogán Valle near the Cordial Mogán Playa Hotel. It was a huge investment; between that and the units in Maspalomas, we invested a total of €136 million. Today we manage 25 establishments on Gran Canaria.

We have been expanding with management contracts and commercial services. It's safe to say that we have been successful in our expansions.

#### In 2018 you won a sustainability award from Bankia. What can you tell us about that?

We have received quite a few awards in terms of sustainability. Our shareholders are businesspeople from the island who are always looking for long-term solutions, not just short-term profit. We are from here and have been here for centuries, so we are committed to our islands and keeping them sustainable.

Last year we won the Bankia award for sustainability. In 2014 we won the Congreso de Hoteleros Españoles award for corporate social responsibility. We are very proud to be recognized and respected as leaders in sustainability. Cordial is the Latin word that means "from the heart", so being cordial is much more than just the basic element of our brand, it is also the fundament of our philosophy.

As a company we need to be socially responsible so we try to support many initiatives, from cultural to sports events for the local communities.

Also, we were careful to not make our resorts all-inclusive; we want the guests to go out and explore and spend money locally.

#### What's your biggest challenge in terms of sustainability?

The island uses a lot of electricity just in taking the salt out of the sea water and making it potable. We try to keep our energy consumption down, as much as possible in the hotel industry.



#### How will the Thomas Cook closure affect the hotel industry and the island in general?

We saw it coming; however it was still a big shock seeing a big company like that file for bankruptcy. It was one of the two biggest tour operators in Europe and they controlled a lot of the connectivity between the islands. Before Thomas Cook declared bankruptcy, we had already been diversifying the tour operators that we were using. We were also using Booking.com and Expedia to help us to get people to book us directly through our webpage or call center. In 2004, when we began, more than half of our bookings came through Thomas Cook, however recently only about 15% of our clients used that company. We also decided to get a commercial insurance for all the credits from Thomas Cook since we knew something was about to happen, so we haven't lost a lot of money because we had everything insured. However, when the Thomas Cook planes stopped, it created less connectivity between the islands. During the winter, the airline has 700,000 seats to bring people to the islands so if they

don't fly, we have a problem because there are fewer tourist arrivals. But, we will adjust and other airlines will start to cover these flights, it will just take time. We have been asking the Spanish authorities as well as EU authorities to help subsidize air traffic to and from the islands. There are 2 million Spaniards on the Canary Islands, many of them work in tourism and they need the industry to stay as stable as possible. But this also comes back to sustainability, many people don't want to fly now because of CO2 emissions. But we are islands in an ocean so this isn't like flying from Berlin to Frankfurt. We shouldn't need to be taxed as if flying was one of many options for us, instead of the main, logical way to reach the islands. It's not that I don't care about climate change, but we need to survive on the islands.

#### Just sun and sand tourism is no longer enough. How do you see the efforts to offer a better tourism product in Gran Canaria?

There are beaches all over the world, so we have competition from any place that has a nice beach. And there are places in the world that are laxer with rules and regulations than the EU so we cannot compete with those just on prices, therefore it wouldn't make sense to have just beach tourism. We have been trying to add quality experiences like gastronomy and wellness centers to our tourism offer and making Gran Canaria a safe place for a holiday. We've been working to develop and encourage sports tourism too by making our island more bike-friendly for cyclists and improving the diving programs.

#### What would be your final message for those looking to come to the Canary Islands?

The Canary Islands is a beautiful archipelago in the middle of the Atlantic between three continents and as such, have a rich history and culture, amazing landscapes, stunning weather, and kind people. ●





# SUSTAINABLE SPIRIT OF SANTA CRUZ DE TENERIFE

often choose to base themselves in the island's attractive capital, Santa Cruz de Tenerife. Located on the northeastern coast, this bustling port city is the ideal place for exploring Tenerife's culture, history and architecture.

Whether exploring the charms of modern art gallery Tenerife Espacio de las Artes or discovering the charming historic town of La Laguna just outside the capital; whether visiting the stunning wave-shaped Auditorio de Tenerife designed by Santiago Calatrava, or simply hiking through the rugged Anaga mountains that overlook the city, Santa Cruz is the natural choice for tourists in search of the authentic spirit of Tenerife.

Celebrating its 10th year in 2020, the Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible is leading the city's efforts to protect its environmental riches for future generations of residents and visitors to enjoy.

Chaired by Santa Cruz's first female mayor, Patricia Hernández, the Foundation carries out activities including environmental field trips and recycling workshops for schoolchildren, organizing local volunteers to collect waste from beaches and implementing actions to combat climate change.

The Foundation's work has helped turn Santa Cruz into one of the standard-bearers for sustainability in the Canary Islands. Since the establishment of the Foundation, Santa Cruz has managed to cut its emissions of greenhouse gases by almost 20%.

"Our city is much more sustainable now than it was a decade ago," Ms Hernández says. "In the coming months and years Santa Cruz will become even more sustainable as we accelerate our efforts to fight against climate change." ●

● The Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible is spearheading the sustainable development of Tenerife's capital city

**T**he largest and most populous of the Canary Islands, Tenerife is also the most visited by tourists. In 2019, more than five million people came to Tenerife on a vacation, 40% of them from the UK. The island is dominated by the giant and still active volcano of Mount Teide, the highest mountain in Spain. Teide National Park, a world heritage site more than 70 square miles in size, is one of the most visited national parks in the world. A cable car takes tourists to almost 12,000 feet high, affording stunning views of the entire island and the surrounding ocean.

While most visitors to Tenerife stay near the beaches of the south, independent travelers



# RESORT CORDIAL SANTA AGUEDA: AUTHENTICALLY CHARMING

● The picturesque & authentic fishing village of Arguineguín is welcoming discerning visitors from around the world

**A** new chapter is opening in the long history of tourism in Gran Canaria, as international visitors explore the stunning southern tip of the island with breathtaking beaches around every corner.

Here on the Arguineguín coast, visited by Sir Francis Drake and his legendary fleet of corsairs in 1595, tourists are discovering a very different island from the larger resorts elsewhere on Gran Canaria.

Many visitors to the island will already be familiar with Arguineguín's Tuesday market. For decades, tourists have been coming here to buy inexpensive souvenirs, stock up on subtropical fruits and feast on some of the freshest and tastiest fish on the island.

Increasing numbers of visitors are now choosing to base themselves in this picturesque location for the duration of their visit to Gran Canaria, experiencing an authentic way of life that has all but vanished from other parts of the island. Here the beaches and sandy coves are quieter, the nightlife is more laidback and the daily catch of fish in the restaurants is unbeatable.

In the last couple of years, a handful of discreet five-star resorts have opened in the neighbourhood, giving international tourists easy access to the charms of Arguineguín.

Joining them this summer will be perhaps the most luxurious vacation homes complex in the district, the Resort Cordial Santa Agueda. The exclusive resort will be both owned and operated by the Cordial Group, in which Arguineguín-born football international David Silva is a major shareholder.

Perhaps the town's most famous son, Silva is a passionate believer in responsible local development. The project is being constructed in compliance with the highest environmental and social standards and has won strong backing from local environmentalists.

As sustainable development unlocks the secrets of this most charming of villages, Arguineguín looks set to assume a starring role in the future of tourism in Gran Canaria. ●





## DESTINATION: SANTA CRUZ DE TENERIFE

Home to half of all the inhabitants of Tenerife, the bustling island capital of Santa Cruz is not only an attractive and vibrant base for independent travelers, but also an increasingly important hub for business & investment

**T**he professionalism of the workforce, the unbeatable quality of life and the digital and physical connectivity of Santa Cruz have turned the city into a growth platform for businesses from a wide range of sectors, from translation agencies to container terminal operators, from biotechnology firms to call centers, IT helpdesks and providers of back office services for multinationals. With corporation tax of just 4%, the lowest in the European Union, unrivalled access to the markets of Africa and Latin America, two



international airports and world-class communications and computing infrastructure, Santa Cruz is also an increasingly popular destination for startups and digital nomads. There are few other cities in Europe that can compete with Tenerife's capital when it comes to costs, climate, coworking spaces and connectivity.

The economy of Santa Cruz will receive a significant impetus in the near term when oil giant Cepsa shuts its crude refinery and transfers the land to the city government for redevelopment, including the construction of a state-of-the-art technology park. The so-called Green Santa Cruz 2030 project has the potential to create new public and private spaces in the city, enhance public transport, stimulate investment and support innovation across the local economy.

"This land belongs to the whole city," says Patricia Hernández Gutiérrez, who was elected Mayor of Santa Cruz in June last year. "We

now want to sign a binding legal document with Cepsa to make the project a reality."

The quality of life and affordability that bring digital nomads and services providers to Santa Cruz also exert an enduring appeal to tourists who want to explore Tenerife independently and discover the island's cultural and natural treasures for themselves.

Far from the beach resorts and mass tourism of southern Tenerife, Santa Cruz is an authentic and friendly city, where contemporary art galleries and fashionable boutiques coexist happily with traditional food markets, unpretentious tapas bars and evocative historical buildings and churches.

Every February, the streets, bars and public places of Santa Cruz become the backdrop to one of the world's greatest festivals: Carnival. Rivalled only by the celebrations of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, the city welcomes hundreds of thousands of revelers from all around the world to celebrate life and happiness in a colorful riot of costumes, masks, music and magic.

More than just a giant street party, the Carnival festivities in Santa Cruz are authentic expressions of local culture which date back as far as the 16th century. Traditions such as the so-called Murga Contest of satirical singers and the Sardine Burial which ends the celebrations are examples of unique living heritage that are unique to the Canary Islands.

At the same time, no city in the Canary Islands feels as contemporary and as cutting-edge as Santa Cruz. Home to street art and open-air sculptures from the likes of Joan Miró, Oscar Dominguez and Henry Moore, the island capital also boasts perhaps the premier contemporary art museum in the Canary Islands, the TEA Tenerife Espacio de las Artes, a stunning building of concrete and glass which showcases the creativity of a wide range of 21st-century artists, photographers and film makers.

Just a short walk away along the waterfront, the Auditorio de Tenerife is one of the most celebrated buildings in all of Spain. Designed by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava and inaugurated in 2003, this wave-shaped concert hall has come to symbolize the energy and optimism of the city as Santa Cruz advances confidently into the future. ●





## SANTA CRUZ: BUSINESS & PLEASURE



**PATRICIA  
HERNÁNDEZ  
GUTIÉRREZ**  
Mayor  
Santa Cruz de Tenerife

### FACTS

**+207,000**  
POPULATION  
OF SANTA CRUZ

**16.176**  
ACTIVE BUSINESSES  
IN 2018

**21.2 °C/70.16°F**  
AVERAGE ANNUAL  
TEMPERATURE

**At the end of September 2019, you spoke about the new objectives for Santa Cruz during a conference. Could you elaborate on these goals?**

Our main goals are increasing quality of life, adding value and putting our people at the forefront of our decisions. For us, large infrastructure projects are not as important if they do not improve the lives of the citizens. Having the best facilities is not as important as using these facilities in the right way. Any development must be good for the population and not only for the tourists. Yet Santa Cruz knows how important tourists are for us and welcomes them.

In that respect, Santa Cruz is a village and a city at the same time. We have a strong sense of community, but we are absolutely cosmopolitan. And it has always been like this, a crossroad and hub for trade and tourism. The port has always been a window to the world for our city and this has always made us unique in Spain. We have always been at the crossroads of many cultures, we are unique in that; we are cosmopolitan without losing our small-town spirit of solidarity and community. Nowadays, with the internet we can share this vision.

**How do you manage to strike a balance between modernity and tradition?**

They are not incompatible. Modernity can respect traditions. We used to think that to go forward was to forget the past; now we know

its important to move forward while keeping our roots. A street that has the same shops and businesses that can be found in any other city doesn't bring any added value. We have our artisans, customs, celebrations which cannot be found elsewhere. This creates a sense of belonging, of continuation. And then our traditions have their own magic, such as our carnivals—which couldn't be stopped even during Franco's regime. The whole city participates in a street festival that lasts over two weeks, and which remains traditional even as it becomes an ever more contemporary event for Santa Cruz.

**Tourism has been and will remain the most important sector of your economy. With the bankruptcy of Thomas Cook and the closing of Ryanair's bases, how do you see the future of the sector?**

Growth must bring quality with it. Our land is beautiful and not only because of sun and sand, although a lot of visitors come for that. We have a lot of other things to offer tourists, unique experiences beyond our all-inclusive hotels. We have a national park in Santa Cruz and biosphere reserves still unknown to tourists as well as art déco architecture to rival Miami's. We have cultural activities, nature and active tourism and there is a lot of potential in our business convention sector as well.

For example, our public foundation Sustainable Santa Cruz develops the area of

Anaga and the rural park there, which is still largely undiscovered. Anaga has laurel forests (laurisilva) which has unique vegetation. So the foundation not only fulfills the role of making this area known, but also of preserving it. It ensures the local population enjoys amenities and services, so that tourism remains sustainable. Besides, it creates a niche market and supports our environment, making a jewel like Anaga known to our own citizens and to the world. Therefore, it's clear that the crisis at Thomas Cook and Ryanair created a problem of connectivity which has nothing to do with the attractiveness of the destination. The



destination itself keeps improving, but we need to ensure tourists can arrive without having to take three different planes. This is the challenge we must undertake and solve as municipal and regional administrations. For Santa Cruz it is also vital to be a cruise-ship port. It's a segment that keeps growing, and so we have room to improve. We have improved the connection between port and city to make it more accessible and comfortable for visitors.

**The Canary Islands' location, between Africa, Europe and America, has made it an ideal hub and link to these three continents. How can Santa Cruz de Tenerife, the largest city in the archipelago, benefit from this advantage?**

We've always benefited from it. Anyone who comes to Tenerife knows that a visit to Santa Cruz is a must. Perhaps at first this was because of our port, but then the openness of the people made us unique, both for trade and culture. Our position in relation to Africa, which still needs to be more developed since we are so close, makes us an ideal steppingstone into that continent, and not only for business reasons, but also in social and humanitarian terms. Multiculturalism creates wealth, and we have been able to integrate that into our culture and our economy.

**What are the opportunities investors may find here?**

To start with, we have a free zone, incentives like the investment reserves which can reduce the tax burden by up to 90% of a company's profits, and other fiscal tools I believe are not sufficiently known in Europe to investors, and which they should look into. These advantages are powerful, and they make investment in our city a very attractive proposition.

Secondly, we offer security—and I mean legal security, because we operate within the framework of the European Union. Also, physical security and security in terms of sanitation and health, since Spain ranks high in both. Furthermore, the investor settling here will have the most days of good weather and sunshine per year anywhere in Europe, with a population that's friendly and welcoming.

Finally, as an island we are investing in cutting-edge technology; we have fast fiber-optic connections which you won't find in most places of the world. All these aspects make our city an excellent place for investment. ●







## ANAGA PARK: A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

Located on the northeastern tip of Tenerife & offering perhaps the most varied & intense hiking opportunities anywhere in the Canary Islands, in 2020 the Anaga Mountains will be celebrating their fifth year as an official UNESCO Biosphere Reserve

**T**his mountain range is the oldest part of Tenerife, formed some seven to nine million years ago. Covering more than 35,000 acres, this highly protected area combines rugged, cloud-capped mountains with deep ravines, spectacular sea views and secret black-sand beaches that provide hikers with an irresistible invitation for a refreshing dip after a hard day's walking. As well as its stunning mountains and geology, the region is also one of the most biodiverse areas in Europe, with a staggering variety of reptiles, birds, fish and countless unique species of invertebrates. In addition to the native fauna, the mountains are one of the best places in the archipelago to explore the laurel forests that once covered the entire Mediterranean basin. Meanwhile, the clear waters here are home to rare species of eels, rays and fish and are an increasingly popular destination for adventurous divers.



Tourists who come to Anaga may stay overnight in the park, in a handful of simple lodges located in the villages and hamlets that are scattered across the mountains. Accommodation here may be basic and rural, but money from visitors has a major part to play in supporting the c. 2,500 smallholders and their families who still live in the region. The local councillor, Ruymán Izquierdo, is leading efforts to declare a marine reserve in the area and to install charging points for electric vehicles on the local roads. For any traveller staying in nearby Santa Cruz, a trip to this most diverse and ancient of Tenerife's natural parks is an unmissable chance to travel to a world of natural wonder, unchanged by mass tourism or by the passing of the years. ●

# The Heart of Tenerife

### Santa Cruz de Tenerife City Hall

Tenerife has a heart: Santa Cruz.

From here, in the capital, you can immerse yourself in the spirit of the entire island, a magical place where you can experience it all. If you love authentic destinations for your journeys, Santa Cruz de Tenerife is for you; cosmopolitan, historic, cultured, a place for leisure & shopping. Enjoy this amazing city & island by discovering the genuine heart of Tenerife.

[www.santacruzdetenerife.es](http://www.santacruzdetenerife.es)





# TENERIFE: 100% LIFE

## Tenerife, the island of fun

Tenerife, the largest of the Canary Islands, has one of the most privileged climates in the world with an average temperature of 22°C/71.6°F from January to December. It literally has 365 days of sun! Its volcanic nature, beaches and immense forests are spectacular. As well, the local gastronomy, wines and deep-rooted traditions, make the island the perfect holiday destination to disconnect, relax and enjoy.

The natural environment of the island is one of its biggest attractions and Tenerife's 43 protected areas cover about 48% of its territory. The Teide National Park, included in the UNESCO Word Heritage List, features the Pico Viejo stratovolcano that, at 3,718 meters, is the highest peak in Spain. The views and sunsets from the top are stunning, and a modern cable-car allows visitors to get close to the peak. Other important stops are the Rural Park of Anaga; Teno Park, with its laurel forest - a genuine relic of the Tertiary; as well as the Corona Forestal Park that has an amazing pine tree forest.



## Open 24 hours

Tenerife is a destination that is continuously changing and reinventing itself. Fun is part of its DNA, and guests are guaranteed a good time whether they want a lively scene or just relaxing with the sunset and waves. Beach clubs and elegant rooftop bars abound and visitors can find a variety of shows and music festivals with some of the world's top international acts in music and theater.

## A cluster of stars

Tenerife's unpolluted and clear sky is considered one of the best on the planet to observe the stars. It's as if Tenerife and the sky itself are intertwined. Guests will not be surprised to know that Tenerife is home to the prestigious Institute of Astrophysics of the Canary Islands where telescopes are built by teams of researchers from all over the world. Anyone can be an astronomer and stargaze in Tenerife and there are many companies that offer the opportunity to observe the sky with these other-worldly telescopes.

In addition to the stars in the sky, there are also some that can be found on land! There are five restaurants on the island with Michelin stars in recognition of the quality of their cuisine. But they are just a sample of the rich gastronomic universe of Tenerife which has been influenced by its constant connections with America, Europe and Africa. There are a variety of restaurants scattered around the island where one can taste authentic indigenous flavors: the famous Canarian banana or honey, gofio (a flour made from roasted grains), fresh local fish

or meat, while sampling some famous local wines that have been crafted for centuries.

## Long live life outdoors!

The best thing about having spring weather year-round is the chance to do the many outdoor activities that Tenerife offers. There is fun to have in the sea, on land or in the air. If guests want to spend time in the ocean they can try kayaking, windsurfing, surfing or diving. There are endless trails for cycling and hiking, or paragliding and flying over Tenerife's incredible landscapes.

Outdoors is where one can find and enjoy the gorgeous beaches of Tenerife. There are plenty of picturesque beaches with soft white sand or black sand beaches that come from the volcanic origin of the island. There are equally beautiful beaches in the north and in the south such as Bajamar, Punta del Hidalgo or Garachico. One can even find natural pools created by solidified lava.

Also, in the waters off the south of the Island, there are sailing excursions and visitors can spot marine animals 365 days a year. Tenerife is one of the best places in the world to watch and catch a glimpse of bottlenose dolphins as well as about 400 tropical pilot whales.

For those who travel as a family, the theme parks in Tenerife are among the best rated parks. There is the Loro Park Zoo or the Siam Park water park, with its white sand beach and artificial waves will certainly keep children well entertained.

## A unique cultural heritage

Tenerife's towns and cities are charming and full of interesting architecture ready to explore. Some notable modern buildings are the Adán Martín Auditorium and the International Center for Fairs and Conferences, both works by Santiago Calatrava and the TEA, Tenerife Espacio de las Artes, by Herzog and De Meuron; they represent some of the architectural beauties on the island. La Laguna, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has traditional mansions and courtyards, but just as beautiful are those of other historical centers that are also worth a visit such as La Orotava, Garachico or Icod de los Vinos. ●





## CONNECTED TO THE WORLD



**PEDRO MANUEL  
MARTÍN  
DOMÍNGUEZ**  
President  
Tenerife Council

### FACTS

**6.1 million**  
TOURISTS IN 2019

**+ 950,000**  
INHABITANTS

**4%**  
CORPORATE TAX RATE

**2**  
INTERNATIONAL  
AIRPORTS

#### Could you introduce us to the island of Tenerife?

Tenerife is a diverse island. It looks like a holiday destination of sun and beach, but it offers much more than that. We have a very diverse gastronomy and there are many cultural activities. It is also a place where you can enjoy parties throughout the year and, in general, it is also a safe island to spend your holidays. In fact, more than 6.1 million tourists came last year, a record for us.

#### How is Tenerife's economy these days?

It is an economy that has taken some hits due to the worldwide economic crisis we have been going through in the last decade, but tourism remains a very potent element of revitalization. There are also other economic alternatives. For example, the Canary Islands Special Zone (ZEC) that offers tax advantages that are unparalleled to other areas of Europe.

In regard to agriculture, we offer certified products of the finest quality that are in high demand in the national and EU markets.

#### What is being done to diversify the economy of Tenerife?

Tenerife is in a geostrategic location. It is the nexus between Europe, Africa and America. Companies that have this sort of access to three continents mixed with the low taxation and the amount of development have many possibilities here. It is a great place for investment and start-up technology companies, for example, have a lot of success here.

On the other hand, we are trying to support our agriculture, because we have lots of products that are top-tier and excellent for consumption, both by tourists and locals.

#### Can you give us the main objectives of the 2020-2023 Modernization Plan?

The Council de Tenerife is very clear: we have to be an administration always ready to serve our citizens and their needs. Therefore, the 2020-2023 Modernization Plan will promote the availability of the latest and most useful technologies to the population. We need to show what we want to be: an open government that fights against corruption, evaluating the public policies and its effects on society and the economy of the island. In short, a government that serves the people and is transparent, for those who want to obtain more information about the actions taken in the island institution.

The Insular Government Council approved on October 29, 2019 the commission for the preparation of the Modernization Plan of the Island Council of Tenerife. The execution period is four months and valid until 2022. It will deepen the regulation of values and principles of action of public services, as well as their transparency. Citizenship will now be the axis of public decision.

The Council's commitment will, in this sense, go beyond strict compliance with the laws and will be guided by the principles of exemplarity in the exercise of political responsibility, excellence in the quality of services and transparency in management. For this, it will be equipped with an adequate administrative organization and an optimal management of personal and material resources and will take advantage of all the possibilities provided by new technologies. This implies a very deep change in the administrative culture and in the way of functioning that has many different aspects: organizational, procedural, normative, technological, human resources, among others. Regarding the strategic objectives of the Modernization Plan, there is the improvement of the quality of public services, the reduction of processing times, the minimization of administrative burdens, the transparency in the activity of the council and the betterment of participation and citizen collaboration which is fundamental, knowing the needs of those we represent and for whom we work,



and to improve as an island object of business investments or destination of millions of tourists annually.

#### How would you describe the tourism that exists today in Tenerife?

Mainly, we have two tourist profiles: on the one hand, the family member, couples with children who opt for the all-inclusive packages; and, on the other hand, we have a younger, active tourist who enjoys a wide variety of activities we offer as a destination. In addition, we have a vast amount of new,



quality five-star hotels that are very interesting for the high-end market. All this allows us to cover a very wide spectrum of visitors and nationalities. Our tourism is led by the British and Germans especially; but also from Sweden, Belgium and France among others.

#### How do you see the development of the blue economy on the island?

The geographical positioning of the Canarian ports and their level of maturity represent a great opportunity for the development of this strategic sector. The ports are fundamental to the island, although much remains to be done in order to maximize their efficiency. The Tenerife cruise destination has been greatly improved. But we have growth potential for berths of pleasure boats of which there is a lot of demand. The port of the capital has an important specialization in naval repair that still has room for growth, and we are confident that the completion of Industrial Port of Granadilla can be a dynamic element of the economic activity of the islands.

#### Why is Tenerife attractive for investors?

Firstly, because it was a safe destination. The government, despite the current term changes, are trustworthy. There are undoubtedly fiscal advantages, such as our tax rate. And also, Tenerife is in a very strategic enclave between Africa, Europe, and the Americas. The island is the ideal option for investors seeking competitive operating costs without sacrificing the guarantees of a territory integrated in the European Single Market and with the best tax regime in Europe. So we are attractive because of the strategic location, the legal and economic security that we provide, the tax advantages, and the quality of the life you have here. ●





## AN INNOVATIVE & SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MODEL



**DAVID PÉREZ**

CEO

Tenerife Tourist Office

### FACTS

**60%**  
OF VISITORS RETURN  
TO TENERIFE

**759,67**  
PASSENGERS ARRIVED  
BY PLANE IN DECEMBER  
2019

**3,718 meters**  
HIGHEST PEAK  
IN SPAIN (TEIDE)

#### How is Tenerife tackling the issue of sustainable tourism?

From our point of view, sustainability and competitiveness are definitively linked. From there, we can begin to discern which aspects of sustainability we should concentrate on. The big question is how we are going to do it. One interesting way we decided to do this is by following the methodology and strategy of the Biosphere Certification. This method also means adapting the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) of the tourism industry, which is very broad and has many different categories: heritage, mobility, sustainability, and so on. Ultimately everything comes together, and we start working on a real sustainable model that can be measured by these goals.

Because if not, sustainability will remain subjective. Also, it's a good way to compare ourselves to other territories. How do we know that the Canary Islands are more sustainable than the Balearic Islands? Or The Bahamas? Or Madagascar? I believe that the UNWTO is strengthening ties with the Responsible Tourism Institute, and that the Biosphere Certification, which places like Barcelona, the Basque Country, and many other territories in the world have, is positioning itself as a true tool to measure progress in sustainability. Having it does not mean that you are sustainable, but that you have committed to work with this method of sustainability.

#### What are some challenges of sustainability, especially in Tenerife?

There is a lot of pressure to make this happen. The evolution of what we are seeing, the weather alerts, citizen awareness, locals and visitors, tell us that we must act. We have a responsibility to leave a pristine environment for future generations as much as possible, and we have to do it well, with conviction and honesty, and sometimes that means decisions are made that are not the most popular. Now it seems that the ball is in the court of the administration, but as we go forward everyone will have to participate, and everyone will have to make sacrifices. I cannot be preaching sustainability as I drive to work alone in my car. The effort that I make has to be the same as everyone else. It is an issue of awareness, training and especially communication, which is another of the indicators within the Biosphere Certification that is very clear, the hierarchical communication of the citizens showing everything that is done for tourism. Also in social justice, accessibility, and inclusiveness. Europe is an aging continent, and touristically we also have to be a reflection of that aging, because it will be the constant for the tourists that visit us.

#### The bankruptcy of Thomas Cook and the closure of the Ryanair bases have caused a concern within the Canary tourism sector and have coincided with your appointment as the new head of Tenerife Tourism. How have you faced these challenges?

It is true that there is a large adjustment touristically speaking, and that the tourism model is questioned a lot and said to be changing. No one knows very well where this change in the tourism model is going. Digital transformation is key in this strategy, which is another thing that changes quickly- the way to market, to choose a destination, to live the experiences offered by that destination. Thomas Cook was perhaps the first victim of that model change, and in that sense, we should not look back, but forward. We have just signed an agreement with Segittur to assess Tenerife as a destination and begin this process of digital transformation. Tenerife has to accelerate this process because it is one of the keys to changing the tourism model.

On January 23, the Council of Tenerife and the City Council of Puerto de la Cruz received the 'Q Prize for Tourism Quality 2020' by the

#### Institute of Tourism Quality of Spain (ICTE). Why do you think you deserved this award?

We held a conference in Puerto de la Cruz last October, when Q for quality tourism was celebrating 30 years. It was born in Puerto de la Cruz through the initiative of some businesspeople who saw that the quality of the destination was deteriorating. Worried about this situation, they wanted to establish a prize that rewarded the efforts of entrepreneurs of Puerto de la Cruz. This model was a success and was brought to the rest of Spain and that's how the quality Q is born.

This recognition comes to recognize (worth the redundancy) the origins of the quality Q, the efforts. Because we strive to make this conference a success, and it means a change in the quality Q. Because as a necessary tool it also has to be renewed, and meet all the parameters of sustainability, digital transformation, governance, innovation, accessibility. And in that sense, I believe that the renewal of the Q quality began in Puerto de la Cruz once again, 30 years later, last October.

#### What would you like people to know about Tenerife?

I believe that Tenerife is known for some things, but not everything it should be known for. It's known for its weather, its beaches, its national park. But it isn't as well known for the exciting cultural activity it has, the great sporting, social activity, for many experiences that can be lived here. We have some much to offer: identity, culture, customs and traditions. Authenticity has been put in the background for decades and, in the end, that heritage is what the tourist appreciates as exotic. In addition, there are things that are overlooked such as our summer weather. There is no humidity here, there are no high temperatures, so we truly have a great summer. However, we are known more for our mild winter. ●







## AGENDA TENERIFE 2020

Many special events that take place in Tenerife throughout the year not only help adventurous visitors get to know the island better, but also make their holiday experience more exciting. Some of them should not be missed

More information at  
[www.webtenerife.co.uk/events](http://www.webtenerife.co.uk/events)

**O**ur Carnival, an International Tourist Interest, is unforgettable. The one in Santa Cruz is the most popular and one of the most important in the world. Also, a must are those in Arona and Puerto de la Cruz with its well-known entertaining race *Mascarita ponte tacón*, where racer must wear high heels. Many music festivals also attract locals and visitors alike. Some worth mentioning are:

- **Arn Blue & Green Concierto Limpio, “Clean Concert”**: August 29 in Playa Las Américas, Arona

The organizers encourage the use of biodegradable products only and are committed to the protection of the oceans and marine life.

- **Boreal**: September in Los Silos  
Set in a unique natural environment, the festival welcomes music and cultures from all over the world and is committed to sustainability and environmental education through multiple parallel activities.

- **Elrow**: April 11 & September 5 in Golf Costa Adeje

A great electronic music festival with prominent stars.

- **Greenworld**: July 4, September 12, October 31 & New Year’s Eve in Amarilla Golf San Miguel de Abona

Another must for lovers of electronic and techno music.

- **Hidrosfera**: May in Punta del Hidalgo  
Through sounds and workshops, this cultural ecological festival aims to create environmental awareness.

- **I Love Music**: April 10, Costa Adeje  
This is an outdoor festival throughout the day with concerts of all music styles. Its great atmosphere and liveliness have made it an essential stop during Holy Week.

- **Mar Abierto**  
It always brings top notch national and international artists every year. Some of the concerts



already confirmed are: Bonnie Tyler on April 17, Víctor Manuel on May 17, José Luis Perales on June 21 and Miguel Poveda on June 27.

- **Festival Mujer.es**: August in Adeje  
A festival where women are the prominent protagonists through their music, art, exhibitions and conferences

- **Phe Festival**: August 21 & 22 in Puerto de la Cruz

An original and attractive festival that combines indie, rock, dance, urban and electronic music. But that is not all, as it also offers gastronomy, sports, fashion, exhibitions and cultural innovation practices.

- **Peñon Rock**: October 10 in Puerto de la Cruz

This music festival brings together Spain’s most prominent representatives of yesterday, today and forever. Dios Salve a la Reina (Tribute to Queen) and Cristina Ramos are confirmed to take the stage.

- **Sunblast**: August 15 in Golf Costa Adeje  
To the delight of its large and loyal fans, this international festival of electronic music and with five stages, attracts the most relevant international players on the world scene.

- **Ritmos del Mundo**: June 13 in Golf Costa Adeje

Another line-up full of great artists, it is the electronic music festival to give the warmest welcome to the summer

- **Soul Lake Festival**: June in Puerto de la Cruz  
A weekend festival in Lago Martiánez with international music such as soul, disco, soulful house and afro house. Something for everyone where there is more than dancing as Puerto de la Cruz also offers great gastronomy, shopping and unique activities.



- **XIIX Festival Internacional Canarias Jazz & Más Heineken**: June 10 & 11 in Adeje

Adeje becomes the world jazz capital with the performances of the most renowned jazz artists and groups on the planet.

- **Siam Park**: September 15 in Adeje  
The largest waterpark in Europe will celebrate its 12th anniversary. It has been recognized as the best water park in the world for six consecutive years thanks to its incredible attractions and its artificial wave beach. It is also very popular for its special events such as the Songkran Festival in April, a tribute to Thai culture or Siam Nights in July and August when under a full moon where you can chill out and enjoy a meal on the beach.

- **Tenerife Fashion Weekend**: May 22 to 24 Playa de las Américas in Arona  
The event welcomes fashion lovers with several runways of prestigious brands, a fashion film festival and roundtables with fashion experts. All of this is accompanied by great gastronomy, shopping and leisure activities. Visitors can also enjoy several cabarets and shows during their stay in Tenerife

- **Compás**: Every Wednesday to Sunday for 2 hours at the Sala Tibu nightclub in Arona

This show is an exciting of many types of Spanish music and art. One dancer that has been very inspirational is the renowned flamenco dancer Fran Chafino. Here guests can experience the magic and power of bulerías, alegrías, tangos, cane, seguiriyas and guajiras.

- **Scandal Dinner Show**: April 25 premiere & every Friday at Hotel GF Victoria in Costa Adeje

A luxurious and daring cabaret that dismantles conventional shows as it offers a unique experience composed of music, dance and fragrance. It was created by Bodegas Monje in El Sauzal. Wine & Sex is a show that combines wine, eroticism, scenic art and gastronomy in a provocative and fun atmosphere. This year’s premiere is entitled “Fausto”. ●





Meanwhile, El Hierro's underwater treasures, with crystal-clear waters that are home to whales, sharks, dolphins and manta rays, have turned the island into one of Europe's most sought-after destinations for divers of all levels.

It is not only sports enthusiasts who make their way to the island. In ancient times coming here was considered to be able to stand on the edge of world, El Hierro today attracts a wide range of travelers looking to escape the pressures of modern living and to discover a more authentic and peaceful way of life.

With just 10,000 inhabitants, over the centuries the islanders have developed unique traditions that reflect their close relationship with nature, ranging from ancient irrigation technologies to weaving, basketwork and classic cheese-based recipes.

Perhaps nowhere in the Canary Islands does the past feel as alive as it does in El Hierro, and nowhere are the inhabitants so determined to protect their environment and preserve their island for the future. ●

## GOING OFF THE GRID IN EL HIERRO ISLAND

For more than three weeks in the long and breezy summer of 2019, the small, rugged, island of El Hierro in the mid-Atlantic became an unlikely trailblazer in the global race to develop a cleaner, more sustainable energy system

Located in the far west of the Canary Islands, El Hierro was completely self-sufficient in electricity for a total of 24 days, generating all its needs using only wind energy and hydropower. "El Hierro has become the global capital of innovation in renewable energy generation," says the island's president, Alpidio Armas. "The records that we are setting are showing the way to a sustainable future, one based on self-sufficiency in alternative energies." Driving El Hierro's progress towards this carbon-free future is the cutting-edge generation facility of Gorona del Viento. The site combines wind turbines with a hydroelectricity station and ensures that any surplus power generated on windy days is not wasted but stored for use when the weather is calmer.

Excess wind energy which is not consumed at the time when it is generated is used to pump water from a lower reservoir to a higher one. On days when the wind is not strong enough to turn the turbines, the water is then released to generate clean hydroelectricity. "Thanks to Gorona del Viento, El Hierro has become the first isolated community in the world which can rely on water and wind for most of its electricity production," Armas says. It is not only in power generation that El Hierro is unique among the Canary Islands. The westernmost, southernmost and smallest of the major islands, El Hierro has a distinct identity which has been untouched by the mass tourism seen elsewhere in the archipelago. Visitors to El Hierro can experience the Canary Islands as they were before the first charter flights arrived, when life was lived according to a slower, more natural pace. The entire island of El Hierro is a designated UNESCO Geopark and its rocky cliffs, wildflower meadows and volcanic landscapes make it the ideal location for hikers, mountain bikers and paragliders.







## EL HIERRO: THE ISLAND WITH SOUL



**ALPIDIO ARMÁS  
GONZÁLEZ**

President  
El Hierro Council

### FACTS

**10,000**  
INHABITANTS

**268 km²**  
SIZE OF THE ISLAND

**100%**  
RENEWABLE ENERGY  
IS USED ON THE ISLAND

**2000**  
DECLARED A WORLD  
BIOSPHERE RESERVE  
BY UNESCO

**El Hierro is leading the way in renewable energy. For 24 days in a row last year, 100% of the energy used on El Hierro was generated by renewables. How was this accomplished?**

It comes from years of commitment to nature, sustainability and renewable energy, regardless of whom is in charge politically. Now, we want to up the ante and be able to use only renewable energy, 100%. We are seeing economic possibilities that will allow what happened in August 2019 to become permanent throughout the year. This happens by not only relying on wind and water but broadening the range of renewable energy possibilities. We are talking about tides, solar and photovoltaic, accumulators and thermal energy.

Meanwhile, we are also working with the SDGs, the Sustainable Development Goals. We have our Zero Waste Plan and the issuance of electric cars-which we are currently assessing specific subsidies for the purchase. Our goal is for our island to be known for what it already is: an island known for renewable energy, for its commitment to nature, for having more than 60% of its natural habitats protected, an island that is 100% a Biosphere Reserve and an island that is 100%, and part of its marine environment, a geopark.

**How do you see tourism in El Hierro evolving?**

El Hierro wants to become more of an eco-tourism destination offering nature tourism,

nature sports, responsible travelling, and no crowds. We're aiming more for quality instead of quantity. We want to value what we have. And what we have is our land, nature, and sea. El Hierro's seabed is known as one of the best in the world. We have the Open Fotosub, an underwater photo contest that's already celebrating its 25th anniversary and we have paragliding, with excellent conditions in the El Golfo Valley.

At the same time, to have a competitive destination, you must have an organized destination. The small natural pools (because we don't have beaches) where people go to swim, need to be organized and made accessible. On the trails, our goal is also accessibility so that people who have difficulties in movement can enjoy them. We want to be spearhead in the concept of sustainability, the concept of nature, the concept of the fight against climate change, etc, since the Canary Islands government is also committed and willing to help us.

**To reach the Sustainable Development Plan at 100%, what alliances are there? Are there PPP (Public Private Partnership) projects?**

We have a very clear example: Gorona del Viento, a wind-pumped hydro power station. It is a public/private project. The Government of the Canary Islands, the Council of El Hierro, Endesa and the Technological Institute of the Canary Islands are all participating; three public organizations, two from the Canary Islands government, one of them is the Island Council of El Hierro, and then a 100% private company that is dedicated to producing energy: Endesa.

The greatest virtue of this partnership is that we do not compete with Endesa, which is the company that generates electricity with traditional methods (thermal power plants), but we have integrated it as a partner, so that it converts to produce electricity with another type of energy. They are convinced that this is the future, and they want to exemplify it. Endesa has technology that would be impossible for us to obtain in any other way. This project has put Gorona in the news all over the world. I myself went to collect a prize from the French government, at an event at UNESCO in Paris, in which Gorona was recognized as the best global renewable energy project. This means that we have an international recognition, not only for this



award but for others as well. Therefore, I am a defender without a doubt in the public/private partnership.

**What differentiates El Hierro from the other islands in the Canary Islands?**

The fact that we use alternative energy means that El Hierro produces very little CO<sub>2</sub> that is released into the atmosphere, and this is unique. We do not have, apart from cars, any polluting industries on the island. Therefore, both the sea and the air are absolutely clean. We also value our sky, which is wonderful, very bright and clear. You can observe the



stars in a unique way, putting El Hierro as a starlight destination at European level. We produce 85% of the tropical pineapple consumed in Spain, as well as other fruits, such as mangos, avocados, and bananas. Having only about 250 square kilometers, the visitor can walk through the landscapes of laurisilva (laurel forests), and in 10 minutes be swimming in Tacorón with an impressive sun shining on you. This variety of landscapes I think is one of the quirks and riches of El Hierro.

**Your motto is "The Island with Soul" How would you define it?**

We are not only talking about land or nature, but about values that are not tangible: its people. We still retain that Canarian spirit that has been lost in other islands which have been subjected to tourism and has somewhat distorted the way we Canarians are: open, friendly, outgoing and always willing to help one. The people of El Hierro go at a slower pace and this allows us to interact, so that personal relationships are more direct and we transfer it to people who don't come from our island.

Therefore, that spirit, that non-tangible question that El Hierro has, is what we have called Soul.

These are difficult values to verbalize, but are no doubt issues of the utmost importance; especially for a type of tourism that interests us and we want to offer: responsible tourism, ecotourism, live and exciting experiences. We don't want our tourists just to spend time here as if they were in any other tourist destination. We want El Hierro to permeate them. That is the concept of 'The Island with Soul'. ●





## EL HIERRO: A FILM SET IN PARADISE



**LUCÍA FUENTES**  
Tourism & Transport  
Councilor  
El Hierro Council

### FACTS

**3**  
MUNICIPALITIES

**+300,000**  
ARRIVALS EXPECTED  
BY PLANE IN 2020

**72°F**  
AVERAGE TEMPERATURE  
IN DECEMBER

**1<sup>st</sup>**  
IN RENEWABLE  
ENERGY IN THE CANARY  
ISLANDS

**Both socially and economically, what role does the tourism sector play on the island of El Hierro?**

Traditionally agriculture and livestock have been important to us, as tourism develops on the island, it is also becoming very important. But we need a tourism that allows us to maintain a sustainable future. This is a quality that has differentiated us from the rest of the Canary Islands and the world. It is something I believe we have achieved, and our plan is to continue to in this direction.

**What has El Hierro achieved in terms of sustainable tourism?**

We have managed to stay away from the type of tourism that is sun, beach and party. El Hierro's tourism is the image of a leader in renewable energy, which can be seen with the Gorona del Viento project. Rather than large hotel complexes, huge shopping centers and leisure recreation, it embraces a clean island and shows what nature truly has to offer.

**Your position is Councilor of Tourism and Transportation. What are the priorities in your new position?**

The priorities for the next three and a half years are to maintain the type of tourism that we have and gradually increase it. We do understand that the bankruptcy of Thomas Cook has taken a toll on the islands and other countries as well and we expect tourism numbers to return to normal levels in the near future. Also, we have to make sure that connectivity is a priority, as you have to go



through Gran Canaria or Tenerife to get to El Hierro. Finally, we will focus on the search for new markets to keep the tourists coming. We are looking at working with new companies in the sector to keep up with the changing tourist offers.

**The 'Hierro' series has been a great showcase for the island. How is El Hierro perceived as a set for the film industry?**

Without a doubt, the 'Hierro' series has been the best example of how an island can be sold touristically thanks to its use as a film set. We have been fortunate that the island was not only the place where it was filmed, but that the island is the protagonist of the series. This has opened the eyes to many other types of productions such as television programs and advertising companies. Also, it has led us to create our own film commission. There is one commission for the whole Canary Islands and then each of the islands also has one, but El Hierro was the only island that did not have its own film commission. So now we are working to attract top producers and companies that are engaged in advertising campaigns, and whoever would want to use the island as a set.

**What is the biggest challenge for the current administration to attract investment to the island, especially sustainable or ecological projects?**

The internet is very limited and that is our biggest problem. As soon as we solve this issue it will open many doors.

**Are there opportunities for collaboration between the public and business sectors?**



Many things have occurred to us, not only at the level of tourist accommodation or restorations but also in the area of technological development. Throughout this issue of sustainability, climate change opens many doors to new companies that can do better than public institutions, but they always need the support of the public sector.

**In November El Hierro hosted the IV AgroWine Tourism Meeting of the Canary Islands. What are the possibilities of developing this activity?**

There has been a lot of abandonment of the vineyards in El Hierro, both because of water shortages due to draught, as well as the generational issues where grandparents and parents might have had vineyards, but the children have gone into other sectors. This is another one of the challenges of this government: to increase the cultivation of the vine, which means that we can continue to make good wines and outperform wines not only from the islands, but from the rest of the world.

**What is the importance of the Geopark within the tourist offer of El Hierro?**

The Geopark is a mark of the quality we have as a destination. Undoubtedly, both the Geopark and Biosphere Reserve labels are two very important elements we have when it comes to selling tourism.

**Where do you see El Hierro's tourist offer in four years?**

I hope that, apart from maintaining our particular type of tourism and the tourists that know us, we spark interest in new markets. We want to ensure that the tourist not only visits once but wants to come back. This means we need to offer a high-quality experience as we are competing with many other destinations in the world. We need to offer the best conditions to create repeat-tourists. ●





## THE GREEN PEARL OF THE CANARY ISLANDS



**CASIMIRO  
CURBELO**

President  
La Gomera Council

### FACTS

**80%**  
SERVICES  
CONTRIBUTION TO GDP

**2,000**  
PEOPLE EMPLOYED IN  
THE TERTIARY SECTOR

**2012**  
DESIGNATED A UNESCO  
BIOSPHERE RESERVE

**3<sup>rd</sup>**  
SMALLEST OF THE  
8 CANARIAN ISLANDS

**You have been President of La Gomera since 1991. How would you compare the island now to when you took office?**

The essence remains the same, but many things have changed. We've carefully kept our traditions, culture and heritage, but we have given a big push to the socioeconomic development of the island.

In 1991, air connectivity didn't exist; we were just beginning to build the airport. The ferries at that time took more than an hour and a half to connect us to Los Cristianos in Tenerife. Changing these factors was among the key steps for us to enjoy a very different reality today.

As far as internal connectivity, our roads are now safer and smoother. The road network in the island adapts to the landscape and displays it, developing the island without damaging our surroundings. In fact, the success of this island comes from having been able to preserve its environment.

**What are your priorities in terms of generating further socioeconomic development?**

La Gomera's attributes allow us to follow different strategies in terms of its development. Although tourism is our main source of income, we have encouraged small and medium enterprises to engage in other activities that range from the primary sector of the economy to light industry. For example, for years now our agricultural and

agro-industrial products have become a good source of income and jobs. There are over thirty companies working in this sector and exporting their products to other countries. But without a doubt, there is a new horizon for development with the growth of renewables. We have developed a green strategy that includes the creation of five wind farms in the island, the greater use of electrical vehicles and the attainment of self-sufficiency in terms of energy for public buildings. We know that progress here will come from services that use renewable energy, and we have all the natural resources needed to develop it here.

**What is the contribution of tourism to the island's economy?**

The services sector, including tourism, represents more than 80% of the island's GDP, with over 2,000 people employed in some segments. It's the engine of the local economy, so we nurture the sector through careful planning, taking in consideration the

symbiosis that has always existed between development and sustainability.

**Can other sectors contribute significantly to economic growth?**

They already do. It's true that they contribute less than tourism, but the primary sector and light industry are growing. The goal is to reactivate areas of agricultural and industrial production, which means increasing the competitiveness of our products and guaranteeing that the next generations will take over—especially the young people interested in starting new projects connected to ecological agriculture and similar initiatives.

**What strategy do you follow to develop the so-called "blue economy"?**

Almost unwittingly, in La Gomera we have always followed this model of economic development. An economy that guarantees sustainability has evolved, limiting the human impact in our natural environment.

However, in recent years we've taken further decisions to preserve our ecosystem, as well as our croplands. For example, last year we celebrated the IV ITLA World Congress of Terraced Landscapes, with the aim of recovering the terraces rising to the hills and mountains to ensure the integrity of crop areas. Since then, we've invested over €3 million in these terraces. Furthermore, we offer a comprehensive recycling service that adds to our efforts to keep our island sustainable and green.

**Considering your commitment to sustainability, do you believe tourism can keep growing here?**

Our island has some limitations due to its topography, which also limit tourism to a certain extent, and which have marked the development of this sector over time. We are part of the so-called Green Islands, whose development has bypassed the big-hotel-chain model. We instead have encouraged the building of smaller hotels and holiday homes, together with rural tourism, which is becoming more and more common—and there is the possibility of growth there.

**What type of investment is most attractive in La Gomera?**

I mentioned renewable energy before. This is an example of the type of investment that has a lot of potential in La Gomera. It's not easy to get here, but it's also true that many investors choose the island as a film location, to start a small business or commit to innovation in the services sector. We are open to any investor ready to bring ideas that can improve and keep developing the island. ●





NATURALLY  
MAGICAL



Q&A

**MARÍA ISABEL  
MÉNDEZ  
ALMENARA**  
Tourism Councilor  
La Gomera Council



## FACTS

**370**  
SQUARE KILOMETERS

**+ 22,000**  
POPULATION

**+700,000**  
VISITORS ANNUALLY

### The last slogan of La Gomera was: “Feel unique”. What makes La Gomera unique?

Our island is small, but at the same time it is like a micro continent with a lot of assets. We have a national park with pre-historic laurel forests, which is a World Heritage Site. Almost the whole island and the sea around it are a biosphere reserve. We have the silbo gomero, a whistled language which is also listed as intangible cultural heritage by the UNESCO. We have numerous valleys with very interesting towns and the greatest palm-tree plantations in Europe. In the north of La Gomera there are old woods of Spanish juniper that reach the sea.

When I travel to promote the island, it's easy to convince people to come and see it, considering we have such wonders.

### You have a new slogan, beginning in 2020. Can you explain the strategy behind this change?

We have changed the slogan to “Naturally magical”. Over ten years ago, it was “Nature and magic”. We wanted to get this idea back into our new strategy because we think it accurately reflects our island. When you're in the national park watching the mist as the sun goes down, you feel the magic. The magic is inspired by nature, so we wanted to go back to that phrase.

### Which are the new activities and tourism products you are offering now, and what type of tourists do you hope to attract?

We have come out with a new tourism product: Health & Wellbeing. Apart from that, depending on the time of year you come, the island changes so it has a different energy at

different times. We lie just between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn, and it is said that there is a special energy here. So the profile of tourist that comes to La Gomera is mostly from Europe, with an emphasis on people between the ages of forty and fifty, although we get people of all ages. It's a tourist who loves nature and likes hiking, and starts walking at the national park, ending two or three hours later at a small, isolated beach. Angela Merkel is one of the people who comes every year to La Gomera to do hiking. This tourist also enjoys our gastronomy, which is based on ecological products like home-grown papaya, banana and passion fruit, all year round.

We also offer activities for those who want to stay longer and do yoga, meditation, different spa treatments, and enjoy vegan cooking. It's the ideal place for those who want to recharge their minds and bodies before heading back home.

### Sustainability is essential to the Canary Islands. What is La Gomera doing to keep tourism sustainable?

We don't want our values to change, so we need to keep preserving our island and improving it each day. We want tourists who respect sustainable values in La Gomera, so to keep reaching this type of tourist is a priority for us.

The team in charge of tourism policies contributes by creating programs and projects. An example is the distribution of 80,000 bags made from ecological paper to businesses and get back plastic bags—almost a ton of them. And then we send that to Holland so they can use them for computer or phone parts, which means using the plastic for something more durable.

Apart from that, we are worried about the plastic in the oceans. We participated in a beautiful project with an association called AGLAYMA which is made up of socially conscious Europeans who live in La Gomera. They are volunteers, but every month we finance them to go out on a boat to the beaches to pick up all the plastic and materials brought to the shores by the sea. There are beaches in our island which you can't access by car, so these outings on boats are important to maintain a clean island and sea.

We are aware that our greatest asset is our nature, pristine and pure. ●

# LA GOMERA: A WORLD AWAY

A rugged & authentic island of ancient forests & unique traditions  
La Gomera is a hiker's paradise

Just a short distance to the west of Gran Canaria, the small island of La Gomera has long been popular with travelers in search of a new world.

It was in San Sebastian de la Gomera, the island's capital and main port, that Christopher Columbus made his last stop on his historic journey of 1492. To this day, with no international flights to the island's airport, most visitors still make their way to La Gomera by sea, many of them on yachts embarking on the daunting cross-Atlantic passage.

The circular, volcanic island is a paradise for hikers, who travel here from afar to explore La Gomera's dramatic mountain scenery and to walk through the ancient and magical rainforest of Garajonay National Park.

A UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1986, this subtropical laurel rainforest is one of the most unique ecosystems in Europe. Covering some 15 square miles in the center of the island, it is one of the last remnants of the jungle that covered the entire Mediterranean region before the coming of the last ice age.

It is not only La Gomera's natural wonders that make the island unique. Long isolated from the rest of the archipelago, La Gomera has developed its own one-of-a-kind gastronomy, includ-



ing such delights as *almogrote* cheese paste and *miel de palma*, a syrup made from sap harvested from local palm trees.

Most famously, La Gomera is also home to its own extraordinary whistled language, the so-called *el silbo gomero*. Long before the Spanish arrived, inhabitants developed the system to communicate across the island's deep valleys, with proficient users today still able to exchange messages at distances of up to two miles.

The preservation of La Gomera's natural and cultural riches for generations to come is a priority for the local government. Casimiro Curbelo, the president of the island's council, is also overseeing efforts to attract investments in wind and solar power and to implement charging points for electric vehicles across the island. “I want La Gomera to be an island that is 100% sustainable and a global pioneer in environmental protection and conservation,” he says. ●





# BINTER: SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATING IN A TURBULENT MARKET

Fast-growing airlines such as Binter are piloting the islands' air transport sector through challenging market conditions

A thousand miles to the south-west of peninsular Spain and stretching some 300 miles from east to west, the Canary Islands rely heavily on air transport for the continued health of the tourism industry.

Last year, three events cast a shadow over the sector. The collapse of British travel giant Thomas Cook was followed by the acquisition of Air Europa by IAG, the parent company of British Airways and Iberia. Finally, Ryanair, Europe's largest low-cost carrier, decided to close three operating bases on the islands.



As these menacing conditions gathered over the region's air transport sector they threatened tourism revenues and inter-island connectivity. The response from local authorities was emphatic, ensuring that the islands will remain at the center of the global travel map for years to come.

Navigating this perfect storm in air transport has been one of the regional government's highest priorities. To replace lost capacity, government officials stepped up their contacts with airlines from across Europe and offered incentives to deliver new international routes. "We want to maintain or improve the connectivity of the Canary Islands, whichever companies are here," said Yaiza Castilla, the councilor for tourism, industry and trade in the regional government. "We will always guarantee our connectivity."

At the end of the year, the islands were repaid for their efforts when British carrier Jet2 dramatically expanded its presence in the market, stepping into the void left by Thomas Cook and Ryanair.

Meanwhile, Iberia has confirmed that it will not reduce flights between peninsular Spain and the Canary Islands when it completes its purchase of Air Europa.

Furthermore, while Air Europa is retreating from the inter-island market, long-established local carrier Binter Canarias is stepping into the void.

"When Air Europa stops their flights in the Canary Islands, Binter will most likely have more flights," says Pedro del Castillo Machado, Binter's Chairman and CEO.

The company, which celebrated its 30th birthday in 2019, is increasing its fleet and has taken delivery of the first of five new fuel-efficient jets from Brazilian aircraft manufacturer Embraer, each with 132 seats and ample space between each row. Binter is flying the low-emission, low-noise Embraer E195-E2 model on internal flights between the Canary Islands and on international routes to Africa.

"This airplane turns Binter into a carrier operating the latest generation of jets," del Castillo

says. "The Embraer purchase will help us pursue our main objective, which is to improve the connectivity of the Canary Islands with both inter-island flights and international routes."

As its fleet expands, Binter is adding new routes to peninsular Spain and beyond. With increasing numbers of multinationals using the Canary Islands as a hub for West African operations, Binter is steadily ramping up its routes to the African continent.

"As demand increases, we are gradually increasing the number of flights to Africa," del Castillo says. "On all our flights, wherever they go, Binter aims to continue providing our passengers with great service and excellent standards."

In a market that is so heavily dependent on connectivity, this is good news for 2020 not only for tourism, but for the overall market. ●







**PEDRO DEL CASTILLO MACHADO**  
President & CEO  
Binter

## FACTS

**220**  
DAILY FLIGHTS

**1,500**  
EMPLOYEES

**3.6 million**  
PASSENGERS IN 2018

**5 Embraer E195-E2**  
RECENTLY ADDED TO FLEET

**24 destinations**  
**8** IN THE CANARIES  
**5** IN SPAIN &  
**11** INTERNATIONAL

## SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE AIR TRAVEL

**The Thomas Cook bankruptcy will provoke a few changes in the tourism sector in the Canary Islands. What challenges will the sector face with the absence of Thomas Cook's airplanes?**

At the very beginning, the absence of their flights was seen with a lot of pessimism. However, as the days went by, this pessimism vanished as other companies started filling the void left by Thomas Cook and started using fleet to cover their flights and provide service for those that wanted to come here. Therefore, I believe that within three to four months, everything will be as it was before.

**Air Europa recently announced that it will stop its inter-islands flights here in the Canaries. How can Binter profit from this?**

Binter's main objective is to meet the demands from passengers who want to fly from one island to another. When Air Europa stops their flights in the Canary Islands, Binter will most likely have more flights at these passengers' disposal to avoid any inconveniences. And when this demand grows, Binter's fleet will grow to cover it. By the way, we will soon be able to rely on the new Embraer airplanes. They are much more efficient consuming around 20% less fuel than our regular jets, due to their new engine system. This means that within a year we will have had huge savings. And, on top of it, they double the travel range of our current jets.

**Binter celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2019 and has become a household name in the Canary Islands. What is your main priority for 2020?**

To continue providing great service with excellent standards on all our flights, especially our inter-islands flights here in the Canaries. We want to make sure we cover not only the islanders' needs, but those of anyone who wants to travel from one island to another.

Flights are extremely important in an archipelago. Here, in the Canary Islands, the population takes planes as one would take a bus or a train on the (Iberian) peninsula. They are used to visit family, go to the hospital, attend a work meeting, run errands, travel on holidays, almost everything.

**So inter-islands flying is quite important here.**

Correct, and as part of the "Obligaciones de Servicio Público" (public service obligations) there is a law all companies flying between the islands must abide. This law sets the prices of the tickets for the inter-islands flights so they are not abusive, and people can afford them.

It is our commitment to all the people of the Canary Islands to provide safe, reliable and top-quality transport so they can fly from one island to another comfortably and efficiently.

**The Canary Islands are often seen as a launch pad to the African market. What is your view on this statement?**

Some research was carried out 15 years ago, which Binter took part in, to see if the Canary Islands could become a geostrategic and economic platform for those multinationals that wanted to start doing business in Africa, meaning, to use the islands as their main office for their African operations. The results of the research showed that if there weren't flights or air connectivity, it wouldn't be possible. So, right after that, we started our routes to Africa and gradually our flights to the continent are growing in number according to demand. Nowadays, some multinationals are present here, their workers and families live here, and the workers fly to Africa. We have been present in the Cape Verdean market for three years now and although



the operation is still small, it is growing as demands increase.

**How does your company face the latest social movements that demand more sustainable transport?**

Years ago, we at Binter began to worry about the mark we were leaving on the environment. The condition of islanders makes us more aware of the need to take



care of the environment, but also that air transport is essential for remote and fragmented territories like ours. From that perspective, we've been working gradually to reduce the impact of our activity. In recent years we have invested a lot of money in renewing our fleet with airplane models that best adapt to the type of route we have and that cause less pollution. In 2021 the 18 ATR 72-600 that we bought for the short radio will have just arrived and by mid-2020 we will already have three of the 5 Embraer E195-E2 that we have acquired. But that is only one part.

**I understand that your sustainability policies are not limited only to the fleet, what more areas do they affect?**

In addition to being able to boast one of the youngest fleets, we have also renewed the ground equipment by changing out equipment to electrical machinery. In cases where electrical machinery isn't possible, either by technology or by physical means, we try to replace it with the newest and latest equipment, which cuts down on consumption considerably. We have also eliminated single-use plastics from the on-board service.

**Which short-term strategy would you like to see taking place in the tourism sector?**

First, I think they need to modernize some tourist facilities and sites and then offer a more diverse and upmarket product.

**And what would you like to tell our readers?**

For many people, especially Americans, the Canary Islands is a place yet to be discovered. And they shouldn't overlook it. It is a great place to spend one's holidays or to establish a business, especially if you would like to enter the African market, you can do it from here. ●





## BUILDING THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY

While the economy of the Canary Islands remains highly dependent on tourism, the region's high-performing public universities are helping to develop new industries, build an information society & create diversified employment opportunities on the islands & across the wider region

**W**ith six campuses, including four on Gran Canaria and one each on Lanzarote and Fuerteventura, a faculty of more than 1,648 people, 115 research teams and in excess of 20,000 students, the Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ULPGC) is playing a fundamental role in the economic and social development of the Canary Islands. In 2019 the ULPGC celebrated its 30th year by improving its position in the list of the Top 200 Young Universities organized by the Shanghai Ranking Consultancy and in the Young University Rankings of The Times Higher Education supplement.

Enhancing the prospects of students in the employment market is a key priority for the current dean, Dr. Rafael Robaina. Of people who completed their studies at ULPGC in 2016, more than 92% are currently employed; the unemployment rate for ULPGC graduates is one of the lowest in all Spain.

"The ULPGC is an important driver of growth and economic development," Dr. Robaina says. "We produce knowledge and innovation that is helping to improve the competitiveness of the Canary Islands and transform the economy."

In Tenerife, at the Universidad de La Laguna (ULL), the history of the institution dates back much longer, but the mission and vision

are the same. Founded in 1792 in the historic city of San Cristóbal de La Laguna, the University has a student population of more than 20,000 people, including students on Tenerife and La Palma.

Long a popular destination for European students on the Erasmus program, the ULL has also built close international ties with African universities and governments. The current dean of the ULL, Rosa Aguilar, has prioritized the internationalization of the university and is reinforcing the institution's role as a driver for development not only in the Canary Islands but in the wider region.

"La Laguna is an Atlantic university and we are very conscious of our geostrategic role,"

she says. "Now is the time to share knowledge with partners in other countries and to cooperate to tackle the common challenges that we all face."

One of the advantages of attending a public research university is how heavily invested these universities are with community projects. Examples of the most dynamic and popular degrees emerging from these Canarian universities are within astrophysics, marine biology and the study of tropical diseases, to name a few.

Students are involved with real-life research work under the guidance of professors who are accomplished experts in their field. While studying sustainable tourism you can experience working at TIDES, the sustainable tourism & economic development program or the PCT, the scientific technological park, both of which were started by the UPLGC. Studying for a degree in astrophysics, you may be spending time at IAC, the institute for astrophysics in the Canaries which runs two of the best international observatories in the world and is a partner with ULL too. The synergy between the universities and research-based projects is a guarantee that the future looks good for these innovative islands. ●




### EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

The Universidad de La Laguna has continually aspired towards excellence in teaching, research & knowledge transfer as part of its commitment towards building a better society for all.

It offers several undergraduate degrees, master's degrees & a range of doctorate programs in areas such as experimental, health, social sciences, humanities & engineering.

www.ull.es

**Universidad**  
de La Laguna



**ULPGC**  
Universidad de  
Las Palmas de  
Gran Canaria

- Undergraduate degrees & master's degrees in science, arts & humanities, health sciences, social & legal sciences, architecture & engineering
- Six campuses across the Canary Islands which pass the benefits of its research onto the local community
- Certificate of excellence in maritime research, from the Spanish ministry for education in 2010
- Several science & technology parks, intended as an environment to foster the growth of new businesses

*Quality Education for All*

www.ulpgc.es





## UNIVERSITY OF LA LAGUNA WHERE EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IS A PRIORITY



**ROSA MARÍA  
AGUILAR**

Rector, University  
of La Laguna (ULL)

### FACTS

**1792**

YEAR FOUNDED

**45**

BACHELOR'S DEGREES

**+50**

PHD PROGRAMS

**23,000**

STUDENTS

**1,695**

PROFESSORS

**How do you see the current state of tertiary education in the Canaries, as the new dean of the oldest university in the archipelago?**

The public universities are the tools that we use to make sure that people have access to education by merit, allowing access to the entire community. They give exceptional value to the education and training of young Canarians, and that will allow us to make the Canary Islands much more sustainable. But they need stable and sufficient financing today to achieve their objectives. The two public Canarian universities, which complement each other, have about 40,000 students, which is why the student community is important. The two universities, University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ULPGC) and University La Laguna (ULL), have campuses on the eight different islands. Our faculty are excellent researchers with competitive projects and with good networks of international contacts. These researchers are the ones who teach and train our students, who not only receive training in economics, engineering, psychology, among other subjects, but also receive the skills developed by the professor as a researcher. Teachers also help students discover a new way of seeing and facing the world and the problems and challenges that it poses, how they have to find new solutions, and explain to the rest of the community that these solutions are the best to solve the problems and challenges.

The public university is research, culture and debate; we are very committed to working values such as equality, social justice, sustainability, the culture of peace, and more. In summary, as I just said, I firmly believe in the public university. I think it is an exceptional tool to change the world because everyone can access it, it makes us all equal, and it includes research that is fundamental if we want to be sustainable, if we want to continue living on this planet.

**What is the biggest advantage to public education as opposed to private universities?**

Private universities ignore the research aspect of studying and their professors teach one concrete subject. Public universities have an added value because teaching is linked to the research processes. This added value means that our students have an adaptive capacity that, although it will cost them more to find their first job than students from private universities, they do have a much more fruitful professional life because of their ability to adapt to the new professions that are being developed.

**Are new technologies influencing public universities and research?**

Students today are different from what they were before, they communicate, think and act differently so they have to be taught differently. In fact, the number of images that you are able to see per second has increased. So we have to adapt to the new student and have to change the way we reach our students. The new technologies help us to better communicate and automate many processes, they help us with the administrative part by removing routine tasks, they support the researcher who will be able to devote value to research, shorten the time it takes to perform certain analyzes, facilitate the understanding of theories, just to name a few of the benefits. Now, with our cell phones, we are able to solve problems in minutes that before could take a week to resolve. But technology cannot be the goal. The goal is for us to train more, to have more knowledge, to generate new knowledge in the face of current challenges.

**Are the Canaries an attractive place for researchers?**

The Canaries are an exceptional place to live. We are in contact with the rest of the world

with an extraordinary communication system. And within two and a half hours you can be in Madrid.

**There are 13 university research institutes here at ULL. What are some of the most important ones?**

The University Institute of Tropical Diseases and the Institute of Astrophysics of the Canary Islands are the ones that have the most international recognition. The sky we have makes us exceptional to work in the field of astrophysics. The astrophysics department started as a very small institute but thanks to the researchers, the contact networks we have and its competitive and international research projects, it has grown. Today we are considered leaders in this field and practically every month we have a publication in *Nature*. The Tropical Diseases Institute also has great researchers. Different lines of research are studied. Obviously mosquito-borne diseases, among other things, because we are a bridge between Africa and Europe, and being able to isolate and investigate these type of diseases here makes us key.

**ULL is also known for its marine biology department.**

Correct. Blue economy is important for the islands and in marine biology we are in the forefront. We have contracts with the American military for radars when studying marine mammals. We also have an agreement with Fred Olsen shipping company the shipping trade coexist with marine life.

**The private sector criticizes education, saying that education doesn't pay enough attention to the demands of the market. What are your thoughts on the matter?**

I believe that when a businessperson says that we do not adapt to reality, it is because we are not training the students for his or her company. But any student who leaves any ULL classrooms, when they are given specific training for the company in two months, stays. Because they have that capacity of abstraction that makes them much more employable than someone who goes directly to a very specific formation. What we have to teach the students is basic knowledge and the capacity for abstraction to respond to the needs of a future world that is changing, which is very dynamic and global.

**University education or professional formation?**

If what you want to do and your skills are more connected to a professional field, it's just as important. Certainly, for me, the difference lies between that capacity for abstraction that the university student acquires, compared to someone who teaches himself to do something concrete. Those that opt to be apprentices have to do something different, they need to be retrained, which is education throughout life, while the university students have a capacity for abstraction that allows to self-form, because they know how to find solutions to new problems. That is the difference.

**How would you like to introduce ULL to our readers?**

ULL is a great research university. In university rankings, we are always rated above average, despite not getting as many funds as other universities. We are very efficient with the little money we have, with an impressive track record in the production of scientific and quantitative information. ●







## ULPGC: DEVELOPING HUMAN CAPITAL



**DR. RAFAEL  
ROBAINA  
ROMERO**

Rector  
Universidad de Las  
Palmas de Gran Canaria  
(ULPGC)

### FACTS

**1989**  
YEAR ESTABLISHED

**22,000**  
STUDENTS

**13**  
FACULTIES

**12**  
RESEARCH INSTITUTES

#### Can you give us a brief history of the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ULPGC)?

The University was created in 1989 and today has more than 22,000 students along with 1,500 lecturers and researchers. It was first created as a polytechnic school and then expanded to be a comprehensive and general university with all kinds of degrees. We have very modern facilities with 13 faculties and 12 research institutes working on subjects such as marine science, climate change, technology, humanities, renewable energy, tourism & economics to name a few. It offers the Canarian community a wide range of cultural and sports activities to complement academic learning, promoting values such as solidarity, social justice, gender equality, and respect for diversity and the environment among members of the community.

We are a leading university in e-learning. Degrees and Master programs as well as a wide range of courses at all learning levels are offered online. The ULPGC has signed agreements with universities from the five continents to facilitate the mobility of teachers, researchers, students and administrative staff.

#### How does the tertiary education system available in the Canary islands contribute overall to society?

Both universities, the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (ULPGC) and the University of La Laguna (ULL) in Tenerife,

are instruments for the development of the islands in terms of knowledge production and knowledge transfer which can later benefit our economy.

A few years ago, the ULPGC won the Quality Award for Public Service from the Government of the Canary Islands so after 30 years of existence we can now say that we certainly contribute to the Canarian society especially in terms of research and patents.

#### What has been your biggest challenge as dean of the ULPGC?

We went through an economic crisis, which had a toll on human resources, both teachers and administrative staff, so we've had to improve the situation. The way to do so was by getting more funds to be able to attract the good teachers and staff back.

Now our next challenge will be to improve our method of transferring knowledge to society. By doing that we will be able to improve our economic model so that we do not depend solely on the tourism industry. We need to help society establish new fields of economic development for the Canary Islands.

#### You mentioned the need to depend less on tourism. What sectors have potential to be developed in the Canaries in your opinion?

Anything related to the blue economy from renewable energy, to the ocean, to fishing. We have an institute focused on aquaculture both in fish and algae aquaculture. The government believes strongly in these technologies and has created Bioasis, an initiative here in Gran Canaria to create a hub of blue biotechnology and aquaculture.

#### What are the most sought-after degrees here at the ULPGC?

Marine science is one of them and we are leaders in this field. We attract students from all over the world to come and study here and this course offers a very complete and ambitious program.

#### Did you study here at the ULPGC?

I studied biology in La Laguna because at that time there was no ULPGC. I got my bachelor's degree at ULL and then I moved to Gran Canaria for a doctorate degree in marine sciences. Lastly, I went to California where I did my post-doctorate.



#### What would you say are your top priorities today?

To make sure that the student is our focus and they decide their own knowledge program. This is quite normal in the United States as far as I know, so I want to establish this line of thinking here in my university. I think we need to establish a new way for the students to get the knowledge they need to get a job when they graduate from university. The student needs to be someone who will be 'hirable' once he finishes his or her studies.



#### The Canaries is often seen as the link between Europe and Africa. Do you get a lot of African students too?

Yes, particularly from Morocco and Mauritania. We have some agreements with universities worldwide but now we are mainly focusing on the northern part of Africa. We are currently developing a network, the University Network of Northwest Africa and Macaronesia that was created in 2017. The main aim of this network is to connect Europe to the northern part of Africa so we act as a bridge. Africa is a big continent, so we decided to work closely with the northern part of Africa because we are very close and also understand each other.

#### How are the new technologies affecting the ULPGC?

New technologies have substantially impacted the education system everywhere. ULPGC students receive support for on-site classes through the e-training platform and may also take specific harmonization courses for the most difficult subjects in the first year of the degree course. Our e-learning strategy is becoming increasingly important.

Today artificial intelligence (AI), Big Data, robots, digital society and transformation are all affecting every single degree from law to medicine and we need to teach our students that it will be even more impactful in the future. Robots will take some human jobs in the future. In a division of one of our institutes, there is a team working on the development of these devices for the diagnosis of conditions such as skin cancer.

#### What would you like people to know about the Canary Islands?

We are a very open-minded society and we have been welcoming people from all over the world for generations. We can certainly be a hub for many things such as shipping, technology & renewables. ●





The blue economy represents 7% of direct activity in the Canary Islands, 7.4% of GDP and 6.1% of GVA, with more than 45,000 related workers. The geostrategic positioning of the Canary Islands ports and their level of maturity represent a great opportunity for the development of this strategic sector. The quality of local specialized services and the possibility of providing and attracting foreign specialized talent are aspects that are highly valued by companies already operating on the island. Several activities such as naval repair, logistic and maritime transport, oil and gas, cold storage, bunkering as well as the provision of offshore services to the platforms currently operating in the area have a lot of potential for further development.

## SHIPPING HUB OF THE MID-ATLANTIC

Strategically positioned at the crossroads of three continents, the Canary Islands have a rich and storied maritime tradition

**T**housands of years ago, Phoenician explorers and Roman merchants would find safe anchorage on these sheltered shores, while Christopher Columbus famously made his final stop here on his epic journey to the New World. Later the islands became popular ports of call for vessels heading to and from the Americas and served as key coaling stations for merchant ships in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Now, as the globalization of trade and the economic development of Africa accelerate, the maritime and shipping industry of the Canary Islands is investing intensively in internationalization, innovation and sustainability while embarking on a new period of growth. The deepwater Port of Las Palmas on Gran Canaria, also known as La Luz Port, has African markets firmly in its sights. In recent years, the

island has emerged as a major supply base for energy companies operating in the oil-rich waters of the West African offshore. In the region, only the Canaries can offer multinationals the full range of maritime services that they require, combined with a qualified and certified workforce, the political stability that comes with EU membership and the tariff-free advantages enjoyed by the islands. “We have opened a quay in the Port of Las Palmas dedicated exclusively to repairing platforms and offshore vessels,” says Luis Ibarra Betancort, the president of the Port Authority of Las Palmas. “Our port is becoming an important strategic center for repairs in the mid-Atlantic. The development of the West African offshore presents us with a major opportunity to expand our bunkering, ship repair and logistics services. Only we have the capacity







and the skills to perform operations on all sizes of vessels, from yachts to supertankers.” At the same time, Las Palmas has also become a major hub for freight shipping between South America, Africa and Europe and the largest container port in the region. Almost 20 shipping lines operate regular routes now

between Las Palmas and ports across western Africa, making it the European port with the highest number of connections to Africa. Reflecting the quality of services and the connectivity to Africa, the UN World Food Programme has chosen the port as the logistics base when responding to humanitarian crisis in West Africa. “We are continuously investing to improve our competitiveness and to maximize the benefits of our connectivity with Africa,” Ibarra says. Privately owned maritime companies in the Canary Islands are also reaping the rewards of African growth. Located in the Port of Las Palmas, the Astican shipyard has established a unique partnership with Norwegian shipping giant Kongsberg to service the vessels of offshore customers in the region, carrying out specialist maintenance services on the engines of rigs and drillships. Combining the offshore expertise of Kongsberg, which recently acquired Rolls-Royce’s commercial marine business, with Astican’s deepwater quay and repair facilities, the venture has helped position Las Palmas in the top league for global ship repair and overhaul. Adding to an already-impressive range of facilities, Astican is now planning to construct a €35 million dry dock at the site which will

be able to service vessels up to 320 meters long and with a deadweight of up to 100,000 tons. The project will enable the shipyard to provide services to the giant cruise ships that regularly ply the waters around the Canary Islands. The dock is expected to start operating in around 2022.

The investment will deliver the shipyard with a massive leap in capacity and turn the Port of Las Palmas into the largest in the region, explains Astican president Germán Suárez Calvo. “We will double our volume of activity while increasing our surface area by just 15%. Average revenues per vessel will rise from around €300,000 to as much as €1 million and we will be able to address the cruise ship repair market. We also expect to double our workforce.” At the same time as expanding its capacity, Astican is investing intensively in new digital technologies to improve productivity and increase the company’s competitiveness with shipyards in Africa, where labor costs are lower.

Meanwhile, Astican shareholder Germán Suárez Investments has teamed up with tugboat company Boluda to form a joint venture which will be based in Las Palmas and provide



logistics services in ports across Spain.

Just as in the shipyard business, investment in innovation will be key to the success of the new venture, Suárez Calvo says. “We will use cutting-edge technology to deliver the best integrated logistics, storage and distribution services, with a workforce of highly qualified professionals.”

This innovation-focused philosophy is followed not only by industrial companies and shipyards in the Canary Islands, but also by the archipelago’s extensive network of maritime services providers.

Since being established in Las Palmas just over 30 years ago, shipping agency

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Alfaship's commitment to quality and its personalized, round-the-clock service have helped establish it as the clear market leader in services such as bunker operations and underwater cleaning. Continuous investment in technology and innovation differentiates the agency in a crowded and competitive market, says Alfaship's managing director, Antonio Castañeda. "Our goal is to continue being at the forefront of innovation and to provide the latest technologies to the various departments of the group," he explains. Alfaship's focus on digital services has helped it win business from some of the world's largest and most advanced shipping companies, who are leaders in the implementation of new technologies and who expect the same degree of develop-

ment from their commercial partners. With a presence in 10 ports across the region, including Gibraltar, Algeciras and Ceuta, Alfaship is also setting its sight on international expansion. "My plans for the future are to complete the digitalization of our group and to open a branch in an international port," Castañeda says. "Alfaship wants to provide our clients all the main ports of the world with the high-quality digital services that today's customers demand." Meanwhile, shipping lines in the Canary Islands are carrying out a new wave of investments in technology to meet stringent environmental regulations, especially the new limit of 0.5% for the sulfur content of shipping fuel set by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) at the beginning of the year. As the regulation enters force, shipyard Astican has recorded a surge in demand for retrofits of environmentally friendly scrubbers, which remove sulfur oxides from a ship's exhaust gases. "The shipping industry is cleaning up its act and is committed to achieving major reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions," Suárez Calvo says.



"We are strong supporters of the IMO 2020 regulation," says Antonio Armas Fernández, the chairman of Las Palmas-based shipping line Naviera Armas. "We are investing in scrubbers for some ships to comply with the new sulfur caps, while other vessels will be able to use low-sulfur fuel." Sustainability is becoming a prerequisite across the shipping industry of the Canary Is-

lands. Naviera Armas, Spain's largest ferry company since its acquisition of Trasmediterránea in 2017, is eliminating the use of single-use plastic from all its ships. At the same time, the company is investing heavily in new vessels and onshore facilities. As well as acquiring a fast ferry which can reach a speed of 36 knots, Naviera Armas has unveiled a state-of-the-art passenger and freight terminal in the Port of Las Palmas. Costing €35 million, the new terminal is the largest investment ever by a private company in a Spanish public port, helping position the Canary Islands for a new chapter in their long and successful maritime story. ●

NAVIERA ARMAS TRASMEDITERRÁNEA

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Ports of Las Palmas  
**STRATEGIC LOGISTICS HUB OF THE MID-ATLANTIC**

The **Port of Las Palmas** is the bridge between Europe, Africa & America and the most important port precinct in the Mid-Atlantic. First used by Christopher Columbus as a refuge for his boats, over time it has become a commercial port providing quality services in cruise ships, bunkering, fishing, containers, naval repairs, freight & passengers. With **state-of-the-art facilities** and flexibility of services, it is a standout logistics center for international containers & cargo and is the **leading fuel port in Spain**, known as the "Atlantic's fueling station", for provisioning of ships, fishing, & naval repairs (offshore). The **Ports of Las Palmas** take the issue of sustainability seriously and is constantly **working on better and cleaner facilities**.







**LUÍS ÁNGEL  
IBARRA  
BETANCORT**  
President

**SALVADOR  
CAPELLA HIERRO**  
Former Director  
Ports of Las Palmas

**The Ports of Las Palmas manages 5 ports. What is the socio-economic role that the authority plays in the development of the Canary Islands?**

**Salvador Capella Hierro:** They play a very important role for two reasons. The first is obvious: we are an archipelago, so all of our goods arrive by ship. The second is our location. We are at an important waypoint on the north-south costal shipping lanes that go from Europe to South Africa and the first port of call on the east-west lanes to South America.

The Port of Las Palmas is the heart of the islands since it is multifunctional in its role of supplying the islands' needs. Other ports of

the Iberian Peninsula and Europe are specific in the cargo and activities they handle such as liquids, containers or ferries. Because of this, it makes us the first port for fuel supplies. We also are a container hub, providing 32 freight lines to Africa. The ports of Africa are beginning to develop and are becoming competition for container shipping, but not in fuel, so we still lead the pack. Most of those ports still require large investments to dredge deep enough mooring and channels. Ours are more than 14 meters deep, so we can serve all types of boats.

Another very important aspect is our port community because of the services and guarantees it provides to our users. A shipping company can carry out several activities at the same time such as refueling, maintenance and cargo transfers. This sets us apart from African ports and makes us stand out as a service port.

**What are the most important projects you are facing in the coming years?**

**SCH:** With the port reaching 90% occupancy, we will soon need more dock space, so we are starting the expansion of the Reina Sofía dock to get 400 meters more dock access that in turn, will offer us protection over the container terminal to help operation increase production.

Another project in the works is the expansion



of the large marina that the city of Las Palmas has. Regattas are held here regularly and there is a lot of traffic from sailing enthusiasts who come from Europe to enjoy our pristine waters. We want to continue being a destination port for pleasure, so we are going to expand this area of our port to increase space as well as giving us a greater protected area against the storms. The nautical-sporting activities are very clean and environmentally friendly, since the majority of them is sailing, and this is a big bonus.

**What strategies are being undertaken to help make the ports more sustainable?**

**SCH:** We have a very clean port for the amount of activities we have. We are already putting a lot of effort into making sure everything that is being developed is using the most advanced technologies in accordance with very demanding parameters. We have instituted regulations and guidelines to prevent spills and run off to avoid polluting the port waters and the coast. We are more demanding in all activities and we are controlling, through sensors, the quality of the water and air.

Today, technology puts new tools in our hands to detect problems and act accordingly, thus preventing it from affecting the city or the environment. In addition, we are working on prevention. By working with our partner companies we continually develop plans for control and maintenance, so no disaster will occur for the environment. We also have important benefits for companies to have environmental controls. This has made companies institute their own plans and stay invested in them.

On our end, for projects that involve construction, we are planning very carefully. They are carried out only where it is needed. When they are carried out, we use the means and techniques that consume fewer materials and are more sustainable. For example, we use drawer techniques to make the dikes, which minimize the use of aggregates and concrete. We are growing as needed, but always optimizing our possibilities to the fullest.

In short, we seek to create a sustainable island. ●

## FACTS

**5**  
PORTS MANAGED  
BY THE PORTS  
OF LAS PALMAS

**+330**  
EMPLOYEES

**180**  
PORTS ON THE FIVE  
CONTINENTS ARE CONNECTED  
TO THE PORT OF LAS PALMAS

Long and well established, the Ports of Las Palmas, with a solid background and credentials endorsed by the excellent results in merchandise traffic, cruise traffic and the provision of services, are facing new challenges which range from the definition and boosting of a commercial strategy to fly the flag of the strengths of the three port areas and, in addition, join the digital revolution already present in many European ports.

The management has been working along those two lines, drawing up a road map to enable them to progress towards the consolidation of the ports as the most important logistic hub of the Mid-Atlantic.

Transition towards Ports 4.0 is also an immediate objective as the digital revolution gets closer and closer. The port community must be prepared for that challenge since the islands' economic and social sectors depend on this. Efficiency and competitiveness will be guaranteed with the application of advanced ICT technologies and the automation of software.





## LEADER IN THE SHIPPING INDUSTRY



**ANTONIO CASTAÑEDA**  
MD  
Alfaship

### FACTS

**+30**  
YEARS OPERATING

**24/7**  
SERVICE AVAILABLE

**2014**  
CUSTOMS BROKERAGE  
SERVICES START

**10**  
PORTS WHERE ALFASHIP  
IS PRESENT IN SPAIN

#### Ports and shipyards are gaining more and more weight in the regional economy every year. What is the potential of the shipping and maritime sector in your opinion?

Rose George's book Ninety Percent of Everything shows us the importance of the maritime world in our lives. Practically everything reaches us by sea.

Decades of intense activity in the sector has led to a progressive general growth, which, together with the permanent development of the necessary port infrastructures, has created a favorable ecosystem for maritime services. There is definitely a potential for a stronger contribution to the regional economy.

#### What is the biggest challenge the sector faces today?

Historically the port's importance has not been recognized and known by the Canarian society. The administration's efforts to link the city and the port have been insufficient. Also, the new generations' entrepreneurship is almost non-existent in this sector, as the same players have been in business for more than half a century. This needs to change.

#### Is it possible to diversify the Canarian economy and rely less on tourism?

Diversification is an optimal way to secure both new employment opportunities for the local population and the region's economic development. One way to achieve optimum diversification that is not governed by

temporary circumstances, would be by setting up intensive collaboration programs with port companies.

The human resources, the geostrategic situation of the islands in the middle of the main maritime routes, plus the existing infrastructure, already allow the Canary Islands to be positioned as a naval repair center par excellence, for example. If we add to that valuable aspects such as being part of a European territory, good connectivity and legal transparency, I think we could develop other activities related to our sector that would lessen the dependency on tourism.

#### What is necessary to be done for the development of the maritime and shipping sector?

We are certainly in a privileged geographical situation, but this must be accompanied, at regional level, by responsible policies that promote the continued development of the private sector. The autonomous government needs to support more the commercial initiatives carried out by this sector. A good start, in my opinion, would be to ensure connectivity between the port and different parts of the city.

The government of the Canary Islands must promote integration and collaboration between all the Canary Islands ports in order to face competition in the surrounding area.

#### What are the competitive advantages of the archipelago to be one of the most relevant logistics hubs in the world?

The Canary Islands currently offers the best EU tax, the ZEC (the Canary Islands Special Zone) which is a low tax zone created for the promotion of the economic and social development of the islands and to diversify the production structure which is attractive to foreign investors.

We can't dismiss as a great advantage the geographical area where we are located which is the perfect location to be a logistic hub between continents. Then, we have multiple sea and air connections and a considerable number of shipping lines. The local infrastructure, staff with high knowledge of the sector and competitiveness also create a very satisfactory environment to be a logistic hub. And finally, a modern administration that adapts to the different variations demanded by the logistics sector.



One of Alfaship's key activities is integral logistics, where we cover all stages of the supply chain with our own means.

#### Alfaship has been operating for over 30 years. What is Alfaship's role in the sector?

Our main activity is being a port agency. We have been leaders in the sector in the Canary Islands for the last twelve years, and one of the most representative port agencies at national level. In order to meet our quality standards in service, we have decided a couple of years ago to opt for a horizontal and vertical integration offering global agency coverage, chartering, logistics and customs.



#### What services of Alfaship can an investor count on?

As a local expert, Alfaship conducts frequent market research and obtains valuable information for its partners, clients and potential investors in the area. Our own legal department specializes in assisting foreign companies seeking to invest in the Canary Islands, thus benefitting from the advantages offered by local regulations.

#### What is the importance of innovation, especially in your sector?

Innovation only brings benefits. The level of innovation of a company is usually proportional to its investments. Also, a large part of the maritime sector is based on international relations with countries so it is necessary to maintain the same levels of technology of your partners. Alfaship's annual investment in R+D+I is considerable. Constant development has led to significant improvements in internal management and customer experience. Our goal is to continue being at the forefront of innovation and provide the latest technologies to the various departments of the group.

#### How do you see the development of the blue economy?

It is comforting to know that on the part of the Spanish authorities there is an awareness that is materializing in interesting projects in pursuit of energy efficiency and respect for the environment. It should be done, as everything else, in a progressive way and in agreement with the main international actors, trying not to strangle any of the industries, and encouraging good practices. The private sector must take advantage of these new currents to detect business opportunities, which in turn will favor the offer of port services.

#### What would you like to accomplish as Alfaship managing director in the near future?

I'd like to achieve our expansion objectives and open three new branches, one of them in an international port; attend traffic in the main ports of the world; be able to offer new services adapted to the needs of our clients; and complete full digitization of the group. ●





## ASTICAN: ALWAYS IN CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT



**GERMÁN  
SUÁREZ CALVO**  
President  
Astican

### FACTS

7

DRY-DOCKING  
LANES

**+600**  
TONS CRANE CAPACITY

**+1,500**  
WORKFORCE

**162**  
PROJECTS COMPLETED  
IN 2019

**You have been at the helm of Astican for almost a year now. What has been your biggest challenge so far?**

I was already the deputy president before I became president so from a professional point of view, there hasn't been that many changes nor challenges. The day to day responsibilities, business-wise, have been the same and not changed that much. The main challenge for me is personal, as I now don't have the support of the former president, my father, who was always backing me up. I miss him a lot, we made a very good team.

**You once said "innovation is about opening doors and windows and letting the fresh air in." How important is it to constantly innovate, especially in your sector?**

Shipping has always been a very traditional sector. A lot of the employees in the sector have been working at the same company for twenty to thirty years. So we thought it was important to encourage all our workers, especially those with a lot of experience and years in the sector, to always be on the lookout for new and innovative ideas that could improve our performance. We encouraged them to check other sectors too, study what had given positive results to see if they could be applied to shipping. Innovation is paramount nowadays and we need to always be observing the very best players in our and other industries in every part of the world and see what we can learn from them. Also, at the end of 2014 and early 2015 the management decided to talk to those close

to retirement in our organization and asked them to help us look for the right candidate to take over their jobs. We also promoted younger workers and hired people from other sectors to bring the fresh air the company needed. Our strategy was to combine experience and new blood to evolve and innovate.

Innovation in our sector focuses on creating environmental-friendly procedures, introducing robotics and new technology such as 3D scanners, digital prints, augmented reality, and so on.

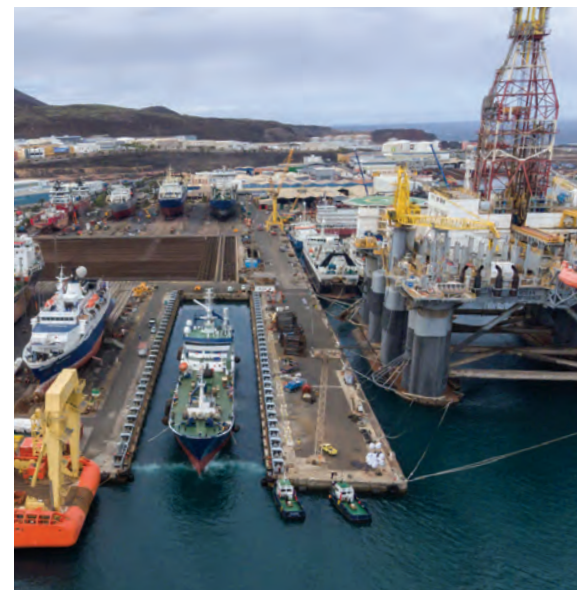
**You are also involved with Inerza. Can you tell us what it does?**

Inerza is a company that started at the beginning of the 2000s as a spin-off of the IT Department of the Port Authority of Las Palmas and the Port Authority of Tenerife. It's innovative and it helps its clients with their ICT needs. An important milestone for Inerza took place more than one year ago when we started what could be considered the largest privately funded R&D center in the Canary Islands. Then, we moved it to the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria where it is headquartered at Parque Tecnológico de Gran Canaria. Some of the reasons we made such a move were: to be able to have the academic research into the real world of daily business, to give the most talented people from the Canary Islands an option to work and stay here and to help entrepreneurs who want to start their own company and be successful. One of Inerza's aim is to help create a rich and diverse economy which isn't based only on tourism. Another is to bringing high quality IT services to our economy.

**Each sector of the economy needs to take care of the environment and be sustainable. Is this a concern within your sector?**

I think the next economic trend is closely linked to social and environmental awareness. In the future, workers and customers won't just ask about salaries or products, they will ask companies what they are doing about the environment and social awareness. In the shipping sector several measures and investments are taking place to address these issues. Since the beginning of 2020, for example, there is a new IMO (Internacional Maritime Organization) regulation which obliges sulfur to be removed from the fuel

consumed by the vessels. If you take the right decision about what technology to be used to comply with this requirement, you could even reduce the running costs of a vessel. Today, every new technology applied to the sector, which is evolving at a high pace, needs to meet environmental demands. Moreover,



the shipping sector is committed to achieving an important reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> released into the atmosphere by 2030.

**A Recent CNN report said Shipping is one of the dirtiest industries, but it's trying to clean up its act. Can you confirm this?**

As I mentioned, shipping is a very traditional and important industry representing about 90 to 95% of the global trade. And it does have an impact on the environment so that is why it has to and will adopt the same technologies as the airlines for example, to reduce its emissions. I believe once they are in place the development and results will be as positive as those from aviation.

**Astican, with an investment of €35 million, plans to build a dry dock in Las Palmas port. Can you tell us more about this project?**

We expect to finish this project around 2022 and it will allow capturing part of the large tonnage traffic that sails each year along the Canary waters. It will allow us to increase the capacity of our shipyard by three and most important, we expect to double our direct employment figures in Las Palmas. With this dry dock, we are also aiming to get into the cruise ship market where each euro billed to a vessel yields 3 euros of revenue.

**What have you learnt from your father, Astican's former president?**

He once told me something he really believed: "Companies are not the money you have in your bank account or the buildings you can own. Companies are the people in them". And from that I learnt that it is important to take care of the people, not just direct employees, but everyone related. This is a long-term priority for Astican. ●





## CONNECTING THE CANARY ISLANDS



**ANTONIO ARMAS FERNÁNDEZ**

President  
Naviera Armas

### FACTS

**1941**  
STARTED OPERATING

**2018**  
BOUGHT  
TRASMEDITERRÁNEA

**36**  
SHIPS

**+5 million**  
PASSENGERS A YEAR

**Your father founded the company in 1941. How did it evolve over time to concentrate on ferries and the transport of cargo and passengers?**

At that time the ships available were old, and it was imperative to improve the connectivity between islands in the Canaries. I bought the first two ships from a Danish company called DFDS, and we started to use the roll-on/roll-off system for trucks, but the ships then were only for cargo.

In the seventies we began to make ferries to carry both cargo and passengers.

Two years ago, we bought Trasmediterránea, and now we have a fleet of approximately 40 boats between the two companies. We also have a new high-speed ship, built in Australia at INCAT shipyard; and we have two others in construction, one in Vigo and one in Italy. So we will retire some of the older ships and substitute them for these new ones.

**What is the current ratio between cargo/passengers?**

We move 5.5 million passengers, 1.5 million vehicles and more than eight million loading meters of cargo.

The income from tourism is a small percentage of our business. We mostly transport residents back and forth; from Melilla and the Balearic Islands to the peninsula, for example. In the Strait of Gibraltar, we transport non-residents, mostly Moroccan citizens who go from Europe to Morocco in summer and then back. Therefore, as I've said the economic impact

of tourism on our business isn't important. We have two lines carrying tourists on excursions, but the number of passengers is small, and the rates via tour operators is lower than normal passenger transport rates.

**Tourism in the Canary Islands has suffered from the bankruptcy of Thomas Cook. Was there a domino effect on a company like yours?**

Of course the bankruptcy influenced tourism here, which is the Canaries' main source of income. With less income, there might be less purchasing power, less jobs, and we might therefore have less business. But on the other hand, as the passenger prices are below the rest of the transport sector, we tend to increase in this segment in times like these. We transport perishables from the capital to the smaller islands. If you have less demand for perishables in Lanzarote, Fuerteventura or La Palma, the demand for transport also decreases. The same for tourism, as people will have less money to spend on vacations. Even with this unfortunate event of the bankruptcy, the tourism figures in 2020 have increased by 2.3% versus the numbers from last year

**Your company obtained the ISO 2000 certification, but the shipping sector as a whole, needs to improve its record. What measures have you taken to help stop environmental damage?**

This year we're already changing the type of fuel we use. Some ships will get scrubbers,

which is an apparatus that removes particulate matter and harmful components from the exhaust gasses generated as a result of combustion processes in marine engines. Others will use 05 fuel, which is less polluting.

However, we have been hearing a lot of talk about gas, and what people don't know is that natural gas creates a greater greenhouse effect than any other fuel. It's talked about as a panacea, but technically it isn't.



We will have to change the structure of some boats, but not all of them. Each of these changes means an expenditure between €4 to €8 million for us. For the past few months, we've also been working on a project to eliminate plastic waste on the boats that comes from containers when passengers consume food on the boats. We are changing from plastic to Tetra Brik cartons. It's a slow process, because the suppliers we work with also have to adapt to our requests.

**How do you see the development of the port here in Gran Canaria?**

I think that certain measures must be taken for it to grow. It's obviously a strategic port because it's in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, but ships gain more autonomy every day that passes. They leave the north of Europe and don't have to stop here to get to South Africa, they just go there directly now. A stop costs a lot of money for a ship. Stevedores and dock workers are very expensive. This makes the product the ships carry more expensive as well, so they avoid stops if they can.

There are cheaper ports than ours. They might present other complications, but ports in Morocco like Tangier, or even the port in Senegal, are stiff competition for ours because they are less expensive than the port here. No one is willing to pay for dock labor twice anymore if they can help it.

**And how do you see the future of the economy in the Canary Islands in general?**

I've always thought it a pity that these islands didn't become a tax haven. The Canary Islands were, in fact, a tax haven at one point, and that's why people from outside came to shop here—because we were tax free. We made a grave mistake by imposing taxes when we should be a tax haven instead, and profit from the business of ship registry. ●





## THE AVOCADO REVOLUTION COMES TO CANARIES

For centuries the Canary Islands have been celebrated for their banana production. Now a new export crop is fast emerging which may soon rival the banana: the avocado.

**A**s global demand for avocados soars, driven by the health benefits and nutritional value of the fruit's unsaturated fats, planters in the Canary Islands are allocating increasing areas of land to avocado production. The surface area in the region which is dedicated to cultivating avocados has increased by more than 25% since 2015.

While much of the islands' avocado output is consumed locally, exports to peninsular Spain and the rest of Europe are rising rapidly. The Canary Islands possess the right climatic con-

ditions and the soil type needed to grow avocados successfully, with the yields achieved here and the quality of the fruit far higher than in other avocado-producing regions in Europe. Because of the intensity of the flavors of Canarian avocados, and their ripe, creamy texture, farmers on the islands have been able to charge a premium price for their products. At Agro-Rincón on the island of Tenerife, Wenceslao Martínez-Barona Zerolo has been growing, packaging and distributing avocados internationally for more than 20 years, supplying supermarkets across Spain and beyond with the full range of varieties: Hass, Fuerte, Pinkerton and Reed.

The company, founded in 1994, grows avocados on more than 200 hectares of land and distributes avocados grown by smallholders across Tenerife, La Palma and La Gomera. In total, it produces around 1.5 million kilos of avocados every year.

With no risks of frost in this subtropical climate, and with crops growing in healthy volcanic soil, the avocados sold by Agro-Rincón are celebrated for their nutty, buttery texture. The company's popular Hass variety has a higher proportion of fat than the average and is sold far and wide across Europe.

Agro-Rincón is now investing in new pro-

cessing capacity to supply surging local and international demand for the fruit, which is especially popular with the world's millennial generation.

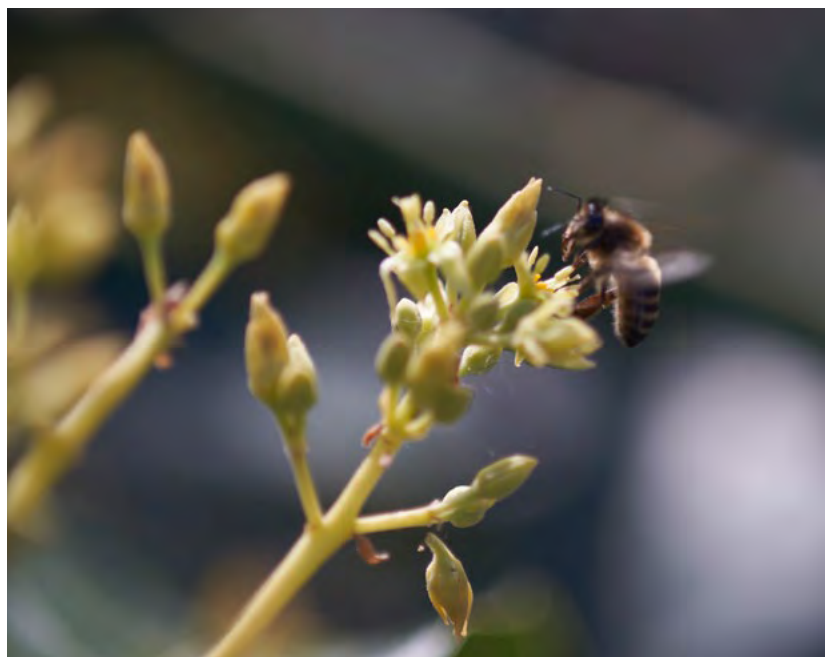
"Avocado production has been increasing rapidly in the Canary Islands and we are preparing our facilities to help us respond to the rise in production," Martínez-Barona says. "Global avocado sales have risen by around 30% and new plantations are being planned in the Canaries. We need to be prepared for this new reality."

"Avocados from the Canary Islands have high potential. Our avocados are of proven quality

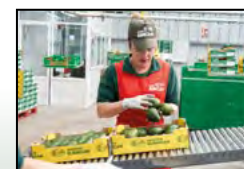
and they are building a strong reputation in discerning markets all over Europe."

To support exports and differentiate Canarian avocados in the global market, the regional Government is currently pursuing plans to create a denomination of origin label for avocados grown on the islands and achieve the status of PGI (Protected Geographical Indication).

At the same time, avocado producers on the islands are creating an association which will govern production, define export strategies and help the Canarian avocado conquer new international markets. ●



### CANARY ISLANDS AVOCADOS THE GREEN GOLD



Our avocados are produced in the volcanic soil of the Canary Islands  
& have an exquisite flavor, creaminess & freshness

**AGRO  
RINCÓN**

[www.agrorincon.es](http://www.agrorincon.es)





## BETTING ON THE CANARY ISLAND AVOCADO



**WENCESLAO  
MARTÍNEZ-  
BARONA ZEROLO**  
Owner  
Agro-Rincón

### FACTS

**20**  
YEARS DEDICATED  
TO AVOCADO  
PRODUCTION

**4 kilos**  
PER CAPITA  
CONSUMPTION  
OF AVOCADOS  
IN THE CANARY ISLANDS

**30%**  
INCREASE IN AVOCADO  
CONSUMPTION  
WORLDWIDE

**In the archipelago, with an arable agricultural area of approximately 130,000 hectares (18% of the total), there is 60% of unused arable land. In your opinion, what is the current state of the primary sector in the Canary Islands?**

The predominant crop in the Canary Islands has always been the banana. Now there are other crops that have been added such as grapes, avocado and potatoes. I believe that there is a lot of abandoned soil, especially on islands like La Gomera, La Palma, El Hierro, and parts of Tenerife so it's beneficial that new crops arise to fill this abandoned land. The avocado, the crop I work with, is becoming more and more popular. But I also encourage that we plant in areas where it is more sustainable, where there is water for irrigation which is not necessarily being done at the moment.

**What is the export potential of the Canarian avocados?**

We are now exporting avocados to Switzerland, for example, which is an important but demanding market. After seeing the high quality of the Canary avocados, they agreed that our fruit is very good and that is why we managed to enter that market. It competes at the highest levels of quality with other growing areas such as Chile, South Africa and Israel. Our avocado has great potential in our growing list of export products.

**How did the development of avocado production in the Canary Islands come to be?**

There is a world avocado boom. The consumption of avocado has risen a lot, 30% worldwide. We've got on that train, and we have increased arable land by 25% in the last six years. I think it is a crop that if grown well has very good recognition.

We export both to the Iberian Peninsula and Switzerland, and we believe that we have better quality fruits than the other countries that export to Europe at this time. I think we should take advantage of it and certify the farms for export, because in Europe it's important to have the Global G.A.P, which is the worldwide standard for Good Agricultural Practices, a quality certification.

Next, we want to grow organic avocados because we believe it is much easier to grow organic avocados here than in other places. So we're now trying to certify Canarian avocados with ecological certifications.

**What will be the results of the Canary avocado sector in 2019 and the outlook for 2020?**

The internal consumption in the Canary Islands has increased as well as the external consumption. There is a great demand for avocados here in the Canary Islands at the moment.

We have a nursery and we even have a two-year waiting list for people waiting for plants. There are people who are now cultivating avocados in areas that have not been productive for other crops. But we need to do it in an orderly manner, because we don't want the farmer to plant in areas that are not optimal for avocados. There are people who desperately want to plant anywhere, but the producers need to make sure that the site they choose to grow is a proper area where there is plenty water and a good climate.

**It is clear that climate change is affecting agricultural production worldwide. How do you work for sustainable crop development?**

In many parts of the world crops are being planted in areas that have no water. I saw a report on Chile where they are planting in areas where there is no water, not even for human consumption. They supply the populations with vats and the water goes to the avocados. That is, they give priority to avocados and not to humans. We believe that this is not sustainable, you cannot prioritize cultivation over human consumption.



Here we have areas, for example, in the south of the islands, where there is little water and it is more expensive, so farmers see avocado cultivation as less profitable. But in La Gomera where there is a lot of water, we are promoting the crop because we see that more than half the island is abandoned and is a good area for avocados.



**What innovation techniques are already being applied for better crop performance?**

Irrigation equipment has been modernized, now they are watering by spray or drip that use much less water. We also have changed the plantation frameworks to have greater productivity to each hectare. Where there were 400 trees before, we have made another type of frame and there may be 550 or 600 trees in the same space.

**The Canary Islands Banana PGI is the only banana that has achieved European recognition as a Protected Geographical Indication. Do you aspire to achieve this recognition for the Canary avocado?**

Yes, and we are now working on creating a Canary Islands association of avocado producers. With it we also want to boost the avocado PGI, because we believe that when we enter production, compared to the productive areas that go into production at the same time as we do, our fruit has more fat than theirs. Higher fat means that the fruit is better. I think it would be a good idea to achieve the avocado PGI because we believe right now the avocado is at the top of the market.

**What does having these certifications mean for Agro-Rincón?**

We had to invest more in field advice and technicians. We needed more technicians because we have more farms, and as we have to certify our product, we need more technical advice for those farms. We needed to invest and teach the technicians about harvesting, pruning, traceability, good agricultural practices, etc. And now we are ready to increase production. ●





**HERMINIA  
RODRÍGUEZ  
ROSAS**  
Vice President

**SEBASTIÁN  
SANSÓ MARRERO**  
Business Development  
Director  
Hospitales San Roque

## FACTS

#1

RANKING IN CANARY  
ISLAND'S HOSPITALS

1<sup>st</sup>

PRIVATE HOSPITAL IN  
THE CANARIES TO BE  
ACCREDITED AS AN  
ACADEMIC HOSPITAL

### How do you see the development of health tourism in Spain and especially in Gran Canaria?

**SS:** Tourism in Spain depends on the economic situation of the countries where the tourists come from. If there is an economic recession, tourism drops somewhat, although it is always one of the sectors that best resists crises.

In Gran Canaria the tourism industry is facing a difficult situation because of issues related to air connectivity and not because of economic crises. This will be solved with the rearrangement of our current air traffic. Air connectivity is the main factor that increases or decreases tourism numbers and consequently health tourism traffic. The Thomas Cook crisis didn't hit Gran Canaria as hard as other areas. In fact, there is another tour operator, Jet2, which has repositioned and absorbed almost all of their air seats. However, what we are noticing is the decrease of German tourists.

### What role will health tourism play in the island's economy in the next few years?

**HR:** A decisive role! Given our proximity to the African continent, we are trying to better position ourselves in the large market there. Some patients, especially those who require specialists, may not be in a position to travel or at least travel a far distance. We are in a privileged enclave to assume these patients. We can offer treatment in complex specialties such as cardiac surgery, neurosurgery, digestive surgery,

other internist specialties, since it is very difficult to find such assistance in Africa. We are pioneering the receipt of those patients and giving them the attention they need. Although they have been traveling to France for many years to solve their health problems, the Canary Islands now offer a cheaper alternative and a shorter travel that means fewer problems and more safety for the patient.

Those from the Scandinavian countries, for some surgeries, are very attracted to the weather here. Patients that require rehabilitation would much prefer recuperating on the beach under the sun rather than in the snow. Our climate really helps us when it comes to health tourism.

**SS:** The health tourist normally corresponds to the market of the traditional tourist.



Our main markets for this type of tourism are first the German market, then the Scandinavian, and thirdly the British; after that of Benelux, France and Italy. The Germans and the Scandinavians come for sun and beach tourism, they are older people who come repeatedly and many of them come for post-operative treatments. In fact, in Gran Canaria there is a center linked to the Norwegian government for

rehabilitation of patients who have certain dermatological complications such as psoriasis.

Many of these tourists end up staying here to live and become residents. So, this is no longer considered medical tourism exactly, but it would be retirement tourism. Gran Canaria, for some people, is becoming the Miami of Europe with retirees who find a way of life here, either independent with a second residence to retire, or in some cases complementary, with a socio-sanitary offer that allows them to be assisted at the end of their lifetime.

### Hospitales San Roque (HSR) has a wide range of medical and surgical specialties, it's recognized for both its medical and technological excellence, and leads the ranking of health reputation in the Canary Islands.

**HR:** HSR turns 100 this coming year. There's a clear difference from how it started to what it is nowadays. HSR began as a project of a group of doctors who detected a series of needs in the Canary Islands, at a time when we were very far from everything and tried to solve them with the means they could. Today, Spanish healthcare is one of the top rated in the world- technologically, scientifically, and professionally; and private healthcare has greatly improved, and is currently at its best. It has assumed increasing complexity and can be compared in most of the processes to public health, with a difference: perhaps it has been quicker in providing newer technology in hospitals. For example, this year we started using the first Nuclear MRI in Spain. It uses less CO<sub>2</sub> and some form of helium, which is much more eco-responsible and with a high-quality image, which helps make diagnostics quicker and easier. That means that the patient spends less time doing the study, so any discomfort the patient might have is reduced. The image quality is very good and on top of everything, it's much more environmentally friendly. ●





## THE GREENEST OF THE EIGHT CANARY ISLANDS



**MARIANO  
HERNÁNDEZ  
ZAPATA**  
President  
La Palma Council

### FACTS

**5<sup>th</sup>**  
LARGEST ISLAND  
IN THE CANARY  
ISLANDS

**2012**  
DESIGNATED A  
STARLIGHT TOURIST  
DESTINATION

**2<sup>nd</sup>**  
BIGGEST BANANA  
PRODUCTION  
IN THE CANARIES

**You are an athlete and understand the importance of being a team player. How does that translate in your leadership as president of the Island Council of La Palma?**

As leader of the Island Council I looked for people who had experience in each of the areas that we have to manage on the island of La Palma. I wanted to have advisors and counselors who are leaders in each of their fields. I carry out my work by giving the directors a lot of responsibility and rely on them to make their own decisions in their respective fields at all times.

**What is your government's strategy for the development of sustainable tourism?**

Today, La Palma, with respect to the other islands in the Canaries, is the most sustainable one in regard to tourism. A sustainable tourism development, always respecting the environment, has always been our priority. And for an economic growth, we need to increase the number of beds available. Because only with more beds we will be able to increase the number of flights to the island and make La Palma more attractive for tourism investors, but we won't do it if it compromises the environment.

So our strategy for the coming years is to develop those areas that have already been exploited, mainly by agriculture. We are talking about the western region of the island where currently bananas are grown. These lands are already exploited and have no environmental value, and that is where we hope that traditional hotel tourism can be developed in the future. As I mentioned we need to increase our bed capacity because

at the moment there are only three large hotels on the island. In this western banana production area four hotels are planned, but we need to attract investors that are interested in constructing hotels there.

At the same time, to increase the number of beds in rural and environmental protected areas, we will continue working on the new Ley de Islas Verdes (Green Islands Law) so small hotels and private rental places can be developed in these areas.

**What is the La Palma Worldwide Biosphere Reserve?**

In 1983, UNESCO declared 511 hectares of the estate El Canal y Los Tiles in La Palma as a biosphere reserve, becoming the first Spanish island to count with this important international recognition. In 1998, the declared territory was extended comprising more than 16% of the insular surface. In November 2002, during a Plenary Session of the UNESCO International Coordination Council, La Palma Biosphere Worldwide Reserve was set up as we know it nowadays

which is the whole insular surface, as well as the incorporation of one part of the sea environment with a surface of 9,870 hectares, making a total extension of 80,702 hectares. It's dependent on the Island Council and the Responsible Tourism Institute. Several departments of the Island Council, including tourism, contribute financially to the running of this reserve. It is directed and led by biologists and technicians who set parameters for the island's sustainable growth.

**What priorities do you have for your first term in office?**

First to create as many investment and growth opportunities as possible. Also, we have to avoid depopulation and grow so that the islanders can stay on the island to live, work and develop their future.

We want to upgrade the island technologically by improving databases. We have a mobile application available for download, CabLaPalma. Those who use it will have access to information about the island; from employment to the weather situation, the state



© Saul Santos



© Abián San Gil

of the roads and the influx of vehicles on each of them. With better technology, we will provide better services to our citizens.

**How do you see the future of the economy of La Palma?**

The economy in La Palma mainly comes from agriculture and tourism, both contributing almost the same to the island's GDP. We have to seek a sustainable tourism development, respectful not only with the environment, but with agriculture, mainly banana and avocado production. So this is the plan for the future: continue to focus on agriculture, where bananas are of great importance, and develop a strong commitment to tourism that can also generate wealth and opportunities for us.

**Astronomy is quite important for the island.**

The island of La Palma is one of the top places in the world for astronomy. Right now, we are waiting to see if La Palma is chosen for the installation of the large telescope from the TMT scientific consortium that already has all the permits to build in the Canary Islands. It would be a breakthrough for us. And we already have the good news that the great European solar telescope will be installed here; this will bring more than €250 million in investments.

**You care a lot about the environment. Will La Palma be the first island in the archipelago free of plastics?**

We are very aware of the fight against plastic. We are an island that recycles and the first in the Canary Islands that carried out the recycling of organic matter. This program has been in operation for more than a year. We are also developing the La Palma Renewable Project, to value different renewable energy facilities that had been abandoned. The European Commission has already selected this project as one of the best in renewable energy and environmental conservation. The objective of this project is to decarbonize the island of La Palma. A very ambitious project, which will take a long time. We have many steps to take, but we have already started it.

**How would you describe La Palma to our readers?**

Our geographical location and good weather make La Palma a paradise with stable and pleasant climate all year. Also, many people say they want to come to La Isla Bonita (The Beautiful Island), our nickname, because it is a natural site. La Palma is a place to be discovered and where you can have some experiences that you can't get in other islands of the Canary archipelago. ●





will feel motivated and have a bigger incentive to renovate their spaces as well.

#### What importance does transparency have in your government?

Information and transparency is one of the objectives that we have because we believe it is fundamental, in the society that we live in, that public administration needs to be more transparent with the opportunities it has, the investments and public tenders, and its actions. But most importantly is transparency of information.

Let me explain the point where we are now and the point where we would want to be. Right now, we are a city council that is behind on being transparent compared to other municipalities. We should complete some requisites which are simple, such as the publication of payrolls of public officers and advisors, the declaration of their assets, of what is approved in a municipal board meeting, and so on. We need to do that as soon as possible because I want our position in the transparency ranking of municipalities in Spain to improve in the short term.

#### What are some of the investment opportunities in your city right now?

There are some, but there could be even more, depending on how far the city officials want to go. The opportunities are especially of a specific type: nightlife activities, theme parks, water parks, and the like. We are now getting licenses and permits for one of the

largest theme parks in the world, but we can't talk about dates yet.

We are a great destination for the sun and beach tourism crowds, but there are other tourist destinations with beaches as well. That's why we are trying to complement our offer with such things as this theme park and night activities and entertainment, which would be a good magnet for hotels, car rentals, and other direct and indirect tourist businesses.

#### Tourists today are changing; they want more experiences.

Exactly. At the end of every vacation there needs to be something special, a positive, memorable experience whether it be

landscapes, the climate, gastronomy, or theme parks. Tourists are looking for experiences and are becoming more competent and choosier when picking destinations to create memories.

We have been able to verify that tourists are increasingly asking for sustainable tourism. I believe that we have many things to advance in and that we are quite late, but little by little we are improving.

#### Are the new technologies affecting tourism today?

Tourist are constantly being more informed thanks to social media and the internet.

We launched an online campaign in Britain where those who searched the internet for sun and beach destinations will find images of the Maspalomas Costa Canaria. The goal was to quickly and concretely show the person who was looking for a beach and sun destination that we exist. It was a very productive campaign because with less money we reached people who were looking for what we have to offer.

#### What would be your message to our readers?

I'd like to say, as the mayor of San Bartolomé de Tirajana, that I have a lot of work ahead of me, but I'm excited to take on the challenge.

My message for the companies that are attracted to our municipality is that we are here to receive, guide, and orient you and that's why we've created an investment committee. Many times outside companies have to talk to the city council, the island council, the Canary Islands government - lots of departments, so we have created this investment committee for the company to come, express what is wanted and we can tell them the requirements and steps to follow. We have many people on the committee who understand the different administrations so the companies that want to invest don't have as many hoops to jump through. I believe it is fundamental to have coordination between the various administrations and the private sector to save time. With the investment committee, the prospective companies can have all of the information at once and can decide if they would like to invest or not.

My message for the readers is that if you are looking for a place to unwind, with sun and beach and relaxing activities that is safe and secure, Maspalomas is the best destination you can find. ●



## MASPALOMAS: WHERE TRANSPARENCY IS A PRIORITY



**CONCEPCIÓN  
NARVÁEZ VEGA**

Mayor  
San Bartolomé  
de Tirajana  
(Maspalomas)

### FACTS

**19 km**  
OF COAST, CORE AREA  
OF MASPALOMAS  
COSTA CANARIA

**2012**  
UNWTO WORLD  
TOURISM DAY WAS  
CELEBRATED IN  
MASPALOMAS

**404 hectares**  
AREA OF SAND DUNES  
IN SAN BARTOLOMÉ  
DE TIRAJANA

#### What is the social and economic importance of tourism, not only for the city, but also for the entire island of Gran Canaria?

Tourism is the economic engine of Gran Canaria and San Bartolomé de Tirajana (Maspalomas). Almost all of the Canarian coastline lives off of tourism, whether it is directly or indirectly.

#### What are your priorities as the new mayor of Maspalomas?

San Bartolomé de Tirajana, or Maspalomas as it is popularly known, is full of opportunities and has great potential. Right now we need to strengthen our potential. One project we are looking at carrying out is a theme park, like the Siam Park in Gran Canaria. However, to improve economic development, for me the most important thing to do is to reinforce the legal framework for investors; that companies trust to come and invest in our tourist destination. That's why to me the most important thing isn't just investing money, or creating budgets, but for all administrations, central, regional or local, to be in on it, so that we all coordinate and can carry out this plan to modernize the city.

#### What modernization do you see as necessary?

The projects that we have right now, seem to be small projects on beaches, trails, things like that. We need to be more ambitious. And when the private sector sees that the public sector is doing its job renovating public spaces, they





## ALEJANDRO MARICHAL RAMOS

Councilor for Tourism  
Urban Planning  
Environmental Policies  
& Human Resources  
San Bartolomé de  
Tirajana (Maspalomas)



## FACT

8

DAYS OVERNIGHT  
AVERAGE STAY IN  
MASPALOMAS

### How important is the tourism industry not only for the city, but also for the entire island of Gran Canaria?

It is very important for us, to the point that it represents 40% of Gran Canaria's gross domestic product and, in the case of San Bartolomé de Tirajana, up to 70%. The main challenge we face is to ensure we're a more sustainable destination, both from an environmental and social point of view. We want the income generated by the tourist industry not to be concentrated in a few large estates and businesses. Rather, we want more residents to be involved within the tourism sector and receive benefits that comes from the town being a major tourist destination.

### How can you ensure this?

We have set three major objectives. The first one is to have a tourism promotion plan. In San Bartolomé de Tirajana and Maspalomas, which is Europe's destination with the most overnight stays to date, there has never been a tourism promotion plan. There will be one now based on five major axes: sun & beach, culture, sports, gastronomy and leisure. Most of the promotion will be online, since it is more effective, has a lower cost, and you can measure the return on investment more easily.

Second, a tourism infrastructure plan to renovate public spaces: better sidewalks, better benches, different streetlights and tourist infrastructure to help us improve our city. The intention is to give ourselves a new identity. Our tourism model has been the typical model of developing countries, where tourists and residents don't mingle. We have

to change that. We need a model in which we do not talk about the tourist area and the residential area, but talk about the city as a whole.

The third objective is to modernize the commercial areas. We must encourage this modernization by creating urban planning possibilities, so that private companies can do it in a simple way that won't have them tied up in the bureaucratic problems that urban planning often causes.

### What are the initiatives that will be carried out to implement a sustainable tourism model?

Some of the actions we are looking to take are: using public lighting with sensors so that the lighting only comes on when necessary; putting sensors in certain parts of the cities so that restaurants and shops receive information on CO2 levels and based on these readings they can take the appropriate measures; improve our recycling and waste treatment; to name a few. Multiple actions will be carried out – we haven't chosen which ones yet, and the private business sector will be asked to help us with these initiatives.

However, previous studies indicate that the most non-compliant group in terms of recycling is not companies, it's the residents. Companies, when working with other companies that certify recycling efforts, do it perfectly. Looking to the residents, we have started a training aimed at 10,000 students informing them about sustainable practices.

### What is the potential to invest here?

More than investing in new constructions, I believe renovating what is already built is a good investment opportunity here in Maspalomas and the Canary Islands.

We are a very attractive destination to open up a business: our average overnight stay is 8 days. That implies that businesses can get a better return since the tourists spend more time here.

### What is the most special place in Gran Canaria for you?

I would say a must visit would be to the largest aboriginal cemetery on the island of Gran Canaria, the Necropolis of Arteara. It is a vestige of the ancient inhabitants of the Canary Islands before the colonization. ●



# LANZAROTE LEADS THE WAY

The otherworldly island of Lanzarote is a recognized leader in sustainable tourism

**C**elebrated for its volcanic landscape, its beaches, its architecture and its water sports, the island of Lanzarote has long been a popular destination for people looking for a family vacation with a difference.

The northernmost and easternmost of the Canary Islands, Lanzarote's volcanic origins and extraordinary landscape exert an enduring appeal to nature lovers. They have also inspired an unusual range of cultural treasures, ranging from art and architecture to wine growing and gastronomy.

Nowhere is the spectacular geology of the island more visible than in Timanfaya Natural Park in the north of the island. Covering almost one quarter of Lanzarote, the craters, magma chambers, geysers and camel rides of this otherworldly environment are the island's undisputed star attraction.

A short journey to the south, to the amazement of visitors, Malvasia grapevines grow out of the ash in this semi-desert climate, protected from the elements by circular stone walls of volcanic rock.

Largely thanks to the wonders of Timanfaya and the volcanic landscape, the entire island has been designated a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

To defend this status – which came under threat during the Spanish real estate boom some 15 years ago – the new head of Lanzarote's government, Maria Dolores Corujo, has made environmental protection and transparency the top priorities of her administration.

“We have to regain the time that has been lost in the development of tools for the control and management of the island's territory,” Corujo says.

In many ways Corujo is building on the legacy of Lanzarote's most famous son, artist and architect César Manrique. When he returned home from New York in 1966, Manrique became an early advocate of sustainable development, working with island leader Pepín Ramírez to ban high-rise hotels and protect Lanzarote from uncontrolled construction.

On assuming office, one of Corujo's first actions was to make an official visit to the Cesar Manrique Foundation, located in the subterranean studio carved out of lava where the artist worked. Inspired by the spirit of Manrique and by a renewed commitment to protecting the island's treasures, Lanzarote is now regaining its role as a true trailblazer in sustainable tourism. ●





## LANZAROTE: NATURE IS ITS BEST ASSET



**MARÍA DOLORES CORUJO BERRIEL**

President  
Lanzarote Council

### FACTS

**+3 million**  
TOURISTS IN 2018

**4<sup>th</sup>**  
LARGEST ISLAND  
IN THE CANARIES

**125 km**  
OFF THE NORTH COAST  
OF AFRICA

**500**  
DIFFERENT KIND  
OF PLANTS  
ON THE ISLAND

**Tourism, Lanzarote's main industry, also generates most of the employment on the island. What are your main challenges regarding this sector?**

We have had an increase in tourism arrivals to the Canary Islands, and especially to Lanzarote, for the past 3 years and many hotels have "No Vacancy" signs on their doors. But this doesn't mean everybody is benefiting from this. We need to address this issue and redistribute the wealth that tourism is generating.

Also, wages of those working in the sector must be equivalent and according to the wealth and income that is directly obtained from tourism. This inequality as well as precarious employment and exploitation cannot be allowed in a developed society, such as that of Lanzarote and the Canary Islands. I have denounced this fact repeatedly and we must keep fighting so working conditions and contracts are respected and fulfilled while the wealth generated by tourism is distributed fairly.

One of our challenges is to fight poverty in the Canary Islands which remain a problem so we must increase minimum wages across all sectors.

And we must undoubtedly diversify the economy while making sure that tourism, our main sector, stays strong and offers the best possible working conditions.

**Is connectivity another of the great challenges to overcome?**

Yes, connectivity will always be a challenge

for us who live in fragmented territory. Simply to move from one island to another we need to travel by plane or by boat so we have to be vigilant in always improving connectivity.

**What are your priorities regarding the development of tourism and the economy as a whole in Lanzarote?**

Lanzarote has always opted for sustainability and a green development model. We were the island that pioneered the land management guidelines in the Canary Islands. We were the first island to approve the Insular Plan regarding the urbanization, are a biosphere reserve and have been the flagship model on developmentalism. One of our priorities is to remain deeply committed to a sustainable development.

We also have to invest public money in improving tourism infrastructure because we live primarily off of tourism in Lanzarote that undoubtedly generates wealth and well-being in the population as a whole.

Other priorities are to diversify the tourism offer and improve local products. We have great potential. One good example is the wines of La Geria. They are some of the best wines in the world because the grapes grow in a special and unique condition typical from here.

I also believe that Lanzarote and the Canary Islands have to look more towards the sea and the blue economy since the sea is one of the most important sources of wealth and we are surrounded by water.

We still have problems in housing, health, education and in guaranteeing decent wages, but at the top of my priorities is to protect the territory, nature, our environment and guarantee the quality of life of the people, and therefore their well-being.

**What else can you tell us about improving local products?**

A lot of work is being done to improve Lanzarote's local products such as wine, cheese and also fishing. Our strategy is to link local products with sustainability and tourism promotion. We also have a network of art, culture and tourism centers where the local product is valued and promoted. Lanzarote is part of and one of the leaders in Saborea Spain (Tasting Spain), a national platform with an international vocation to boost tourism and gastronomy using local products.



**What do you want the island of Lanzarote to be known for?**

We want our island to be known for its landscapes; its great tourism offers; the work of César Manrique; it being a biosphere reserve; the implementation of renewable energies; and the tasting of organic products that have a seal of quality.

Talking about Lanzarote is talking about the environment, sustainable development, and an

absolute respect for nature, so I want people to know that we are an island that always values nature against developmentalism and wild urbanism and protects its beautiful landscapes.

**You mentioned the good work that has been done regarding the implementation of renewable energy.**

We really have great wind and sun here, so we have all the conditions for the development of renewable energy. The implementation of wind energy has been very important so far and we've already begun to see benefits from it. But we must continue working, not only with wind, but also in photovoltaics and the energy we can get from the sea which has great potential.

By the way, the fight against climate change has been declared a priority in the Canarian Parliament and also in the Lanzarote Council. We have created a joint strategy to be sustainable and self-sufficient. The results are good for now, but we must keep moving forward not to stagnate.

And to continue making headway, we will create the Climate Change Observatory and the Climate Change Agency to have the newest information regarding climate change. And from there the strategy has to be the implementation of clean energy, to wager on the blue economy and ensure that the territory is sustainable, viable, and ultimately, improve living conditions.

**Lanzarote, the Different Island is the slogan of the island's website. What makes Lanzarote different?**

It is a volcanic island with a lot of colors, great beaches and protected natural landscapes, but what makes it tremendously special and different is how peaceful it is. This serenity is the result of the coexistence and synergy of our art, culture and nature. Spending time, enjoying its great climate and cuisine, savoring Lanzarote is a unique experience and not comparable to any other destination! ●







## SMALL IN SIZE BIG IN IMPORTANCE



**MARCO ANTONIO  
GONZÁLEZ MESA**

Mayor, Puerto de la Cruz

### FACTS

**30,000**  
POPULATION

**8,739 km<sup>2</sup>**  
AREA OF THE CITY

**19<sup>th</sup>**  
CENTURY  
WHEN TOURISM  
STARTED

**1971**  
FIRST POOLS  
OF COSTA MARTIÁNEZ  
ARE INAUGURATED

#### What is the importance, both economical and social, of tourism in Puerto de la Cruz?

It's the driving force behind our economy. Puerto de la Cruz is one of the municipalities on the island of Tenerife with the smallest population, 30,000 people, but with almost a million overnight guests annually. The economic resources assigned to us are determined by the population and with them we must provide services, not only to our inhabitants, but also to all visitors. Hence the importance of tourism.

In addition, it is key that the tourist services we offer are of quality. For this, we need to fill jobs within the sector. This implies a series of things: that there is a very high percentage of the population that is dedicated to tourism, that we generate employment for the whole north of the island of Tenerife due to the diverse commercial and gastronomic offer linked to tourism, and that there is a clear commitment to training.

Quality employee training will allow us to offer excellent services with quality customer care, since it covers the most specific positions within the sectors.

#### Besides sun-and-beach tourism, what type of tourism does your city offer?

We are a mature and pioneer destination with great experience in tourism services. Our future Insular Center for Water Sports Technification is a clear commitment to sports tourism. However, we already attract part of this type of tourism thanks to our sports

pavilion and the safety in our municipality. We also have a wide gastronomic sector since there are many communities integrated into our society and that is something that is reflected in gastronomy. We have Indian, Thai, Senegalese, many types of cuisine, without forgetting the Canarian cuisine itself and the fact that anywhere in the port you can eat fish that has been caught in the surrounding area.

#### How do you deal with the disparity between residents of Puerto de La Cruz and the overnight guests welcomed to the city?

Mobility is a key aspect since we are a small municipality, just 9 square kilometers, but with many services. For this, we have approved a sustainable urban mobility plan (UMP), with which we intend to offer alternatives to heavy transport that are forced to pass through Puerto de la Cruz, recover certain streets, and make others pedestrian only. This makes local consumption and zero kilometer products gain special relevance, allowing us to reduce the transport that has to cross the municipality, among other aspects.

#### What are some of the big projects that you have pending?

My role as mayor has just recently begun; however, some steps have already been taken. Our new bus station has recently been completed. Obviously, it is a project that began during the last legislature, but there were still pending things such as talking about its functionality or adapting to the environment.

We will undertake the regeneration of the Martiáñez beach. It is the first beach you see when you arrive to the Port. It is a project that has been abandoned and we have managed to approve a draft of the agreement in the insular field. We are waiting on approval from the central government, but soon we will be able to say that there will be an investment of €8 million for the Martiáñez beach. At the other end of our city, we have the Garden Beach, where we will work to ensure its accessibility and inclusiveness. The Hotel Taoro is going to be reformed as well. In addition, we are currently approving the aforementioned Insular Center for Water Sports Technification, unique in the Canary Islands, which will be a very ambitious center.



Finally, the most interesting project is that of the port and its infrastructure. It is a very complicated project with many parties involved. Today we have planned meetings in the insular area with other administrations and the Council of Tenerife to resume the project. We are clear that the port has to allow passenger traffic and we are taking steps to see what possibilities there are to achieve that.

#### You mentioned that you would like to attract private investors. What steps are being taken in this direction?



We are trying to make the world see that Puerto de la Cruz has a future, recognizing our legacy and our experience and putting a value on it. In addition, although we are a small municipality, we have a great dynamic and varied cultural offer. Coexistence is another important aspect: our identity as a tourist destination means that we can integrate the tourist with the local population with ease.

If this wasn't enough, in all of the Canaries we have a series of interesting economic proposals for investors. On our end we are working to become an administration that is agile and efficient, making investing easy, thus the investor can count on the assurance that he will be given an answer to his project in the shortest possible time.

#### What type of tourists would you ideally like to attract to Puerto de La Cruz?

In today's world, the perception is that we are a destination for people of a certain age group. However, we believe we are a destination for tourists of every age, offering different experiences for different age groups, such as gastronomy, shopping, and nightlife. To ensure that we need to start changing the perception people have of the Puerto, we want to say that we are happy to have any type of tourist who wants to get to know the city, regardless of their age.

#### You've been in office for five months. What are you hoping to complete within your first year?

I want to show that we are capable of improving the efficiency of the city government administration. To do that, we aim to, in this first year, start to organize, modify, and restructure the administration so we can start offering jobs in the local administration and reduce unemployment. ●





**DELIA  
ESCOBAR LUIS**  
Deputy Mayor &  
Tourism Councilor  
La Orotava

## FACTS

**207.31 km<sup>2</sup>**  
TENERIFE'S LARGEST  
MUNICIPALITY

**78%**  
OF TEIDE NATIONAL  
PARK BELONGS TO LA  
OROTAVA

**1<sup>st</sup>**  
CITY IN THE CANARIES  
TO JOIN THE  
CITTASLOW NETWORK



### Which are the most significant economic sectors for the local economy?

For us, just like for most of the towns in the Canary Islands, tourism is one of the most important sources of income if not the most relevant. However, we are not like most of the towns here. We do have a few unique features that set us apart and help us attract different types of tourists.

We have a rich cultural heritage with a well-preserved historic center. We have beaches like our neighbors, but ours are volcanic and natural. We have protected areas along the Acentejo Coast. You can see beautiful banana trees along the lower altitudes and agricultural landscapes in the high altitudes, which are closely linked to the livestock and agriculture sectors where you can find the distinctive trellis cords for vineyards. The Corona Forestal and Teide National Parks offer exquisite views and are ideal for active and sports tourism. La Orotava is a town with a very rich and vibrant cultural life and gastronomy apart from its nature beauty. We offer more than just sun and beach.

### You mentioned that different types of tourists come here. Who are they?

Currently we have two types of tourists that come here. First, the tourist that arrives with the tour operators. These tourists spend very little time to explore and get to know the city and area. This type of tourist is not the most beneficial to us and it can even have a negative impact on our society. We are not really that interested in this type and that's why the end of Thomas

Cook doesn't really affect us as much as it affects other cities and towns on the island. The other type of tourist we get is the type we welcome. They come to explore the area and have unlimited time to get to know La Orotava. Our marketing and promotional efforts are aimed towards the this type of tourist.

According to our tourism office, the number of this second type of tourist has been stable, about 50,000 visit us annually. The majority of them are English, German and Spanish, although recently the numbers of both French and Italian tourists are increasing.

The average time these tourists spent on the island is seven to eight days. Usually, almost every tourist that comes to Tenerife, visits the Teide National Park, which is part of La Orotava. And since they are already here, we actively try to steer many of them to visit other parts of La Orotava too at least for a day.

### Has the tourism growth in La Orotava been sustainable?

Overall, I would say so. It is relatively easy to have a sustainable growth since we are a seasonal destination: the tourists come for the day and afterwards usually go back to where they are spending the nights which is in another place on the island.

We don't really have mass tourism and are overcrowded. First because we aim to attract a more high-end tourist and also because our tourism offers and products are very spread out in our geographical area. So our tourism has no negative impact in the local population.

La Orotava has become the first municipality in the Canary Islands, and tenth in Spain, to become part of the prestigious Cittaslow International Network and we are very proud to have received this international certificate for 'quality of life'. This certificate, which is reviewed annually, follows some guidelines such as air contamination, sound pollution, the relationship between the local population and the tourists, the development of local products, etc.

This doesn't mean that our work is done. There are still issues we need to address to be even more sustainable such as improve parking in our area and around the Teide to give an example.



### Can you expand on the diversity of your tourism offer?

We have a wide cultural offer throughout the whole year. We have the second largest auditorium on the island. The town hall has established that it can be used for free for many events and concerts. This allows us to have top-tier artists here for free; we don't have to make the investment to bring them, the private organizers of the events do that. So we have great performers without

overloading our budget. Furthermore, several local business and restaurants serving different types of food have flourished around the auditorium which makes us an excellent gastronomic destination and adds value to our tourism offer.

We also are a tourist destination for elite sports and athletes. We have a climate all year long that cannot be matched, and we have the Teide National Park which allows athletes to train 3,000 meters above sea level. We also have one of the most avant-garde sports complexes in the Canaries. We conduct competitions at local level, whether it's our annual night race or the numerous events that take place in the national parks and town hall.

Lastly, we are attracting convention (MICE) tourism. As an example, we recently hosted the International Tourism Convention where there were more than 70 experts from 20 different countries.

### Does the private sector participate in the town's development strategy?

Yes. This year we approved a strategic plan that was entrusted to two universities: the University of La Laguna and the European University at La Orotava. It has taken us a year and a half to approve it since we wanted all public and private entities with a stake in tourism to participate and have a say in it. Now we need to continue developing our tourism product. We know what we want to offer our tourists: easy access to a topnotch product and always quality before quantity.

### What makes La Orotava unique?

For me, special moments: sitting on the beach watching the sunset while sharing a great bottle of our local wine or admiring the sunrise from the top of the Teide Volcano. Going for long hikes in springtime or celebrating our local holiday in June. Our rich culinary and cultural heritage. These moments are what really makes La Orotava unique. ●





The geographical location of the Canary Islands is our biggest asset. We are a European archipelago that is located in Africa. It's a lot faster for us to travel to Senegal or Mauritania than to fly to Madrid. We are making an effort to position ourselves as a European hub and a steppingstone to West Africa.

**JOSÉ SEGURA CLAVELL**

General Director  
Casa África

The most promising sectors in the Canary Islands for investment are tourism and the energy sector with all the possible renewable resources we have to offer.

**RAFAÉL MÉNDEZ MARTÍN**

President, Destilerías Arehucas

One of our biggest problems on the islands is connectivity and the challenge it brings for import and exportation. It would help to see a stronger presence of well-established airlines.

**ZACARÍAS GALINDO**

President, Golf del Sur

A company's income statement, its revenue and costs are obviously important, but as important is to bring value to the local economy. This has to be done. The best way to do this is to generate high-quality jobs, developing the local community, and building economically stable companies. It is also essential for companies to stick to their ESG policies both within and around the company, by investing in new machinery, implementing new technologies, etc. Sustainability is not only related to the environment, but should also be a focus with regards to economic development.

**MARÍA VICTORIA LÓPEZ FUENTES**

President, Grupo Fedola

The banana industry is extremely important both socially and economically for the Canary Islands. In fact, we are the largest European producers of bananas and pride ourselves on supplying jobs to many people in rural areas. We are able to create opportunities where there are none. The banana has always been symbolic of the Canary Islands.

**SERGIO CÁCERES PÉREZ**

Director Asprocan (Plátano de Canarias)

PROEXCA is focused on attracting investments that will diversify the economy and alleviate its dependence on tourism. The Canary Islands are already a frontrunner in various sectors in which we have an impressive competitive advantage such as renewable energy, audiovisual & animation companies, high-tech & innovate industries with links to tourism, oil & gas, and astrophysics.

**PEDRO MONZÓN CABRERA**

Promotion & Foreign Network Director, Proexca (Canary Islands Economic Development Agency)

When we talk about tourism to investors, the Canary Islands are considered the optimal touristic destination to invest in. It is a year-round destination, as well as being politically, economically, and socially stable. The Canary Islands are a first world destination that offer a safe European island vacation.

**SERGIO ARENCIBIA**

President, Emicela

We have sun, wind and water in the Canary Islands and if we do things properly we could be using only renewable energy in a decade and be an example for other archipelagos to follow.

**RAIMUNDO BAROJA RIEU**

Vice President, Grupo DISA

The Canary islands have a special fiscal and economic climate due to its distance from the Iberian peninsula, divided territory and limited capacity to generate industrial development that can create high-quality jobs. Therefore we have attractive economic incentives to promote the film industry, along with highly skilled workers and unparalleled natural beauty.

**MARIO ROMERO MUR**

CEO, Grupo Mur

The importance of medical tourism in the Canary Islands is growing rapidly, given that the Canary Islands' health system has dramatically improved over the past few years. Along with that, the Canary Islands are seen as an attractive destination because it is sunny, warm all year, and offers a high quality of life.

**JORGE PETIT SÁNCHEZ**

CEO, HPS (Hospital Perpetuo Socorro de Las Palmas)







## MOISÉS JORGE NARANJO

General Manager  
Fuerteventura Tourist  
Board

## FACTS

2<sup>nd</sup>

LARGEST ISLAND  
IN THE CANARIES

1,894,946

TOURIST ARRIVALS  
IN 2019

### How is the Fuerteventura Island Council dealing with the issue of sustainability?

For Fuerteventura, the primary goal is growth in quality, keeping in mind the capacity of visitors our island can have. Currently, we're receiving about 3 million tourists annually, and our population is around 120,000 habitants. We are about at our capacity for tourists and don't want to grow more. Now, we want to increase the quality of the tourism offers, our supply and demand, and the use of renewable energies to serve both the population of the island as well as the tourists who will be visiting us in the future.

We need to change our tourism model to focus more on the interior and rural areas of the island. We are putting a lot of faith in ecotourism, as we already have the ecological areas and we can improve the conditions of these zones.

The economic model in Fuerteventura has been based mainly on tourism, but little by little we are looking for possibilities and opportunities that will allow Fuerteventura to grow but not depending so heavily on tourism alone.



### How do you assess the diversification of the economy of Fuerteventura? Any sector showing it has a lot of potential?

In recent years Fuerteventura has unexpectedly become a natural set of great American film productions. For example, "Exodus" by Ridley Scott was filmed here, also the latest installment of "Han Solo, Star Wars". "Wonder Woman 2" which comes out this year has been shot in Fuerteventura too. America has begun to see Fuerteventura as a possibility not only for tourists, but for cinema as well.

We are taking advantage, or trying to take advantage, of the geographical position of Fuerteventura. It's the easternmost island, closest to Africa, but its territory is within European jurisdiction. So why not, in the short term, turn Fuerteventura into an intercontinental platform between Africa, Europe and America.

### Where do your tourists come from?

We have air connectivity to 17 European countries, both regular and charter; this is where a lot of the tourism comes from.

### How is innovation affecting the island?

We currently have agreements with the two Canarian universities, the University of Las Palmas of Gran Canaria and the University of La Laguna, so that the academic knowledge is made available to us here in Fuerteventura. In the case of La Laguna it is with new technologies, taking advantage of any knowledge of innovation in new technologies and applying it to tourism.

On the other hand, with the intention of being an intercontinental platform, we have been celebrating a very important international forum for years: Africagua. It is an international conference on everything that has to do with the problem of water, the use of water, or even taking advantage of water as energy. There are different African countries (Morocco, Mauritania, The Gambia, and Senegal), who come to Fuerteventura to know what is the latest in terms of water use. Fuerteventura has been a pioneer amongst islands in using desalination plants-water treatment plants to remove salt from sea water and use it for human consumption. This has had very good results, to the point that some hotel chains have their own water treatment plants to be able to control the consumption that customers have in their hotels. ●

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