



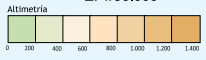
OFFICIAL TOURISM  
GUIDE

WHERE **LA GOMERA**  
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**La Gomera**  
The Canary Islands





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# La Gomera

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# The Land

## An island of startling landscapes



Taguluche

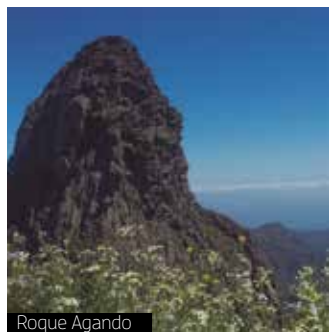


Las Rosas dam

La Gomera is a volcanic island dating back 12 million years. It is small and covers an area of 378 km<sup>2</sup>, its highest point is Alto de Garajonay at 1,487 metres. It is divided into six municipalities and has a population of 23,000 inhabitants. La Gomera is covered in abundant vegetation, ravines and valleys full of laurel forests. Leafy forests, startling ravines and gorges, a mild climate throughout the year, charming villages and a magic that is difficult to find anywhere else in the world. All these things make La Gomera a special place where the tourist can enjoy a unique experience.

Throughout its history the island has managed to conserve an indescribable landscape which has been sculptured by erosion for over two million years. La Gomera is dominated by the majestic laurels which are taken care of by the inhabitants with affection and dedication as recently certified by UNESCO when La Gomera was declared a World Biosphere Reserve.

The National Garajonay Park is the most valued jewel of La Gomera. For nature lovers, the best possible experience is to visit its interior and discover landscapes that are difficult to imagine. The woods of El Cedro will awaken the senses of those who visit and allow them to discover a unique area while in contact with nature. This natural park which has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site is a true relic from the Tertiary and a global reference point for the conservation of the laurel, this type of forest populated the Mediterranean basin for millions of years and the only remaining one is situated on the island. In total, 33% of the island's surface is protected and includes a total of 16 natural areas and places of scientific interest.



Roque Agando

*La Gomera is the perfect island to go trekking, it's clearly defined footpaths both along the coast and in the mountains provide really spectacular panoramas. There are also other open-air activities close to nature like dolphin and whale-watching which distinguish La Gomera, given that it is one of the places with the greatest whale biodiversity in the world. Thus both the sea and the land offer a wide range of possibilities to enjoy the island actively.*



Path in Tejiade



## History



San Sebastián in 1686

*The ancient Gomerans were big, strong, agile warriors, simply attired, idol worshippers. "In these islands there were valiant men of great strength, like Igalan, Aguahanahizan, Agualercher, Hauche, Amuhaici, Aguacoromos; and, having died in war, their names are remembered among their descendants as people worthy of being imitated and celebrated" notes Leonardo Torriani at the end of the XVI century.*



The Count's Tower

## The first inhabitants of La Gomera and the arrival of the Europeans

There are many theories concerning the origin of the name "Gomera". The most accepted is that the name Gomera is related to the Berber tribes of Gomara, in northern Morocco. Prior to the Spanish occupation, the island was populated by the ancient Gomeros or Gomeritas of North African origin. From these inhabitants various traditions have been maintained, among which the most remarkable is Gomeran whistling, an ancient form of communication which was declared in 2009 an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, another example is traditional pottery which is completely hand-made using ancient techniques without the use of a potter's wheel.

At the start of the first Castilian incursions, the island was divided into four cantons: Mulagua, Hipalán, Orone and Agana which were identified with the huge ravines of Hermigua, San Sebastián, Valle Gran Rey and Vallehermoso respectively.

When the colonisation of the island began it was ruled by the nobility and this went on until the beginning of the XIX century, diversely, from what was found on the islands of La Palma, Tenerife and Gran Canaria. The nobility of La Gomera was related to the Peraza Family. When Hernán Peraza "the youth" came into power as the owner of the island, a period of significant violence on the part of the Gomeran natives took place. So much so that in 1488 the ancient Gomerans rebelled against Hernán Peraza and killed him; the remaining Castilians took refuge in the Torre del Conde (The Count's Tower), until Pedro de Vera, the conqueror from Gran Canaria managed to quell the revolt with enormous cruelty. This episode marked the submission of the island to the Castilians.

## La Gomera : "Columbus departed from here", Isla Colombina

In 1492 La Gomera was the scene of an event that passed into the annals of human history: The departure from San Sebastián by Admiral Christopher Columbus on his voyage to discover the New World precisely on the 6th of September 1492. The island's capital was the chosen place for Columbus to set sail from, on the voyage which led to the discovery of America. Thus, for this important reason, La Gomera is known as the "Isla Colombina". Columbus was not the only one to use the route of

San Sebastián, other famous navigators also used the island's capital as a stop-off on their voyages to the New World: Francisco Pizarro, Vasco Núñez de Balboa, Hernán Cortés and others.

## The modern age: The power of the nobility and pirates



Aguada well

During the XVI century the nobility introduced sugar cane plantations in the main valleys of the island in order to export the "sweet liquid" to the European markets, this in turn brought about the arrival of artistic pieces from the Netherlands who were the main importers of the "sweet liquid".

La Gomera is an island that throughout history has suffered many attacks from pirates from Jean de Capdeville in 1571 to the Berbers in 1617. Numerous Gomerans died during these cruel attacks, but without doubt the attack by the English pirate Charles Windham in 1743 marked a milestone in history. In order to remember this important event a fresco was

painted in the chapel of Pilar in the Church of the Assumption in San Sebastián representing the attack on the capital.

## The modern era: The problem of communication and emigration

The end of the nobility rule at the start of the XIX century saw the beginning of the modern era on the island. Up until well into the end of the last century the island communicated through a network of routes and pathways in its interior (many of them where in a bad state) due to its complicated orographic structure characterised by enormous ravines and large mountains and this was one of the main tasks that the island faced.

All this meant that La Gomera was behind with respect to the industrial advances of the modern age. In order to solve this problem, they initially built a series of small jetties during the XIX century. But it was at the start of the XX century, with the expansion of the cultivation of bananas that they erected, on the coasts of the villages of the north, one of the most architecturally important industrial buildings: the davit crane. These worked using a large crane which had been mounted on to concrete pillars. The subsequent building of a network of roads and the completion of San Sebastián's port made the davit cranes fall into disuse. La Gomera took a big step towards economic progress overcoming the inconveniences which made communication with the outside difficult.

Moreover, the various preserving factories that opened in the south of the island are worthy of note, like La Rajita, La Cantera and Santa Rosalía, the latter in Playa de Santiago and they were witness to a rich past, where the processed product, made with mackerel eggs marinated in oil was known as "Gomeroan caviar".

Another important landmark in the improvement of communications took place in 1974 when the first regular ferry passenger service between San Sebastián de La Gomera and Los Cristianos (Tenerife) was established by the Fred Olsen Company.



Old photograph of the capital

## Its traditions



*From way back in time, singing accompanied by chácaras (a type of large castanet) and drums has always been a form of expression for the Gomerans. The dance of the drum constitutes an authentic sign of identity and a chronicle of birth, life and death.*

### The Dance of the Drum

The island of La Gomera has numerous and varied traditions many of which are ancestral. The Dance of the Drum is a dance and a song, lost in time and unique to the Hispanic world both for its archaic mixture of songs about romances (narrative poetry) and facing line dances, music and choreography belonging to the islands.

The dance is an agitated dance to the rhythm of drums and chácaras (empty castanet-like percussion instruments, generally made from mulberry tree wood which are tied to each hand and produce a very particular sound) in time to a choir repeating a phrase or "pie de romance", after each solo.

The typical costumes of La Gomera, the woman's consists of a white petticoat with a backstitched red band on the frill, a large red skirt and over this another blue wool one with yellow daisies on the edges. The order in which the skirts are worn may vary depending on the area of the island. On the top, a white blouse with a black waistcoat and other accessories like the yellow head-scarf and the straw-like hat with blue ribbon and black boots. The men wear black three-quarter length trousers, a white shirt, a black waistcoat, a red sash, socks and canvas shoes.



### La Fiesta del Ramo (a type of bouquet)

This type of bouquet is made from a cut of sweet cane decorated with flowers, fruit and sweets which heads the procession in honour of a saint. It is traditionally associated with an offering to the earth through the products that it provides. The Branch evokes fertility and abundance so that exquisite, healthy fruit, flowers and vegetables are harvested. The significance of the branch comprises numerous traditions and rituals related to the earth and the community. This is a typical local festival of Arure village in the Valle Gran Rey municipality.





## Gomera Whistling

Gomera Whistling or Silbo Gomero is a unique language used by the islanders over the centuries in order to communicate over large distances, from one end of the island to the other; it is very useful in a land divided by large ravines and enormous slopes. It is believed that whistling began with the first inhabitants of La Gomera, the indigenous people. In the XVI century, during the Castilian occupation of the island, the Gomerans adapted the whistle to the Castilian language. At the beginning of the XXI century, in order to avoid the disappearance of this particular language due to improvements in communications and particularly the disappearance of shepherding which was the main source of employment, the Government of the Canary Islands introduced it as a subject in schools and declared Gomera Whistling as a Canarian ethno-graphic heritage in 1999.

The Gomera whistling is not a series of pre-established codes used to express limited content but an articulated, concise non-conventional language which makes the exchange of an unlimited range of messages possible through the reproduction of characteristic sounds of a spoken language through whistles.

The whistled language of La Gomera is one of the most original and representative manifestations of the Canary Island Archipelago and the most enduring tradition that links us to the pre-Hispanic past of these islands. The Government of the Canaries has put legislation into place to salvage and revitalize Gomera whistling. These laws – the only ones in the world that protect an oral Intangible Heritage – make the teaching of the whistling language from La Gomera in primary and secondary education mandatory in all the island's schools. This innovative measure guarantees the survival of Gomera whistling to the next generations.

*On the 30th of September 2009 Gomera Whistling was inscribed in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Today not only does it survive with its people but with the monument erected next to the Igualero look-out point where this particular communication skill is remembered.*



## Gomera pottery

Popular Canarian pottery inherited from the natives of the islands has one of the most singular and authentic examples in El Cercado in the Vallehermoso municipality. In this locality of La Gomera close to the town and the Fortaleza de Chipude they have maintained the ancient procedures and elaboration techniques to make pottery without the assistance of a potter's





wheel. These potters represent the last traces for the production of pottery on the Island: The workshops maintain a link with their ancestors and keep the tradition of clay alive. It has disappeared in the other potteries of the archipelago.

The pottery is made from clay, sand and red ochre, all modest local materials. The production process is relatively simple but it does require time and dedication. Plates, water jugs and custom-made pots are just some of the more popular receptacles to be found. Once the object has been shaped, it is left to dry and then placed in a wood oven for firing. The colour of the receptacles is a light brown which is obtained from the red ochre; the other islands make their pottery in dark brown or black.

## Crafts



In addition to the most typical examples, we can also find other activities such as crafts, embroidery, crochet, lace, fur, leather, rope, silk, wool, etc. Handicraft activities are concentrated in the northern region of the island of La Gomera, in Vallehermoso municipality which has the largest number of artisans.

Some of the more characteristic elements of crafts should be highlighted, such as the loom, which still survives, using the traditional methods for the elaboration of blankets or rugs in Tamargada, Arure or Hermigua; the use of the palm and banana trees are adopted to make useful objects such as bags, hats and baskets or the use of palm leaves, reeds, rattan or cane. Wood is used for the manufacture of traditional instruments like the *chácaras* (type of large castanet) or *morteras* (a type of cup) they are made from trees from the island such as a type of laurel, briarwood or mulberry bush.



## Culture

### Pedro García Cabrera



Born in Vallehermoso, Pedro García Cabrera heard his mother and aunts playing the guitar and singing traditional couplets in his native village since he was a child and this no doubt influenced his tendency towards neo-populist poetry. At the age of seven he moved to Seville, where his father who was a teacher found work. However, two years later he returned with his family to Santa Cruz de Tenerife, where he studied for his bachelors degree. In La Laguna he studied to become a teacher and in 1922 he began his literary activities with articles in

magazines and local periodicals.

Pedro García Cabrera, represents one of the fundamental voices of Canarian poetry of all time. His first book *Líquenes* appeared in 1928. García Cabrera appeared as co-founder of *Cartones* and *Gaceta de Arte*, two of the main avant-garde Canarian magazines. His text, *Los senos de la tinta* (1934) led to his involvement with the surrealist movement. After the military coup in 1936, García Cabrera was imprisoned and sent to Africa however his poetic and literary works continued to grow and were published again in the fifties. In his last poetry books he clearly opts for social comment and solidarity. García Cabrera died in 1981 in Santa Cruz de Tenerife and was recognised as a classic author of Canarian literature.

### Pedro Bethencourt Padilla

The poet Pedro Bethencourt Padilla was born in Agulo, in 1894. He studied commerce in Tenerife although he abandoned it to graduate. At this early stage he already received several prizes for poetry contests. He travelled to many places including Madrid, France, Switzerland and Havana. Upon his return to Spain he wrote two interesting works entitled *Salterio* (1920), which he presented at a private cultural institution in Madrid with illustrations by José Aguiar, and *Vida plena* (1934). During these years he shared many literary social gatherings with other writers such as Unamuno, Ortega and Gasset or Ramón Gómez de la Serna. Once again in Havana he wrote his last work *La piedra viva*. As well as being a poet he was also a guitarist and he contributed to the founding of the school of classical guitar in Havana, Cuba. He died in Madrid in 1985.



### José Aguiar

José Aguiar García, a celebrated painter from Agulo was born in Vueltas de Santa Clara (Cuba), in 1895 although he returned a year later to La Gomera and later took a graduate course at La Laguna (Tenerife). In 1914 he moved to Madrid in order to study law, a career that he later abandoned to begin studying art in 1916 at the Fine Arts school in San Fernando. Without breaking his ties with the Canaries, Madrid became his habitual residence in 1924, apart from his numerous trips and a period he spent in Seville when in 1933 he gained a place as an art teacher at the School



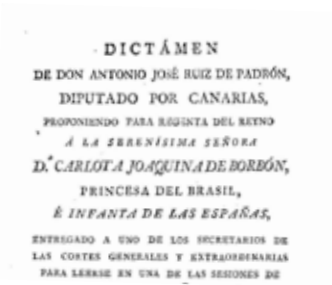


of Art and Trades of Seville. He finally established his art studio in Pozuelo de Alarcón (Madrid) in 1947.

Within figures with some irregularities which bind him to the Spanish expressionist tradition, his works adhered to formal classicism, regional painting typical of the national and institutional post-war style and social realism (wall painting) of which he was a great master. He also cultivated his landscape and portrait skills.

### Antonio José Ruiz de Padrón

Antonio José Ruiz de Padrón was born in San Sebastián de La Gomera in 1757 he was a priest with liberal ideas and became one of the most illustrious personalities ever born on the island. He had an adventurous life, while travelling to Havana his boat was caught up in a storm and instead took him to the United States where he met Benjamin Franklin and George Washington. However, it is doubtlessly his participation in the Courts of Cadiz in 1812 that got him into the history books. It was this Gomeran who made a speech asking for the abolition of The Tribunal of the Holy Office of the Inquisition.



Fruits of the earth, painting by José Aguiar

## Gastronomy

Gomera gastronomy is as simple as it is special, as forceful as it is delicate. It's like a crossing point between American and European culture. You can get an extremely interesting mix of products from both continents and it is this that contributes to the development of an exquisite cuisine. These days the island continues to conserve many special flavours maintained with pride by its inhabitants.



### Water cress soup

Soups are another characteristic of the island's culinary culture. Most of the soups are vegetable based and water cress soup is very typical, it is served in a special bowl made of pine wood. The slightly spicy-hot taste of these vegetable leaves, gives a strong personality to the dish; it is also easy to come across soups made with yam a tropical fruit commonly cultivated on the islands.



As well as broths and soups, meat from La Gomera is reputed, goat and rabbit are real culinary specialties of the island; Fish dishes also feature and are a symbol of the south of the island where they are a real speciality.

### Gomera cheeses

Cheese from La Gomera is made with raw goats' milk and usually mixed with sheep's milk.

Preferably, it should be eaten when it's hardened and has a fresh, slightly piquant flavour; its aroma clearly evokes the smoking process using rockrose, briarwood and mulberry. The richness of the island's vegetation, much of it endemic, is responsible for the variety of aromas and tastes of Gomera cheeses.



### El almogrote

Almogrote is a paté or dip made from a typical cheese from La Gomera, it is very tasty and slightly hot. To make it you need to finely grate very mature cheese (particularly hard cheese from La Gomera) and mix it with garlic and olive oil to your taste. Everything is focused on getting the right dense consistency (depending on the amount of oil used).





## El guarapo (sweet palm juice) and palm syrup

Guarapo in La Gomera is what they call the sweet juice extracted from the Canary date palm (*Phoenix canariensis* Hort. Ex Chab.); from this you can make both the palm honey and the sweet drink of the same name, among others. Guarapo is a mix of crude and processed sap which comes from the heart of the Canary palm tree and has a very sweet and distinctive flavour. It is both refreshing and energizing (with a high mineral content) and very delicious drink.

The famous palm honey, made exclusively from the sap or guarapo of the Canary palm tree is queen in the Gomeran kitchen, being used to prevent illness as part of Canary natural medicine and to make desserts and cocktails or accompany specific dishes.



## Wines from La Gomera

The agricultural policy of the Autonomous Government, the work of local government as well as the effort and dedication of wine-makers and wine cellars has promoted the rebirth of wine through the Regulating Committee "Vinos de La Gomera" which controls and assesses the quality of wine. The creation of new local cellars, the appropriate equipment from the existing cellars and technical advice from specialists on how to look after wine crops has made the production of first class quality wines possible.

The most common wines on the island are white wines, straw yellow in colour with varied intense aromas that are pleasing to the palate. Possibly the Forastera (a Spanish wine grape variety) is what differentiates and gives character to these wines. They are exceptional, full bodied wines with a very particular bouquet. The reds have a good ruby colour, fruity aromas and are smooth and well-balanced.



## Rich confectionery from La Gomera

Confectionery from La Gomera is also varied, outstanding sponges and almond biscuits, butter-based and bakers' products, milk-based buns and cakes, biscuits and roasted milk. The vilana cake named after the receptacle used to bake it in is a traditional Christmas cake. Gofio and palm honey balls, almost always made with spicy almonds constitute a tasty variation of gofio and bees' honey.

The typical curd cheese cake is made with fresh cheese, eggs, flour, sugar and anisette seeds. It is eaten thinly sliced with palm honey. Baked milk is another of the most traditional Gomeran desserts.





# The capital, San Sebastián de La Gomera



San Sebastián de La Gomera is the island's capital and corresponds to the ancient canton of Hupalán, it has a population of approximately nine thousand inhabitants. San Sebastián borders the municipality of Hermigua to the north and Alajeró in the south-west. The view from the bay shows a valley set into the mountains. It is circumscribed by its historical centre which has substantially maintained its original shape with four large blocks of houses.

## History

The origins of San Sebastián date back to 1440 decade, when Hernán Peraza "El Viejo" (the elder) took formal possession of the land which nowadays occupies the village which had been visited previously by other conquerors. Peraza named the capital San Sebastián probably because of the Castilians' devotion to this saint. Among the first buildings to be erected in this period were: Torre del Conde, the church of the Assumption or chapel of San Sebastián. Due to erosion over time, these buildings have been refurbished by local institutions and form an important combination of heritage and art.

The "Villa" as it was known to its inhabitants suffered countless pirate attacks that reduced it to ruins on numerous occasions, each time it successfully recovered from such circumstances.

The current economy of the municipality is mainly due to being the capital and the island's principal port and the consequent development of the public administration and services, particularly transport, commerce and tourism.

The village has managed to balance the traditional architecture – around the time of Columbus – with the modern buildings such as the National Tourist Hotel "Conde de La Gomera",



*Christopher Columbus departed from San Sebastián for the New World (America) on the 6th of September 1492 supplied with food, water and wood, hence the name the "Isla Colombina".*



the Island Government building or Island Auditorium "Infanta Cristina".

A mention must be given to the importance of the avenue of Los Descubridores and the Fred Olsen promenade as an open-air recreational area next to the marina and the harbour which cannot be forgotten given the importance the sea has in San Sebastián's passed and recent history.

## Places of interest

A must for any tourist visiting San Sebastián is to visit the monuments from the period of Columbus – Monumentos Colombinos – refers to buildings that relate to Christopher Columbus or the period in which the Admiral visited the capital. Among these buildings we can note the Torre del Conde, the Church of the Assumption, the chapel of San Sebastián and the Casa de la Aguada or Customs House.



La Torre del Conde (The Count's Tower) is the only existing medieval military fort in the archipelago as well as being the oldest building still standing since the conquest period. The Gothic style tower was built during the Castilian occupation, it is characterised for its defensive tower and used as a refuge in order to avoid attack from within or from the sea. The tower is 15 metres in height and adheres to late medieval standards of construction.



The church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción (Our Lady of the Assumption) was erected during the time of Hernán Peraza "El Viejo" (the elder) around the middle of the XV century. When the Admiral Christopher Columbus passed through the island in 1492 they were building the church's Gothic facade. The building of this new construction also suffered from the effects of the pirates' attacks. So, in 1619 only the walls remained. It is a true museum of sacred art with objects coming from Flanders, mainland Spain and America.

The San Sebastián chapel is the first religious temple built in the capital dedicated to the martyr after which he was declared as the patron saint of the municipality. The capitals made by Portuguese stone-carvers at the beginning of the XVI century are remarkable.

La Casa de la Aguada – The Customs House originally belonged to the island's nobility. The ancient well where Admiral Christopher Columbus took provision of water for his voyage to the New World is still standing and tradition says that he baptised America with the water from this well. Today it is an exhibition centre providing information on the historic building and its commercial use as a customs house.

Another important place of note is the Archaeological Museum, situated in the noble house of the XVIII century. Here you can find out about the life-style of the island's indigeneous inhabitants, their religion and rituals. You can also see a selection of utensils found during several excavations. On the opposite side of the street, in front of the church of the Assumption, you will find the Island's Archives, which safe-keeps the written historical memory of La Gomera, in a traditional Arabic style house with its remarkable latticework balcony.

One of the main tourist attractions on the island is without a doubt the beaches. The municipality's coast encompasses the east, south and south-east of the island. There are many different beaches to be found in this area, the most note-worthy is La Cueva which is made up of volcanic sand and rock and situated near the Torch monument (built in commemoration of the 1968 Olympics) and the harbour. This beach is sheltered by an artificial reef which keeps the waters calm for bathers. The San Sebastián beach has numerous bars, restaurants, a parking area and a promenade. Avalos beach is gifted with turquoise-green water and gets its name from the ravine close by. El Cabrito is a small



San Sebastián Beach



Avalos Beach

and very quiet beach, it is only accessible via a foot-path or via the sea just like the small cove called La Guancha. Another of the renowned beaches is Chinguarime it is the farthest from the centre of San Sebastián in the south of the island and it is a very peaceful beach and hardly any people, a visit is worthwhile for its clean and transparent waters.



Los Roques natural monument

The protected areas of San Sebastián de La Gomera, are the Benchijigua Comprehensive Natural Reserve which is situated in the crater of the same name in the middle of the island. You can find many protected, endemic species like the chahorra and tajinaste. The natural monument los Roques can be found inside the National Garajonay Park and is made up of Ojila, Agando, Zarcita and Carmona which all testify to volcanic disruption excavated by erosion. The Natural Monument of the El Cabrito ravine is situated in the south of the island in this area you can find the Roque del Sombrero and la Playa El Cabrito.

Lastly we must mention the Majona Natural Park: cliffs, hillside slopes and ravines like the Majona and the Juel as well as some natural springs can be found in this area.



Benchijigua comprehensive reserve



*The Special Natural Reserve of Puntallana, is situated to the north of San Sebastián and in its interior there are various endemic vegetables. In the surrounding area you will find the Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe) chapel, another patron of the island. The chapel was built in the XVI century with many native relics such as engravings, necropolis and concheros (made of shells).*



## Paths

### The paths of San Sebastián de La Gomera

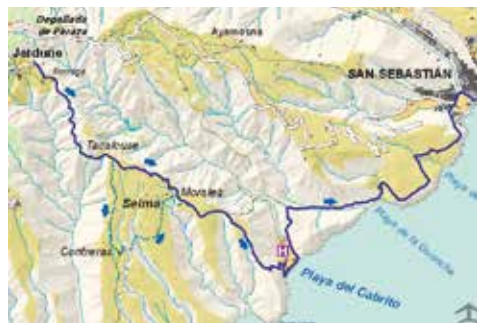


This walk is 3Km., long and takes an hour and a half and is moderate in difficulty. This path starts at the GM-2 road at the same altitude as Los Roques on the border of the Garajonay National Park until you reach the well-known house of El Manco. The walk continues as far as the La Laja neighbourhood and crosses several landscapes passing through Canarian pine wood forests and fayal-brezal (tree

heath) which is currently being recovered.

When we reach El Manco house we can take a rest and see a spectacular view of the rocks of Agando, Ojila, Carmona and Zarcita which all originated from ancient dense lava emissions which then solidified. Descending the zigzagging pathway we reach the edge of the ravines channel where we will see the La Laja hamlet. Once we are in this picturesque valley we can easily go along the road to San Sebastián or go up to the Peraza shortcut to the path that goes through the small chapel of San Isidro.

### From Jerduñe to San Sebastián de La Gomera



This pathway is one of the busiest slopes on the south of the island. It is 16Km., in distance and takes 7 hours to walk, it is moderately difficult. Leaving Jerduñe (from road GM-3) gradually descending until you reach the houses in La Berruga sheltered by the rock of the same name.

The landscapes are startling. Below we can admire the Chinguarime ravine and if we turn around, behind us we can see Jerduñe, Vegaipala and at the bottom Punta de la Sabina. Continuing the walk over a well-maintained stone path you reach the cave-houses in Tacalcuse, one of the most spectacular places on La Gomera. There is a turning in the road here which takes you to Seima or Contreras where we take the road which ends in Playa de Santiago. The other road goes as far as Morales and then to San Sebastián.

Coming from the area of Morales we come across a group of abandoned houses. From here we can go down to El Cabrito, a true oasis at the mouth of the ravine as well as being a natural protected area. Although the beach is on private land, it is for public use and you can get water at the Reception of the accommodation site seeing as there are no shops or restaurants. The path

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continues to La Guancha beach, the landscape changes here and the path, maybe due to tiredness, gets a little more difficult. Nevertheless, everything changes when you get to the beach, an ideal place to leave the countryside of San Sebastián behind you and take advantage of an unspoilt area. Lastly we go up to the El Cristo lookout point where our tour ends.

### Enchereda, a magic corner of San Sebastián



Enchereda is situated in the northern part of the San Sebastián municipality. Its geography is characterised by deep ravines shaped by millions of years of erosion, the result is an astonishing landscape, a real paradise for hikers who cross it. This territory is protected as is the Majona National Park which is made up of small colonies of – sweet tabaiba (*euphorbia bravoana*) a shrub in danger of extinction. This trek lasts about three hours and is 13 Km., there and back and is of moderate difficulty.

The path starts in Las Casetas on the GM-I road, right in front of the tunnels going towards Hermigua. The walk begins with a zigzagging ascent along the mountain. Reaching the top we go into the north-east slope and the landscape changes, becoming greener. Here there are a series of small pine forests which have been replanted. This is a perfect point to spot the spectacular San Sebastián ravine with its reservoirs, the Roque de Agand at the top of the ravine and the houses of the capital at its bottom. On the other side we can contemplate the Majona ravine with deep gorges and the island of Tenerife with the ever vigilant Mount Teide.

Continuing our walk for a few minutes we will reach the dirt track of Las Casetas which we need to follow, this is the road we left at the beginning of our walk. Lastly we reach the hamlet of Enchereda, an important pasture area belonging to the San Sebastián municipality where the forests of the mountain peaks are outlined against the arid zones of lower part of the Majona ravine. A little after leaving the hamlet the road enters an area of pine forest, half an hour later we will reach the last part of our tour; the houses of El Helechal, the most northern part of San Sebastián. Suddenly we can hear the singing of birds and sometimes the sound of the wind in the middle of the profound silence of these rural Gomeran places. We can also see species such as the giant cacti, maidenhair, etc., and as a grand finale the Majona ravine with its enormous vertical slopes. When reaching El Helechal we can either continue the walk as far as Hermigua or take the road back from where we came.



# Hermigua, a valley full of charm



San Pedro Convent

Hermigua is situated in the north-east of the island of La Gomera and it is the first village the traveller will come to, on leaving the capital San Sebastián and going to the north of the island by GM-I road. Hermigua is 39.67 km<sup>2</sup> in size with a population of over 2,000 inhabitants.

## History

The municipality of Hermigua was set up with Agulo, the original territory of Mulagua. After the Castilian occupation, given the area's suitable conditions for the cultivation of sugar cane and its proximity to the capital it attracted the interests of the island's nobility and thus it was colonised very early on. The first settlements were built in the Valle Alto together with the church of Santo Domingo and the Dominican monastery of San Pedro the Apostle which was founded in 1611. The creation of the hub in Valle Bajo took place a little later and rose up around the church of Nuestra Señora de La Encarnación in the XVII century. In 1812, it was established as a council (it started working as such in 1837) with the end of the nobility rule that had prevailed on the island.

Hermigua and San Sebastián de La Gomera could only be reached on horseback. Due to these difficulties, a public limited company La Union decided to build a davit crane which solved the communication problems which the village suffered due to the rough sea in the north of the island. The idea was an extraordinary engineering feat, to construct a large crane mounted on to concrete pillars. This crane was used to import and export any type of merchandise as well as embarking and disembarking passengers.



Old photograph of the davit crane in Herimigua



The davit crane in Hermigua, situated in a place known as El Peñón was built in 1907. After numerous set-backs, the green light was given for a modern and functional infrastructure which in turn led to the transport of the agricultural produce from the valley. In the middle of the XX century the jetties fell into disuse, however, diversely from those in Vallehermoso and Agulo the davit crane was not destroyed by the elements, but by the changes in the island's socio-economic reality similar to those taking place worldwide. Activity in this area diminished so much that the inhabitants saw emigration as the only means of survival. Today four huge concrete pillars and the remains of the old davit crane are embedded in a pretty spot on the coast of Hermigua.

## Places of interest

Some of the places of interest in the municipality are: The church of Santo Domingo de Guzmán, the ancient Dominican monastery of Hermigua, the church of the Encarnación and the Ethno-graphic museum. The hamlets of El Cedro and Los Aceviños are both located on the border of the Garajonay National Park and inside the forest of the same name. The forest, located in the same municipality is characterised by the presence of the laurel trees.

Among the attractions in Hermigua are: the El Cedro forest with its continuous stream of transparent water making the impressive massifs of San Pedro fertile, according to popular legend these massifs were lovers fused in an embrace then lightning turned them into stone and separated them. The municipality also has an interesting natural pool as well as two beaches: Santa Catalina and La Caleta which is ideal for swimming and is well-equipped with showers and toilets.

Hermigua was renowned in the previous century as "having the best climate in the world" according to a study carried out by English, Belgium and German meteorologists.

Another place of natural interest to visit is the El Chorro waterfall. Inside the old davit crane in Hermigua we can visit a natural pool which is without a doubt one of the most singular aspects of the Hermigua village. In and around the pool you can enjoy an unforgettable swim. The pool's clear waters are perfect for diving and fishing, however care



*The Garajonay National Park stands out as a place of natural interest to visit. The Park was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986 and part of it is located in the municipality.*



should be taken because the natural pool is affected by strong sea currents.

Firstly from a cultural perspective we note the church of Santo Domingo de Guzmán from the XVII century, which hosts baroque alter pieces, Arabic style wood panelling and first class artistic imagery. Secondly the church of La Encarnación, built in a neo-gothic style during the first decades of the XX century. It has a wood and linen sculpture of its patron by Fernando Estévez. Furthermore, a visit to the Ethno-graphic museum situated in this

municipality and precisely in Las Hoyetas is worthwhile to get an idea on what life was like in La Gomera until some decades ago.

## Paths

### Circular route: From Hermigua to El Cedro via San Juan



This is without doubt one of the most transited walking routes of La Gomera. This path is 12 km. long and takes 8 hours, it is moderate to difficult walk.

The walk starts on the main GM-I road in the El Convento neighbourhood, where the PR LG 3 walk starts. Via a staircase we reach the secondary road which will take us to the bottom of the so-called Roques de San Pedro or Roque Chico and Roque Grande.

We have to take a turn to the left, following a sign which indicates El Cedro – Garajonay, going into the Monforte ravine where water always flows. Going along the paved path we reach the beautiful reservoir called Presa de Los Tiles.



*The Bosque del Cedro (Cedro forest) is a wet laurel forest situated at the highest point of the municipality, where the main ravine of the municipality begins. This forest constitutes a primordial set of woods of the Garajonay National Park. It also has a stream of the same name where water flows all year round (which is unusual in the Canaries). Furthermore, it is considered as one of the oldest forests in the archipelago.*



From this point the trekker can see the enormous El Chorro waterfall which is 175 metres high. Then over a distance of 3.9 km starts an ascending incline of 550 metres until you reach El Cedro. The El Cedro hamlet is situated on the border of the Garajonay National Park in the upper part of the municipality of Hermigua. If you wish you can stay in this hamlet at one of the lovely rural accommodations and soak up the nature this place offers.

Once we reach this centre, we have to follow the signs until Las Mimbreras – Garajonay, a little further on we will come to a recreational area situated in the adjacent chapel of Nuestra Señora de Lourdes (Our Lady of Lourdes). The path runs next to a small stream and we find ourselves immersed in laurel trees until we reach the previously mentioned chapel.

Once we reach Las Mimbreras, we take the route signalling Hermigua for the Camino de San Juan (the San Juan walk). The second part of this walk is 6.2 km long. We then take a dirt track which we have to follow on the right, observing the turning at Los Aceviños. The vegetation is already changing at this point, leaving the laurel behind us and coming to the fayal-brezal. From various points we have excellent views of the Hermigua valley with Monte Teide in the background.

After a few kilometers, we will have to take another turn on the right with a steep descent along a serpentine path until the San Juan chapel. Once we leave the dirt track also known as the priest's track, the walk continues to descend until we reach the main GM-I road next to the Ethno-graphic museum – well worth a visit. Turning right again and continuing for a kilometer we reach the departure point.

## From La Caleta to Muelle de Lorenzo



This path runs along the east coast of Hermigua and is 5km in distance (there and back), the estimated time to cover it is two hours and it is easy-moderate in difficulty. This walk takes us to the old harbour of Lorenzo, built at the start of the XX century by the English company Fyffes Limited so as to

produce tomatoes and bananas from the Hermigua valley.



*Caleta has become a mandatory place to visit with its black sand beach, bar, recreational area, the San Juan chapel and breath-taking views of the Teide and Tenerife.*

The path starts at the road which leads to the beautiful Playa de La Caleta, very near to this we will find an information panel showing us the route with an illustrative map. The walk to the Muelle de Lorenzo has recently been restructured and offers all possible comforts. After a small incline we reach a look-out point where we can enjoy a spectacular view of the Playa de la Caleta. This beach was used for centuries for the export of sugar from the plantations of the Hermigua valley. La

Following our path until we reach the hamlet of Palmar where we start a slight descent as far as Las Salinas ravine, from here we start an ascent until we get to where the path runs along the same wild rural cliff. The view changes spectacularly once we reach the Punta de Lorenzo, we will see a beautiful coast where the cliffs of the north coast precipitate into the sea. In the distance, we will spot the outskirts of Taguluche and the coast of Tejigüel.

A little after, we will see the ruins of a building: The old house where the arrival and departure of goods loaded and unloaded on the Muelle de Lorenzo were registered. A moderate descent starts a little further on towards the Muelle de Lorenzo, a place nestled in one of the most extraordinarily beautiful places on this coast. We will be surrounded by unadulterated nature where we can take a rest by the sea and then our return journey will take us back along the same path.



## Agulo: A balcony over the Atlantic



*Today Agulo is a charming municipality that has clearly opted for rural tourism and nature, so this village offers the visitor the chance to enjoy some extraordinary landscapes in a few square kilometers.*

Agulo is known as the “bombon of La Gomera” for its whitewashed houses, the lights that run along its small cobbled streets and its pretty views towards Mount Teide. Agulo is the second village we will come across along our route of the north of La Gomera.

### History

Among the four cantons which made up La Gomera in the pre-Hispanic period, Agulo together with Hermigua belonged to the Mulagua canton. The village of Agulo was founded on the 27th of September 1607 and in 1680 its various neighbourhoods were formed: casas de (houses of) Cabo, casas de La Montañeta and casas de Lepe. The municipality's border was originally under the jurisdiction of Hermigua until 1739.

In the XIX century with the arrival of the liberal period, this village with its own council became the smallest municipality of La Gomera. Once the wine-making crisis had been overcome in the XIX, the expansion of the cultivation of bananas at the end of the century commenced. To this end the Sociedad El Patriorismo was set up in order to undertake the construction of the davit crane of Agulo (inaugurated in April 1908) and to aid the transport of bananas. Those were years in which the municipality's economy was at its peak, making it one of the most prosperous of the island. Agulo was one of the first villages to have drinking water, electricity, telephone lines etc. The Spanish civil war and subsequent dictatorship triggered a period of emigration in the history of this municipality leading to its economic decline and symbolized by the destruction of the davit crane in 1954 by a sea storm.



## Places of interest

Within the municipality of Agulo we can clearly distinguish two different zones: the low area, made up of Agulo and Lepe and the high area which is integrated with the neighbourhoods of Las Rosas and La Palmita. The historic centre is divided into three population hubs called Las Casas, La Montañeta and El Charco. The cobbled streets and the antique buildings give a special look to this village.

Even though Agulo is the smallest municipality of La Gomera, it has a good quantity of attractions that make it one of the mandatory places to visit for everyone coming to the island. Its inhabitants say that their small village is 'the best balcony with a sea view in the Canaries', particularly true, during the very clear days of the winter. Above the roofs stretches the blue Atlantic, its horizon broken when Mount Teide, in Tenerife, appears silhouetted on the horizon. However, it is enough to look behind to see the green precipices that separate the village from the top of the islands plateau.

From the end of the XVIII century and above all at the beginning of the XIX, a phase of renewal and urban growth took place, increasing economic improvement based on agricultural commerce and the ascent of the island's middle class, who started to see homes as something that dignified their privileged position in society. Houses were built with two floors, larger rooms, more windows, more elaborate and intricate doors and windows for the carpenters to make, forged iron balconies, substantially the architecture of the historic centre of Agulo took on remarkable dignity compared to the previous era.

Another strong point of the municipality is behind the historic centre. Despite Agulo being small it is an enclave of contrasts.

Lepe is another of Agulo's pretty neighbourhoods, the small coastal enclave of the village. A coast with callaos (kind of pebble beaches), beautiful views towards the sea and a lovely view of Tenerife, these are the business cards of a harsh but spectacular coast.

Lastly, on the coast of Agulo, you come across a recreation area and the chapel of San Marcos. You can reach this area by car or on foot. In the chapel you can see the municipality's patron, San Marcos. Furthermore, the area has a beautiful beach however it is not suitable for swimming due to the swell and large waves.



*One of the most unusual buildings in Agulo is the church of San Marcos, unique in its design thanks to the use of the neo-gothic style with numerous gothic arches and outstanding semi-circular vaults reminiscent of the east. It was designed by Antonio Pintor an architect from Tenerife and erected in 1911 over the antique baroque masonry site which had been closed down due to its hazardous state. Next to the church you will find the square and the town hall building, the nerve centre of the population.*



*A good way of seeing the approximately 25 Km2 of the municipality is to go up as far as the Abrante look-out point with its glass arm suspended over seven metres where you can enjoy some of the best views.*



## Paths

### Circular route: Agulo – La Palmita (via Los Paso and El Roquillo)



This circular route begins in the historic centre of Agulo and ends in the same village, passing through La Palmita and Cerpa, very close to the Garajonay National Park all of this after ascending and descending the municipality lengthways. This walk is 12.5 km long, it takes about six hours and is moderate to hard in difficulty.

The path begins in the historic centre of Agulo, on the main GM-I road next to some bougainvillea, a stone and concrete staircase with a metal hand-rail.

From here go up until you reach the ring-road, take this until you get to the main road again, in front of the start of the Los Pasos walk. This initial tour corresponds to the Las Mimbreras walk. Continuing along the route, up via the Los Pasos walk (rich in indigenous flora and landscapes) you come to a large slope at the beginning until you reach La Palmita reservoir where it joins a dirt track. Having reached this point, we go towards the right until the Abrante look-out point, located on the road that goes up, where you can enjoy an unforgettable view of the historical centre of Agulo. We can also follow the ravine above, via La Palmita ravine walk, where

at the height of the San Isidro square and below this, there is a walk that goes up to the sign posted place where you find the San Isidro chapel.

Once again we can turn back a little further on at the link with the tarmac road of La Palmita at the height of the Casa de Lugo where there is a large monkey-puzzle tree. From here we continue up until we reach the Casas de Cerpa where this route ends.

Once we reach this point, we can go along the tarmac road as far as the Visitors Centre of the Garajonay National Park in the Juego de Bolas. You must go to the centre before visiting this National Park in order to find out about its main characteristics regarding the flora, fauna, geology and the main paths it covers. Leaving the Visitors Centre behind us and going along the secondary tarmac road until we get to a parking lot, where we leave the road and take the dirt track on the left. After about a kilometre we take the path towards the left leaving the road after a while we take a turn towards the Abrante look-out point and take the left crossing again and start a rapid descent to the El Roquillo walk. This walk is of enormous heritage and cobbled for most of the way, it passes close to a cave until we reach the very interesting Casas del Roquillo. After leaving this small hamlet we reach the GM-I main road at kilometre 26,700. Crossing this road we go to the Piedra Gorda neighbourhood in order to skirt the mountain until we see the cemetery in Agulo, continuing along the road that takes us to the historic centre and the end of our route.



## The path of Agulo's davit crane

A place that is worth visiting on the coast of Agulo is to its davit crane. It can be reached on foot from the historic centre. The path is 3Km in distance there and back, its estimated time is two and a half hours and it is easy.

The walk begins in the same historic centre, in the calle Pintor Aguiar, beginning with a tarmac road, called the Transportador. Along the walk we will see the old packing warehouses belonging to Fyffes on our left. The rectangular two floor building used both floors for packaging and on the north side of the lower floor the loading and unloading of the container which brought the fruit directly to the davit crane. Reaching the end of this road we can look at the davit crane of Agulo and then we can start our descent along a zigzagging path that once ran through the banana plantations.





The davit crane was built in 1908, an industrial engineering project designed for the transport of fruit (bananas and tomatoes) and people. The davit crane using a wood and metal arm mounted on two concrete pillars raised the boats that docked on the outskirts of Agulo. Due to a large sea storm the structure disappeared in the 1950s, the two pillars remain as witnesses.

Once we reach the Agulo coast, we turn near the davit crane, the Callao de Lepe on the right and a small harbour with its little beach where, when the sea permits it we can take a dip in its crystal clear waters. At the top of the davit crane you will find the old installations and warehouses which are in ruins nowadays. This is a fantastic enclave where you can enjoy a day swimming, fishing and staying close to the sea. The return walk to Agulo will go back along the same track.





# Vallehermoso, a traditional village



Vallehermoso is the last village we can visit on our route of the north of La Gomera. The municipality occupies the north west of La Gomera as well as an area of the south west of the island, going from north to south. Its population is divided between the historic centre and numerous neighbourhoods spread over the entire area. The most notable are Chipude, El Cercado, Alojera, La Dama, Macayo, El Ingenio and Epina.

## History

The island of La Gomera at the time of the ancient Gomeros was divided into 4 cantons; today what is known as Vallehermoso was called Agana. The natives mainly lived in caves (which they also used to bury their dead) or in cabañas (huts). After the European colonisation in the XVI century, the island's economy was based on a single crop. In that period, a large sugar factory was located in the municipality in the Barranco del Ingenio, where extended areas of forest were cut down in order to refine sugar. Vallehermoso experienced huge growth at the beginning of the XVII century.

This municipality maintained its strength until the XIX century; however the commerce of wine ended with all its related wealth, thus causing a gradual but unstoppable decline in the population. The village owned extensive vineyards which gave them great benefits, but the trade of wine with England ceased causing a decrease in wealth.

In 1904 a davit crane was installed on the north coast of the municipality in order to promote foreign trade and the export of bananas and tomatoes. However, a new crisis at the beginning of the 1930s made its mark once again on the local economy. This provoked strong social tensions between the farmers and landowners. This





Vallehermoso at the end of the XIX century



Los Órganos



Tamargada



Roque Cano

tense climate worsened with the start of the Spanish Civil War and in Vallehermoso this led to a series of conflicts which became known as “El Fogueo”.

The adverse post-war conditions were the cause of a new wave of migration, people willing to find new opportunities, especially in Venezuela left La Gomera in clandestine boats. In 1949 the road to San Sebastián through the municipalities of the north was completed. In 1954 Vallehermoso's davit crane was destroyed by a storm, from that point forwards the departure of the agricultural produce was carried out using an improved harbour in the island's capital.

## Places of interest

Vallehermoso has many places of interest like the church of San Juan Bautista (St. John the Baptist) which dates back to the XVII century, although it was restructured at the start of the last century; the Encantadora reservoir and the island's wine cellar. Among other places of interest are Los Órganos (the organ pipes), situated in the north east of the island. They represent the best example in the Canaries of basalt rock, where marine erosion has left exposed a set of rocks which look like organ pipes and this is the consequence of the cooling process of volcanic material. Where Los Organos are concerned, the work of the sea has permitted the discovery of the internal structure which offers a surprising example of cylindrical disjunction. The location on the coast of the island is very inaccessible, so much so that they can only be seen from the sea (currently, from the Puerto de Vueltas in Valle Gran Rey you can go via boat to this natural monument).

Roque Cano is a symbol of the municipality however it is distributed over a large part of the island. It is located on the right-hand border of the Vallehermoso ravine. The Roque has been listed as a natural protected area. Lastly we must mention the Fortaleza de Chipude, a real native sanctuary; its profile is a rocky plateau and sheer slopes covered with some rare endemic plants such as the houseleeks.

The beach in Alojera is the best in the municipality (access, accommodation, food). In Vallehermoso there are two swimming pools which can be used during the summer months and they can be found at the maritime park. However, the more adventurous traveller can find some small solitary coves on the southern slope such as Argaga and La Rajita, or the Playa del Puerto del Trigo on the western slope. In the north we can find much prettier beaches despite

them not being suitable for swimming, like Playa de Arguamul or the Sepultura in Tamargada.

In the Alojera and Tazo neighbourhoods, the extraction of guarapo (sap), the sweet juice extracted from the Canarian date palms (*Phoenix canariensis*), is carried out. The sap, guarapo is elaborated to make palm honey and a sweet drink of the same name, among others.

It is both refreshing and energizing (with a high mineral content) and very delicious drink. The famous palm honey made (without any additives) from the sap is the queen of Gomeran cuisine.

In Tazo you will find one of the oldest chapels of La Gomera, Santa Lucía, dating back to the first European raids on the Island.

Another place not to be missed is Chorros de Epina, located on the road connecting Vallehermoso with the ridge right at the turning for Tazo. This is a legendary place, where its seven water pipes "speak" about various popular traditions and where you can drink from the "correcto", luck in love will guide you.

Added to this we must not forget the Roque Blanco Natural Monument, a mountain peak, that together with Roque Cano protects the village. The best place to enjoy this is from Cruz de Tierno, from there you can get a spectacular view of the area of Garabato, one of the most picturesque corners of the municipality.



*Guarapo is a mix of crude and processed sap which comes from the heart of the Canarian palm tree and has a very sweet and distinctive flavour.*



Alojera

## Paths

### From Cruz de Tierno to Vallehermoso via Roque Cano



This is a really old walk which linked Vallehermoso to Agulo, Hermigua and San Sebastián. The walk is 4.6 Km., it takes 2 hours and is easy.

In order to get to the starting point of this path we have to go to Las Rosas neighbourhood in

the adjoining municipality of Agulo, go along the road that passes right by the side of the big Amalahuigue reservoir until you get to Cruz de Tierno. From this point, take the right and we will access a dirt track which after 600 metres becomes a wide path with extraordinary views towards Vallehermoso and Roque Cano.



On the left below the path you see the small Garabato reservoir in an area where the arbutus trees (*Arbutus canariensis*) stand out. Along the actual path examples of juniper (*Juniperus turbinata* ssp *canariensis*) can be seen among lots of other vegetation. In front of us we will have the majestic Roque Cano, it looks like a keel of a boat. On the right we can see the Tamargada hamlet and at the very bottom the historic centre of Vallehermoso. Just before the pronounced descent we pass right by the side of the Roque Cano, a perfect place to stop and contemplate the landscape before continuing on to Vallehermoso.

### Circular route: From Vallehermoso to the Cumbre de Chijeré passing the Vallehermoso swimming pools.

This path covers one of the loveliest landscapes of Vallehermoso, the already mentioned Cumbre de Chijeré, it ends at the swimming pools belonging to this northern village. This walk is 17Km., takes 6 hours and is moderate to hard in difficulty.

The beginning of this path is a short distance from the centre of Vallehermoso. We have to cross the road in the direction of the Valle Gran Rey leaving the historic centre behind us for a walk through the country houses that take you to Santa Clara on the right of the cemetery. At the part where we go up the hillside, we will get some unforgettable views of the Roque Cano. We go into the Era Nueva ravine which we will take us as far as the Cumbre de Teselinde.

This is a fairly easy path with palm and juniper trees. As we ascend the humidity increases. The path forks into two: On the right it goes up one of the hills there and back, we follow the left fork and go up over the hillock. Turning right the path widens and progresses more evenly; a wooden railing protects us from the overgrown furrows of the ravine which goes down as far as the sea.

Once you get to the Santa Clara chapel and a little further on we will come to the look-out point of Santa Clara which will provide breathtaking views of the cliffs that drop into the sea next to the Arguamul hamlet; on the left is the PR-LG 10, the descent that takes us to this neighbourhood. If the mist permits we will be able to see the islands of Tenerife and La Palma.



*The Santa Clara chapel was built in 1888. Behind the chapel is a recreational area with wood tables and benches shaded by the trees.*



Continuing our walk as far as Chijeré where the landscape slowly changes with the characteristic junipers, weather-beaten by the force of the winds. The ground is extremely eroded and becomes ochre around the fossil dunes near the Cumbre de Chijeré. Below, at sea level is the Roque de los Órganos emerging, impressive for its bright colour and the extent of its vegetation. After a short while we will have this Natural Monument below us and as far as the end of the slope, however we will not be able to see Los Órganos clearly as this is only possible from the sea.

Reaching the chapel of Nuestra Señora de Coromoto, on the left is a fork in the path where it divides as far as the uninhabited hamlet of Chijeré. Taking a short diversion, 500 metres there and back, to Punta de Alcalá we will find an information panel and

impressive views of the vertical precipices with their tiers forming a wave-like barrier to the sea. From here starts a spectacular and vertiginous descent, more than a 500 metre drop until the Playa de Vallehermoso.

Gradually, the views of Vallehermoso and its beach come into focus and we will see a unique triangular pool with intense turquoise blue sea water. The path ends next to a country house on the road. We will continue the short trip to the beach. Vallehermoso's beach is made up of black volcanic rocks and is located next to the old davit crane. This area is not suitable for swimming but its pools are and it is a good spot where you can stop and rest. Taking the last stretch as far as Vallehermoso which is 3.7 Km. The first stretch is along the GR-131 road, then turning left and taking an internal road which ends in a farm and becomes a path taking us through allotments below the stern gaze of the Roque Cano until we reach the streets of the village.



## Playa de Santiago and Alajeró: From the sea to the mid-altitude areas of the south



Alajeró



Playa de Santiago



Playa de Santiago is the first village the traveller will see when they come from the capital to the south of the island via the GM-3 main road. The region of Santiago administratively belongs to two municipalities: San Sebastián de La Gomera and Alajeró which is the southern-most municipality of the island's municipalities and has a population of more than 2,000 inhabitants.

### History

The term Alajeró corresponds to the territories belonging to the ancient native areas of Hipalán and Orone, located in the south and west slopes of La Gomera. The first historical notes from the Hispanic era go back to 1502 with the foundation of the chapel of San Lorenzo in the Aragerode valley. The mid XVI century saw the construction of the old chapel of San Salvador, probably in the same location as nowadays. In the year 1675, the neighbours joined a separate parish from the one in San Sebastián. In 1681 Alajeró completely broke away from San Sebastián de La Gomera. On the 26th of May 1812 the Constitutional Council was established. In 1831 the Genoese Francesco Grasso founded the first tuna in brine factory of the island in La Cantera, on the municipality's coast.

Together with this important manufacturing development, the wide rolling watersheds (las lomadas) accommodated at the beginning of the XX century the cultivation of tomatoes. This industrial and economic boom can explain the constant demographic growth of the municipality's population and the decline in emigration to Cuba and Venezuela, a phenomenon which affected many families from this village.

Playa Santiago is the most important place in the Alajeró municipality for its number of inhabitants. The village's origins come from a group of fishermen who ceased fishing to set up a tinned food factory. They also built a series of installations where their employees could live and boats could be repaired.

In 1917 a Norwegian company, Nowga was set up in Playa de Santiago and a decade later an agricultural company Rodríguez López also set up business. Agriculture irrigation reached a remarkable level, thanks to the channeling of the waters from the highlands; the harvested tomatoes and bananas produced in the area were exported from a small jetty in Playa Santiago.

## Places of interest

Set on the slope of a hill, Alajeró is made up of modest stone buildings, charming palm trees and the appealing disarray of the hamlet which appears to drop off the slope of the mountain, giving the impression that it is at a standstill. Its asymmetric, steep streets and its irregular houses give it a profound, local feel. The inhabitants' doors are always open in welcome to the stranger.

The traditional architecture is representative in the distinct hamlets that have been built in this municipality. Of note is the Fiesta de la Virgen del Paso, which takes place in mid- September, the origin of this local feast goes back to a promise of payment to an emigrant going to Cuba and has now been transformed into an important picturesque event. On the 14th of September the image is removed from the El Paso sanctuary and put back the following day. Lots of people meet and play chácara (a type of large castanet) and drums and sing ballads and narrative poem during this night.

The Santiago ravine separates the municipality from San Sebastián and leads to the Playa de Santiago, a fishing village that has become an area where tourism has developed in La Gomera. Other beaches worthy of mention in Alajeró are Erese, La Cantera (where you can find an old disused tinning factory) and La Negra.

The most important population hubs of the municipality are the historic centre of Alajeró, Playa de Santiago, Targa, Antoncojo, among others.



Church of the Saviour



Agalán dragon tree

*Another of the most representative features of the municipality is the Agalán dragon tree, an example of one of the oldest characteristic trees in the Canaries which has been turned into a symbol of the municipality. It can be reached through a path located very close to Alajeró's historic centre. It also stands out for its slenderness in a sown field typical of the south of the island.*



*La Gomera's Airport is located in this municipality and provides several inter-island flights to Tenerife.*

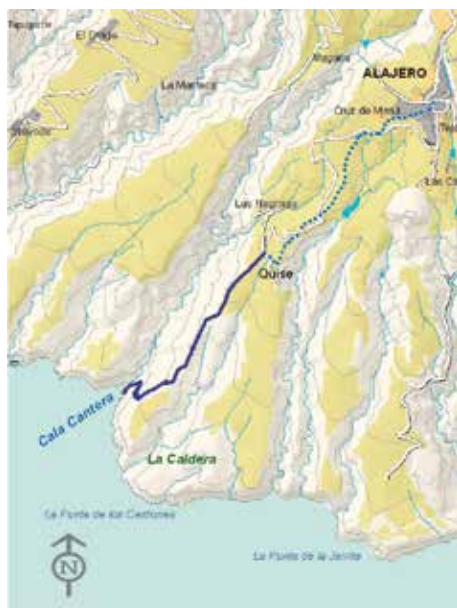


Playa de Santiago is the most important urban hub and tourist area of the municipality. Over the last few years this village has transformed its economic activities into tourism and services for which the area is especially apt due to its climatic conditions and landscapes. Improvements carried out in the port for fishing and sports, and the construction by the Fred Olsen company of a four star hotel complex have made this village one of the most prosperous on the island.

This village slowly developed starting with luxury hotels and a golf course. However, despite these developments Playa de Santiago, located in the sunniest part of La Gomera has known how to maintain its original charm. The tourist can enjoy its large beach as well as the coves close by in the municipality of San Sebastián such as Tapahuga, del Medio or Chinguarime. In Playa de Santiago the visitor can find a large range of goods, great restaurants where you can try the best fish in the south of the island, supermarkets, shops as well as La Gomera's airport which is just a few minutes away.

## Paths

### From Alajeró to La Cantera



The route to the beach La Cantera is one of the prettiest paths on the island. On the deserted rocky beach of La Cantera an abandoned fish factory awaits us. The length of this path is 16 Km., (there and back), it takes 6 hours and is moderately difficult.

Our trail begins just before getting to the Quise hamlet. To get there we need to take the road to Quise from Alajeró, after the church of El Salvador in the direction of El Calvario mountain. We walk along the road in the lower part of the village and after 3.7 Km.; we come to the beginning of the path. The road ends a little after the end of the Quise hamlet, a pretty neighbourhood of Alajeró which



formerly lived on rain-fed agriculture (cereals) and livestock..

The walk which is easy and for the most part bordered with rows of stones descends a wide terraced hill and offers extensive views of the Alajeró coast and its cliffs which constitute a place of scientific interest where threatened and protected endemic species live. The osprey nests in this area. To the south of the cliffs you will find the Monumento Natural de La Caldera, an example of the most recent volcanic activity on La Gomera. You can also find at the end of this municipality the Paisaje Protegido de Orone (protected landscape of Orone).



Remains of the preserving Factory

After approximately 30 minutes the hill narrows. The path turns to the left next to a rocky headland from which you can already see the beach of La Cantera. In 1831 the Genoese Francesco Grasso founded the first tuna in brine factory of the island in La Cantera and in 1860 an Italian Angelo Parodi made a tuna salting factory in Playa de La Cantera. These days the ruins of the factory have been conserved as a remnant of the economic splendor in Alajeró and the south of the island. La Cantera beach is one of the island's many deserted beaches and one we can enjoy along this walk. The return walk to Alajeró goes back along the same path.

## From Imada to Playa de Santiago



The hamlet of Imada is to be found in the municipality of Alajeró and it is reached via the GM-3 road. This neighbourhood is surrounded by a large quantity of terraces and its houses are spread along the sides of the mountains and decorated with hundreds of palm trees. Our path starts in this beautiful hamlet. The distance of the path is 9 Km., the estimated walking time is four and a half hours and it is moderately difficult.

The walk begins in Imada, on the right hand side of the sports ground; first snaking around the houses and cultivated terraces and after thorough almond trees, tunera diffusa- known as damiana, rockrose, etc., Across the Imada ravine we will begin our descent down this pretty slope of the Alajeró municipality where the willows, and depending on the season we cross it, the water will show us the course of a small stream



Imada neighbourhood

in the direction of the Guarimiar hamlet.

The path runs along the side of a very steep mountain with enormous basalt rocks. We pass a canal and we reach the Guarimiar hamlet where many of its houses have been abandoned. Further along we come to a crossing where we can go towards the Targa hamlet or in our case walk as far as El Rumbazo. The Rumbazo hamlet is surrounded by an important palm grove next to other neighbourhoods like El Cabezo, or the Pastrana neighbourhood in the Benchijigua ravine. Reaching El Rumbazo we need to take the tarmac road which serves as an access to this hamlet and others like Taco which we will visit afterwards.



Let's observe how the dryness of the Santiago ravine progressively increases as we get closer to the municipality's coast. We will see various species like reedbed, cerrillos (*Asclepias curassavica*) or balos (*Plocama pendula*). A little further on we get to the end of our route, Playa de Santiago. This is no doubt a good place to rest or have a quick swim at the beach or if you prefer, eat some great fish in one of the many restaurants in this charming village.



## Chipude: a village with a Gomeran flavour



Chipude is the neighbouring village as we go along the GM-3 road in the direction of Valle Gran Rey. Chipude has strong local roots as a matter of fact it is one of the oldest localities of the island. It is also the highest village of La Gomera. It is in its' ravines that the Gomeran whistling managed to survive and take refuge up until today. Its' important cliff of la Fortaleza (1,243 metres) or Argodey as it was called by the ancient inhabitants of the island is ever-present on the landscape of this south-eastern village of La Gomera. Chipude administratively belongs to the Vallehermoso municipality and we can visit it once we have gone up the road that goes from Alajeró to Igualeiro.

### History

Chipude has had a chapel dedicated to Nuestra Señora de Candelaria since the XVI century; it was erected in the parish in 1655. An old tradition transmitted by a priest, belonging to an evangelizing mission, who came and introduced the devotion to the image of the virgin of Candelaria in La Gomera. It is said that she appeared in the Hoya de la Candelaria (the slopes of the Fortaleza, next to Pavón) where the indigenous inhabitants celebrated their religious rituals.



Chipude was a very rich place over the centuries as regards agricultural livestock and the exploitation of its forests; in fact, it was a highly important pasture area and one of the largest breadbaskets of the island. For this reason the village had its own council and governor. However, in 1850 through an official agreement dated the 26th of March of the same year, the governor accepted to join Chipude and Vallehermoso due to the scarcity of resources in this area, integrating this village and its nearby hamlets to the municipality to this day.





Not very far from Chipude at the La Rajita beach, the Compañía Lloret y Llinares established a canning factory in 1928 it continued to work up until 1984. The importance of the old factories based in La Gomera was such that during the 1960s they absorbed three quarters of the total amount of fish unloaded in Santa Cruz de Tenerife province. However from the 1970s, the age of the fleet, the depletion of the island's superficial fishing grounds and the lack of capital for improvements to the sector contributed to a serious crisis consequently none of these businesses exist on the island today.



*Argodey also comes from an indigenous word ār-gudiy, which means place of abundance.*



*There is a walk to reach the summit from the Pavón hamlet.*



## Places of interest

La Fortaleza is a solid massif with a plateau formation and it gets its name from the locality that it belongs to, Chipude. The rock was originally called Argodey, and so it appears to have been recognised in the first ethno-historic references. This locality was described by Gasper Frutuoso in 1590 as the 'land of palms'. According to the latest studies, the rock could be used as an observatory, from which to calculate the summer solstice, which is on the 21st of June, the same day in which the indigenous inhabitants began their year: If you look from Chipude you can see that the sun rises just above the Alto de Garajonay around the 21st of June. Other astronomical markers exist in the Canaries and are all based on the observation of the stars positions in relation to certain reference points. The Fortaleza houses a wide range of species of endemic flora and has been declared an Area of Ecological Sensibility and more recently a heritage of cultural interest in the archaeological category.

In Chipude as well as visiting the great restaurants where we can try the rich Gomeran cuisine such as the water cress soup, el almogrote or local cheeses, we can stop off to visit the church of Nuestra Señora de La Candelaria. This church was erected in 1655, it underwent restoration between 1980 and 1984 with the financial assistance of the Cabildo (Government) de La Gomera seeing as the church was close to ruin. This church has two naves; the epistle one is where you will find the patron saint of Chipude, deeply revered in La Gomera, Nuestra Señora de La Candelaria.

El Cercado is a neighbourhood next to Chipude, located in a small valley, 1,000 metres in altitude. This is a good place to eat and it has strong pottery traditions, in fact it is a must for the tourist who wishes to get first-hand information on Gomeran pottery. This is where the largest quantity of





*At the Centro de Interpretación Las Loceras (Potters' Interpretation Centre) located on the main road which goes through this settlement you can get more information on this handicraft.*

traditional pottery is made on the island. The most significant fact is that it is hand-made without the use of a potters' wheel, using the same techniques as they used in ancient times. These days there are several workshops dedicated to the making and selling of distinct pieces. In El Cercado the visitor can see how the hands of the potter work with the clay and how their ancestors worked before the occupation of the island by the Castilians. There are several restaurants in this neighbourhood where the visitor can taste traditional Gomeran food. Given its privileged location, from this hamlet many trekking paths start from here to the Garajonay National Park, Chipude as well as from the close by municipality of Valle Gran Rey and Vallehermoso

## Paths

### From Chipude to its Fortaleza



The suggested path is short. Our walk will take us to one of the most spectacular natural look-out points of La Gomera, the top of the Fortaleza de Chipude, from which we will get a panoramic view of the whole region and the south-western area of the island. This path is 4.5Km long (there and back), it takes two and a half hours and is moderately difficult.

Our walk starts in Chipude's square, a place where all Gomerans meet on the 15th of August, the feast day of the

virgin of La Candelaria, the municipality's patron saint. From the square we walk along the road for about 200 metres where then take a left turn and follow the GR-I3I sign La Fortaleza-Igualero-San Sebastián trail. Following the red and white

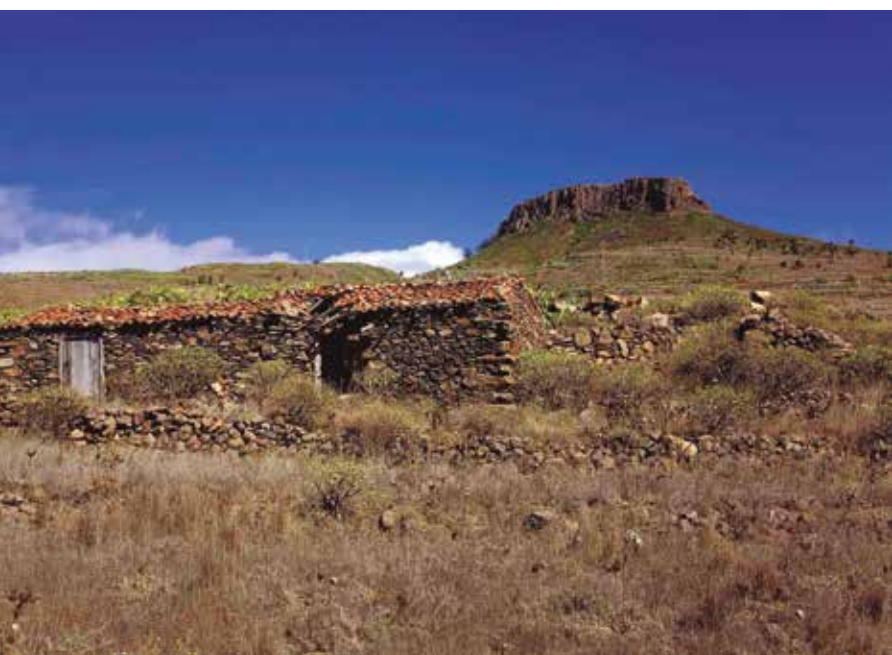




*Chipude and El Cercado have many examples of traditional architecture*

signs crossing the road a couple of times (CV I2) in the direction of La Dama we move towards the Los Apartaderos hamlet. Passing through the houses and terraces we reach the new road and continuing along it or crossing through the neighbourhood diagonally (GR-I3I) we reach the Pavón hamlet.

At this point we have to go up the paved street that starts on the Pavón road and after we continue along the path (signed) as far as the Fortaleza. From here we will leave the GR-I3I and proceed to the right along a clear path taking us to the base of the slope. The path continues through the rocky terrain until you reach some stairs which make our progress easier. Once you have gone through the pass we continue on the right over some rocky terrain until we reach a wide plain. The highest zone is in the middle of the plateau, from here you can enjoy the extraordinary views from all compass points: Towards the east we can enjoy the Erque ravine (with its hamlets of Erque and Erquito); towards the south the mouth of the ravine with La Rajita and the green of the banana plantations of La Dama; from the west the Chipude and El Cercado neighbourhoods and the far-off mountains of the Valle Gran Rey; lastly from the north the green of the Garajonay National Park with the islands highest peak the Alto de Garajonay (1,487 metres). The return walk towards the square in Chipude will follow the same path.



# Valle Gran Rey: Beaches, the sun and impressive nature



Valle Gran Rey is the touristic municipality par excellence of La Gomera. This beautiful village is situated in the west of the island. It is 36.36Km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of around 5,000 inhabitants. Open on its west coast, it looks like it's surrounded by the Vallehermoso municipality. This is the farthest village by road from the capital, a little more than an hour's drive, and the last village on our journey along the south of the island. In order to get to the spectacular Gomeran valley, we follow the road from Chipude in the direction of Arure and from this neighbourhood we take a modern road towards Valle Gran Rey.

## History

In pre-Hispanic times, the Valle Gran Rey belonged together with the region of Chipude to the old indigenous canton of Orone. This old link maintained its historical continuity given that the parish of La Candelaria, in Chipude, created in 1655, also belonged to Valle Gran Rey until the parish of Los Reyes (The Three Kings) was founded in 1929. The Valle Gran Rey is a village with a lot history; it has not been considered an important territory in vain, for the nature it has to offer and the indigenous people's life-style. Valle Gran Rey is place of residence for kings and fortune-tellers (judging from its name and ethno-historic sources). The place where the rebellion of the Gomeros began, they united in the Baja del Secreto (a crag located in front of Charco del Conde), and decided to stop living under the regime of Hernán Peraza El Joven (the youth) and his despotic government in 1488.

During the period of nobility rule, a large part of the Valle Gran Rey belonged to the Counts of La Gomera.



Los Reyes hermitage





*Over the last few decades it has gone from being a municipality mainly oriented towards agricultural and livestock to focusing on the economy in the tourist sector, benefitting doubtlessly from its privileged geographic position, sunny climate, extraordinary nature and the best beaches on the island.*



Giant Lizard



*No less important is the César Manrique look-out point before reaching the Valle Gran Rey. This look-out point designed by the well-known artist from Lanzarote, will impress the traveller due to its perfect integration with these impressive mountains that surround Valle Gran Rey and the views it provides of this village, the look-out point also has a restaurant.*

The modern councils were established in 1812. A part of the Valle Gran Rey ravine (Banda de La Calera) was encompassed in the Arure council and the other part (Banda de Los Reyes) in the Chipude council which then ceased to be an independent municipality in 1850 in order to be incorporated in Vallehermoso. The municipality's capital was in Arure until approximately 1880, when the mayor decided to transfer it to La Calera, given the strength of its economy and the population who took over this hamlet and the Valle Gran Rey in its entirety. It was not until 1927 when the two sides of the ravine were no longer united under the same municipality, and it was in 1941 when the name of the municipality was officially changed and went from being called Arure to being called the Valle Gran Rey.

## Places of interest

The population of this municipality is rather spread out over several neighbourhoods and hamlets which are mostly located along the Valle Gran Rey ravine and its coast. The capital was originally in Arure, which was also the name of the municipality. The historic centre is mainly divided into two main hubs: El Valle Alto (with population hubs like: Granados, El Hornillo, La Vizcaína or El Retamal) and the Valle Bajo (with population hubs like: La Calera, Borbalán, Vueltas or La Playa). Other population hubs belonging to the Valle Gran Rey are Las Hayas, Arure and Taguluche.

A place not to be missed is the El Santo look-out point in Arure, set deep in a mountain with a steep, vertical slope, where the visitor can enjoy a breathtaking view as far as the small hamlet of Taguluche and the Atlantic Ocean.

The beauty of its landscapes studded with innumerable palm trees, changes this municipality in to a mix of white housed neighbourhoods that contrast with the green of the landscapes: Los Granados, El Guro, La Vizcaína are just some of these hubs from which several paths begin and joins them with Las Hayas, the great plateau of La Mérica in the neighbouring village of Chipude.

The coastline of Valle Gran Rey is 5 km long and offers the visitor several black sand beaches suitable for swimming, La Calera and the beach at La Puntilla are the biggest. This is the coastline's main attraction considering that these are the best beaches on the island where the fine black sand mixes with the pure blue of its waters. As



well as the Vueltas beach located near the port there are several more: the Charco del Conde, a small natural bay where small children can enjoy the sea; the Playa and the Puntilla located in the western-most part of the area which is of considerable size or the Playa del Inglés which is perhaps one of the most stunning corners of the island where the black sand and the foam of the sea are balanced against the cliffs of La Mérica in a natural enclave incomparable with anywhere in the Canary Islands. La Mérica is the natural habitat of the giant lizard of La Gomera one of the most unique species which is at risk of extinction.

Valle Gran Rey has a good infrastructure of apartments and accommodation as well as all types of leisure services. The marine excursions which depart from Puerto de Vueltas to Los Órganos – a true marvel created by the erosion of limestone, in the nearby municipality of Vallehermoso. Also departing from Vueltas is an excursion for whale and dolphin watching in the island's southern waters which is an area with the greatest cetacean biodiversity in the world.

Various companies rent bicycles and organise trekking activities seeing as they are in a strategic position for travel on the island and a network of trekking paths that are perfectly user friendly.



## Paths

### From Arure to Valle Gran Rey via La Mérica



This is one of the most used paths in Valle Gran Rey and La Gomera.

The (GR-I32) walk starts in Arure and after crossing the plateau of La Mérica mountain it ends at the Valle Gran Rey coast. This path is just over 7 Km., it takes two and a half hours to walk and is of moderate difficulty.

Our path begins in El Verodal in the Arure village, walking along a dirt path towards the Llanos de Mérica, to then go down to Punta Perico until La Calera a main hub of Valle Gran Rey.

At the curve we have to take the path to the Santo look-out point (from where we can get a splendid aerial view of the houses in Taguluche). Leaving the entrance of this path we go to the right following the dirt path onwards with several changes in direction which in parts leads us to the beginning of the narrow ravine ending at the valley's delta, our destination, or to the view of Taguluche.

Soon after, we will reach the Pedregal plain and we follow another trail leaving the main one on our right because it ends

a few metres farther on at the edge of the cliff. The stone path will become visible when we have done a stretch of the next path and we follow our itinerary along the edge of a rocky slope which includes the Terejigüete cave. Soon we reach a plain, La Mérica, where a large threshing floor crosses the path, a mute witness to sown land by some families who used to live in the grain-growing plain. The descent starts at Risco Perico where there are some amazing views as far as Valle Gran Rey. The path zigzags for a while descending for several hundred metres to the Cañada del Picacho until it takes us to our destination La Calera.

### Circular route: From Arure to Tagulache

This circular route will take us to the pretty hamlet of Taguluche, the farthest neighbourhood from the village of Valle Gran Rey, it is situated on the island's western-most coast.

This path is 6Km. long, the time to cover it is four and a half hours and it is moderate to hard in difficulty.

We start and finish at the El Santo look-out point; we will pass under an arch and go along until we reach a small chapel, the path continues just behind this chapel. Below us is the Taguluche Hamlet which is our destination. Fifty metres further along we leave this path which goes down to the left and we carry on straight ahead, after about three quarters of an hour we reach a small headland from which we can see the Alojera village. Going down towards this village and after coming to a crossroads we turn right until we walk along a path that runs parallel to the road.

A little way after we get to the Taguluche cemetery, we will visit this neighbourhood in Valle Gran Rey later, it is characterised by its pretty terraces, lush palms and amazing sea views. We could also go as far as the chapel of the Buen Viaje which has a recreation area and a large square. We will have a panoramic view of the valley, surrounded by enormous vertical slopes behind us and the blue of the ocean in front of us.

The ascent to Arure takes a stone path up a steep mountain that separates Taguluche from Arure. It is not unusual to meet goats and sheep along the path. The walk has several stretches where the terrain is very steep and vertiginous; however it provides some spectacular views to Taguluche. A little farther we will be able to see the Heredia ravine and coming to a dirt track we take the left towards the beginning of the path.



*Several species of plant will accompany us along the route such as Canarian Islands candle plant or mountain grass, spurge or artemisia.*





# The National Garajonay Park: A forest in the mist



The National Garajonay Park is located in the central peaks of the island and we can easily reach this important natural enclave from San Sebastián via the Gm-2 main road. In 1981 the Park was declared a National Park and a World Heritage Site in 1986. It protects, in its approximately 4,000 hectares a unique forest ecosystem, the Canarian laurel, which originally took refuge in the foggy areas of the northern slopes of the western islands of the Canarian Archipelago.

The laurel forest is a type of forest made up of various species of trees with evergreen leaves, similar to the laurel leaves. Their existence is linked to high humidity, mild temperatures and climatic stability throughout the year.

Garajonay is one of the rare rain-forests still in existence in Europe. The idea of a rain-forest makes us think of a forest still intact or untouched by man, with various species of mixed trees forming the canopy, a great accumulation of bio-mass, the presence of distinct layers with large, old trees on the top layer, numerous dead tree stumps, some still standing others fallen etc. These characteristics exist in Garajonay, a forest that guards the authentic natural elements which are increasingly difficult to come across, miraculously conserved by the inhabitants of the island in spite of the growing demographic pressure that the island has had to undergo.

## The origins of the name: the legend of Gara and Jonay

The Garajonay National Park gets its name from the highest peak of La Gomera, the Alto de Garojanay 1,487 metres. According to oral tradition, its name originates from an ancient, indigenous legend that tells the story of the love between Gara, a princess from Agulo and Jonay a prince from the island of



Tenerife. This legend, with its strong popular ties, recounts that during an ancient Gomeran religious feast, Jonay a young, handsome Guanche (original inhabitant of Tenerife) arrives on the island from Tenerife. Later on, Gara and Jonay gazes meet and they fall in love forever. Gara's parents refuted the love between them so the lovers ran away. In order to salvage their love they went to the highest peak of La Gomera and finding themselves trapped, they got a stick with both ends sharpened and pressing each end against their chest, they embraced each other and they both died. So after this, the mountain is Garajonay, in remembrance of the two lovers who preferred to die together than live apart.

## A forest in the mist

The frequency of fog on the insular peaks has remarkable ecological consequences: little sunshine and a wet environment decreases the drying of the vegetation during the periods without rain and supplies additional water, a phenomenon known as "horizontal rain": the trees generate rain by intercepting the tiny drops of mist that pass over their tops, which loaded with humidity drip and soak the soil.

The rains and mists foster the establishment of dense forest on the insular peaks, which by its mere existence captures water from the peaks, protects the soft soil which facilitates the infiltration of water and its incorporation in the insular groundwater. We could say that the forest is an enormous sponge that absorbs stocks and supplies the greatest part of the island's water resources and feeds a remarkable network of permanent streams and springs, an unusual fact in the Canaries, where streams have virtually disappeared due to catchment and the intense exploitation of water resources.

## Flora and Fauna from the Garajonay National Park

The National Park is an extremely important refuge for the Canarian flora. More than 400 species live in the park, from which approximately half are indigenous, highlighting an elevated number of endemic species from the island.

The existing vegetation in Garajonay, its distribution, the climate and the trade winds are all factors which



Sculptures of Gara and Jonay in the Laguna Grande



*This explains the zeal that the local population feels towards the Park's natural springs which are perceived as one of Garajonay's principal attractions and a symbol of conservation.*



Violeta (Viola riviniana)


Tajinaste azul (*Echium acanthocarpum*)

Gacia (*Teline stenopetala*)

Follao (*Viburnum rigidum*)


Paloma Turqué

clearly influence it, however the Park's orientation and the level of conservation must also be taken into consideration.

The laurel forest is mainly made up of trees like the lime tree (*Ocotea foetida*) which is scarce; the laurel (*Laurus azorica*) which is more common throughout the Park and grows to 25 metres in height; holly (*Ilex canariensis*) is also fairly common; Faya (*Myrica faya*), another important tree in the laurel forest is heather (*Erica arborea*) with considerable formations on the southern slope, the Canary laurel (*Apollonia burbujana*), viñático (*Persea indica*) the leaves of which are poisonous for cattle is often found in the ravines; picconia (*Picconia excelsa*) which is easily recognisable by its' greyish bark and is usually found close to the Canary laurel.

Another plant that stands out on the land is the bracken fern, there are more than twenty species in the Park, and bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*) is the most common. We will also find golden chain (*Adenocarpus foliosus*) and the doradilla fern (*Asplenium onopteris*).

In the middle area, a marked seasonality between winter and summer can be clearly distinguished. The vegetation in this area is endemic. The most characteristic vegetable formations of this area are the juniper (*Juniperus Phoenicia*), the Canary Island Juniper (*Juniperus cedrus*) and the strawberry tree (*Arbutus canariensis*). On the southern face, the strawberry tree is replaced by the rock rose (*Cistus mospelliensis*) and Canary subalpine broom and bridal veil broom (*Spartocytisus filipes* and *Retama monosperma*). At the top of the ravines there are also palm trees (*Phoenix canariensis*), together with these the rupicola vegetation like musk and lichens stand out and form part of the Park's natural landscape.

The lower area, on the contrary, is dominated by formations of tabaibal-cardonal and notably the sweet tabaiba spurge (*Euphorbia balsamifera*) near the coast, sour tabaiba (*Euphorbia bertheloti*) and the cardón (*Euphorbia canariensis*), sometimes accompanied by *Plocama pendula* and seasonal herbs. The layers of bush are represented by a rich regeneration of tree species and other species like the *Viburnum rigidum*, *Gesnouina arborea*, *Maytenus canariensis*, *Phyllis nobla* (*Bystropogon origanifolium*), all these plants are endemic in the Canaries and are frequently found at the bottom of the ravines. The most common fern in this area is the dryopteris fern (*Dryopteris oligodonta*).

Fauna in the Garajonay Park is scarcer than the flora. The most typical of the middle and low areas are rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), which were introduced on the

island by the Spanish, and hedgehogs (*Aeetechnus algericus*). In the peak areas, laurel makes an important habitat for the Canarian birds. We will also find species like the sparrow hawk (*Accipiter nisus granti*), Eurasian woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*), and the two mountain pigeons: scaly-naped pigeon (*Columba bollii*) and the white tailed laurel pigeon (*Columba junoniae*). These pigeons are indigenous to the Canary Islands. We will come across predatory birds like the kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus canariensis*) and eagle (*Buteo buteo insularis*) both day-time birds and the small nocturnal owl (*Asio otus canariensis*). Other vertebrates are few in number although in this area you will come across numerous non-indigenous: black rats (*Rattus rattus*) which can damage the (*Persea indica*).

## Facilities at the Garajonay National Park

The Visitors' centre of the Garajonay National Park is located in a place known as the Juego de Bolas, in La Palmita neighbourhood, Agulo municipality in the north of La Gomera, 3Km from the Park. A visit to the Centre is advisable prior to going to the Park in order to get information on all that this Tertiary jewel has to offer. Inside the Centre there are three exhibition rooms with comprehensive information on the Garajonay and the island and a bookshop.

The Park also has an extensive network of lookout points situated along the roads, all offering good views, information panels on the landscape you are looking at and its' natural treasures. Some of the lookout points are: Mirador del Rejo (a valley with lots of vertical slopes colonised with interesting rupicola vegetation and a view of Hermigua), Mirador del Bailadero (view of los Roques), Miradores de los Roques (situated in the vicinity of the impressive volcanic peaks), Mirador Cumbre de Tajaqué (view of the Benchijigua crater, its arid landscape contrasting strongly with the green of Valle del Cedro).

The recreational areas are ideal for day-trips and leisure. Embedded in the thick of the Park they are situated at the chapel of El Cedro, Las Creces and Chorros de Epina and the most important recreational area: La Laguna Grande (the big lagoon) gets its' name from the large glade surrounded by trees, which with the heavy rains is covered in water and where, according to legend, the witches meet for their rituals; a children's play area, a restaurant, tables and benches complete facilities. Outside the Park's limits there are other recreational areas Las Nieves near los Roques is outstanding.



Visitors' Centre



Visitors' Centre



Igualero Lookout point



Laguna Grande  
Recreational area



## The paths of the Garajonay National Park



The best way to enter the Park and enjoy its beauty and lushness is on foot. It is for this reason that the Park's old paths were used by the Gomeros going from one place on the island to another:

### From Contadero to El Cedro hamlet



*In the winter the mist and twisted heather (Erica arborea), heavy with white, yellow and orange lichens create a ghostly environment.*

Our departure point is Contadero, in the middle of the island, a meeting point for many of the island's walks and our destination is the emblematic El Cedro hamlet belonging to the Hermigua municipality. This is one of the most transited paths of the island. We will cover 4.8Km, it takes approximately two and a half hours to walk and is moderately difficult.

Once we start our walk from El Contadero, our path will cross the top of the heath where high environmental humidity allows for the development of epiphyte plants (that grow non-parasitically upon other plants), the ground is carpeted in ferns and musk.

Half way down the descent, the shade and lushness increase: we enter the mountain-side laurel forest which is mostly laurels (*Laurus azorica*), Myrica faya) and holly (*Ilex canariensis*) like the appearance of (*Viburnum rigidum*) and (*Picconia excelsa*).

Our walk takes us to the El Cedro stream, the main ravine with a continuous stream of water among the five that already exist in the Park. Here the forest reaches its maximum size: the noble viñátigos (*Persea indica*) 30 metres in height shows us its grandiosity and beauty.





When we reach Las Mimbreras we have several possibilities: the right-hand path takes us to the El Cedro hamlet or the Rejo road at the crossroads called the Reventón Oscuro. The left-hand path takes us to the Acebiños and further on to Meriga. Our walk follows the path, continues down and crosses the wooden bridge until we reach the chapel of Nuestra Sra. de Lourdes, a symbol of the old local religious festivities, inside the mountain, a symbol of chácara and drum. Here the path forks again. Taking the left turn where the path runs parallel to the ravine which goes as far as El Cedro.



This enclave was one of the most important of all those situated within the limits of the Monteverde. It had numerous inhabitants who lived by exploiting, transforming and selling the produce the mountain and fields provided: water mills, agriculture, cattle, wood, coal, fallen leaves....The path continues to Hermigua, with a considerable slope that zigzags through the thermophile laurels which are rather deteriorated where you can see the (*Apollonias barbuja*) and (*Visnea mocanera*), providing a marvelous view of Hermigua. If we turn around we can enjoy the beautiful El Chorro waterfall, which is formed by the water from the mountain to the valley. The waterfall was once used to generate power and produce electricity for the municipality.

## Cañada de Jorge

This path is in Raso de La Bruma, a place that gets its name from the ever-present mist which envelopes this wonderful corner of the National Park during most of the year. The path is 4Km, takes two hours to walk and it is easy.

We will start to descend crossing one of the best fayal-brezal in the Park, spotted with deteriorated areas mainly due to coal which was used prior to butane gas being imported. Along the same stretch of path we will see holly (*Ilex canariensis*) and laurels (*Laurus azorica*) as well as other (*Viburnum rigidum*).

After a half-hour walk we get to Cañada de Jorge, where we come across a small clearing. A little further down we have several options: On the left, there is a path that goes to Arure. If we wish to take the circular route returning to Raso de La Bruma we need to take the right hand path crossing the heath in regeneration. In the past it was a highly exploited area which is now giving way to a beautiful wet laurel forest as



we get closer to the road. Once there, we take the right and quickly get to El Raso our exit point.

## Circular route Los Barranquillos

This circular route is located in the western-most area of the National Park. It is 1.5Km long takes about half an hour to walk and is easy. The path runs



along tree heath which has been well conserved due to the previous uses of the area: coal, extraction of dead leaves, coal dust used as fertiliser and food for cattle...

The path, which is prettier on misty days, firstly takes us to an area of young tree heath which is derived by intense exploitation which subsequently makes space for an older beautiful tree heath. As we get closer to the cliff edge, the forest gives way to lower vegetation with dry tips

and is covered with lichens. The view from the cliff is marvellous showing us the west coast with Alojera in the background. Furthermore, you can hear the cooing and the flutter of wings of the white tailed laurel pigeon (*Columba junoniae*), an indigenous bird linked to Monteverde which nests on the high cliffs.

The walk lets us enjoy and distinguish two different ecosystems on Monteverde: the tree heath at the top of the hill and laurel in the narrow pass. The former is more exposed to wind and light, less ground humidity, with more exposed undergrowth and the domain of the beech tree and heather. Below, in the stream bed where there is greater cover and ground humidity, a budding laurel forest develops made up of laurels (*Laurus azorica*), holly (*Ilex Canariensis*), *Picconia excelsa* and *Visnea mocanera* accompanied by an undergrowth of saplings, musk and ferns which cover the ground.



Recommended photographs: the three suggested walks and the map of the paths of the National Park.



## USEFUL INFORMATION



## How to get to La Gomera



You can fly or take a ferry to La Gomera. Flights from Tenerife North airport or Gran Canaria are available every day and both have flight connections with Spain and main European cities. The flight takes 35 minutes from Tenerife North (Binter Canarias), and 45 minutes from Gran Canaria.



There is an excellent ferry service to La Gomera and it is the most popular option in terms of price and duration of travel. Two companies, Fred Olsen Lines and Naviera Armas, provide the service with a minimum of six daily crossings from the port of Los Cristianos in the south of Tenerife. The duration of the ferry crossing is about 60 minutes. Both companies have an online reservation service. La Gomera also has inter-island connections with La Palma and El Hierro.

Both Fred Olsen and Naviera Armas have offices at the bus station (intercambiador) in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 15 minutes from the Tenerife North airport. Both companies provide a free bus service to transfer passengers to the Port of Los Cristianos.

The port of Los Cristianos is 12 Km. from the international airport Queen Sofía (Tenerife South) and 70Km from Tenerife North airport. From the Tenerife South airport you can take a taxi or a bus to Los Cristianos in about 15 minutes.

## Transport

**Fred Olsen Express**  
+34 902 100 107  
[www.fredolsen.es](http://www.fredolsen.es)

**Naviera Armas**  
+34 902 456 500  
[www.navieraarmas.com](http://www.navieraarmas.com)

**Binter Canarias**  
+34 902 391 392  
[www.bintercanarias.com](http://www.bintercanarias.com)



San Sebastián de La Gomera is the political and administrative capital of the island and its main access to the sea; the island's largest commercial port is based in the capital, and has been used throughout its history for both passengers and goods.

Throughout La Gomera the various villages are connected by mini-buses and buses provided by Guaguas Gomera

#### Servicio Regular Gomera SL (GUAGUASGOMERA)

+34 922141101

[www.guaguasgomera.com](http://www.guaguasgomera.com)

### Taxi

#### San Sebastián De La Gomera

+34 922870524

#### Vallehermoso

+34 922800279

#### Valle Gran Rey

+34 922805058

#### Agulo

+34 922801074

#### Hermigua

+34 922880047

#### Alajeró-Playa de Santiago

+34 922895022

+34 922895300

If you wish to tour the island by car, there are several car rental companies.

### Rent a Car

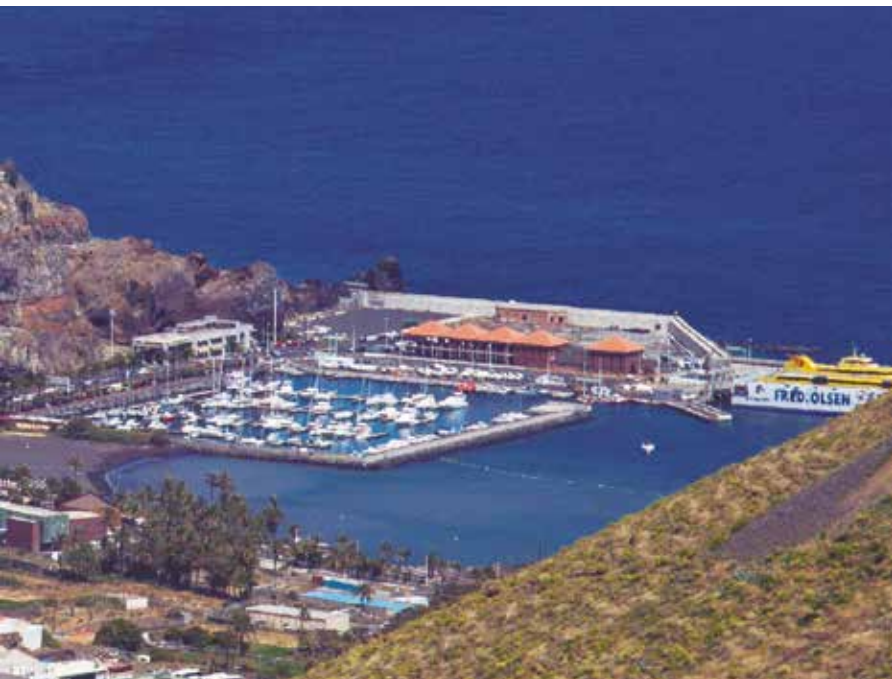
#### San Sebastián de La Gomera

##### PAE

Calle Orilla del Llano, 2  
+34 922870364

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

If you wish to find the other car rental companies available on the island you can access the complete list on La Gomera's tourism web site [www.lagomera.travel](http://www.lagomera.travel) or through this link.



## Accommodation and restaurants

La Gomera offers a wide range of accommodation. 3 and 4 star hotels located in San Sebastián, Playa de Santiago as well as Valle Gran Rey with all the necessary amenities to enjoy your visit to the island, including gastronomy, sporting activities as well as leisure centres like swimming pools or golf courses. Rural hotels are another of the island's accommodation options on offer; surrounded by a special charm, quality and exacting service, these hotels are located in the north of La Gomera and they stand out for their peacefulness and comfort.

### Distances between San Sebastián de La Gomera and other municipalities

From San Sebastián de La Gomera to Hermigua	<b>20 km.</b>
From San Sebastián de La Gomera to Agulo	<b>25 km.</b>
From San Sebastián de La Gomera to Vallehermoso	<b>38 km.</b>
From San Sebastián de La Gomera to Playa de Santiago	<b>29 km.</b>
From San Sebastián de La Gomera to Valle Gran Rey	<b>52 km.</b>

Apartments, providing another accommodation alternative, offer their guests the chance of experiencing something different. They can be found in any of the island's municipalities and are situated in areas that are all close to shops and services as well as being well equipped so you can enjoy your stay.

Because of its physical geography and its incredible landscapes, one of the best ways of staying on the island is in one of the rural houses, situated in beautiful enclaves along the coastal areas and close to the National Park or along the mid-altitude areas. They stand out for their décor, quality and comfort; also the majority of these houses are traditional ones that have been refurbished; an unforgettable way to get to know the unchanging Canarian architecture.

## Accommodation

### San Sebastián de La Gomera

#### Hotel Jardin Tecina \*\*\*\*

Lomada Tecina - Playa  
Santiago  
+34 922145850  
[www.jardin-tecina.com](http://www.jardin-tecina.com)

#### Casa Rural Rincon del Olivo

El Olivo. Lomo Fragoso  
+34 922871082

#### Hotel Parador Nacional de Turismo \*\*\*\*

Cerro La Horca  
+34 922 871100  
[www.parador.es](http://www.parador.es)

#### Hotel Torre del Conde \*\*\*

Calle Ruiz de Padron, 19  
+34 922870000  
[www.hoteltorredelconde.com](http://www.hoteltorredelconde.com)



## Accommodation

## Valle Gran Rey

**Hotel Gran Rey \*\*\***

La Puntilla  
+34 922805859  
www.hotel-granrey.com

**Apartamentos Casa Askanova**

La Calera  
+34 822017918  
www.casaaskanova.es

**Apartamentos Jardín del Conde**

Av Charcho del Conde, 13  
+34 922806008  
www.jardindelconde.com

**Casas Rurales Jardín Las Hayas**

Las Hayas, s/n  
+34 922804077  
www.jardinlashayas.com

**Hotel Jardín Concha \***

La Calera  
+34 922806063  
www.hotelconcha.net

**Apartamentos Charco del Conde**

Av Marítima, 7  
+34 922805380  
www.charcodeconde.com

**Apartamentos Mesa**

La Playa, s/n  
+34 922805855

**Apartamentos Los Médanos**

La Playa  
+34 822017918

**Apartamentos El Guirre**

Camino Playa del Inglés  
+34 922805401  
www.apartamentospelguirre.com

**Apartamentos Residencial El Llano**

Calle Pescuesito, 1  
+34 922805489  
www.residenciaelllano.com

## Vallehermoso

**El Cabezo**

Barrio El Cabezo, s/n  
+34 922801298

**Casa El Palmar**

El Palmar, 16  
+34 922800509

**Hotel rural Tamahucho**

Calle La Hoya, 20  
+34 922801176  
www.hoteltamahucho.com

## Alajeró

**Apartamentos Santa Ana**

Las Trincheras  
+34 922895166  
www.gomerarural.com

**Apartamentos Tapahuga**

Av Marítima Playa de Santiago  
+34 922895159  
www.tapahuga.es

**Pensión La Gaviota**

Av Marítima Playa de Santiago  
+34 922895135  
www.pensionlagaviota.com

## Hermigua

**Hotel Casa Los Herrera**

Plaza Nuestra Señora de la Encarnación  
+34 922880701  
www.casalosherrera.com

**Hotel Ibo Alfaro**

Barrio Ibo Alfaro, s/n  
+34 922880168  
www.hotel-gomera.com

**Apartamentos Casa Diversa**

Los Gomereros  
+34 922880911  
www.casadiversa.com

**Apartamentos Los Telares**

Carretera General, 10  
+34 922880781  
www.apartamentosgomera.com

## Agulo

**Casa Rural Finca La Maleza**

Carretera Gral. La Palmita a Meriga  
+34 696414290  
maleza.ecoturismogomera.es

**Casa Rural La Palmita**

La Palmita  
+34 629410147  
lapalmita.ecoturismogomera.es

**Casa Rural Las Hiedras**

Las Rosas  
+34 659714574

If you wish to find the other hotels available on the island you can access the complete list on La Gomera's tourism web site [www.lagomera.travel](http://www.lagomera.travel) or through this link.





## Where to eat

### San Sebastián de La Gomera

#### Restaurante Club Laurel

Lomada Tecina - Playa Santiago  
+34 922145850

#### Restaurante Conde Niebla

Parador Nacional de Turismo  
Cerro La Horca  
+34 922 871100

#### Restaurante El Charcón

Paseo el Charcón  
+34 922141898

### Valle Gran Rey

#### Restaurante El Baifo

Calle Normara, 1  
+34 922805775

#### Restaurante Casa Efigenia La Montaña

Las Hayas, s/n  
+34 922804077

#### Restaurante El Mango

La Playa, s/n  
+34 922805362

### Vallehermoso

#### Restaurante El Carraca

C/ Nueva a la Iglesia, s/n  
+34 922801021

### Alajeró

#### Bodegón del Mar

Av Marítima 35 Playa Santiago  
+34 922895135

#### Restaurante Junonia

Av Marítima Playa Santiago  
+34 922895450

### Hermigua

#### Las Chácaras

Lomo de San Pedro, 5  
+34 922881039

### Agulo

#### Tasca La Vieja Escuela

Calle Poeta Trujillo Armas  
+34 922146004

If you wish to find the other restaurants available on the island you can access the complete list on La Gomera's tourism web site [www.lagomera.travel](http://www.lagomera.travel) or through this link.





## Leisure and main local fiestas

### Leisure activities

La Gomera offers the visitor various leisure activities in contact with nature. Both the nature and climate of the Island provide the ideal setting to practice outdoor sports all year round.

A great number of paths await those who want to enjoy the magic of nature on the island. The island's physical geography has benefitted from the inclusion of a network of paths. These paths cross the whole island and are maintained in optimal condition. This has consolidated the island as an exemplary destination for those who enjoy trekking. The unusual image is completed with precipitous cliffs, massifs, laurel forests, pines, palms and giant heaths that without doubt make La Gomera an island with something different to offer.

La Gomera offers all the necessary conditions to go mountain biking both as a family or professional cyclist. Discover the fantastic landscape of the island of La Gomera and don't leave any place unexplored as it is well worthwhile. Mountain biking orientation courses are available to discover the best places on the island: The cliffs, ravines, parks and beaches. You can take different routes according to your level of experience and physical condition. So come on let's go and discover La Gomera on two wheels.

The Port of San Sebastián de La Gomera, is the visitor's first stop, with its' proud history linked to the Discovery of America. Since the the XV century it has been a habitual stop off for expeditions to the New World. The Port has a modern sports marina for the practice of nautical sports.

Thanks to the exceptional climate the whole year round and the sea currents, the temperature of the water in the Canarian archipelago varies between 19º C in winter and 26º C in summer. The particularity of the sea bed (more than 3,500 metres deep between islands) and the volcanic rocks from which they are made up, renders them excellent nurseries for an endless number of sea bed species.

As for diving, the seascape on the sea bed includes diverse rocky formations, mainly of lava and basalt rock. We can find hills covered by big rocks, formations of bridges, gullies and mountains, forming in their entirety wonderful underwater seascapes. We can admire impressive precipitous walls formed by tall basalt rocks.





Other island attractions are the excursions departing from the ports of Playa de Santiago and Valle Gran Rey. They offer the visitor whale and dolphin watching, in fact, La Gomera is one of the places in the world with the largest biodiversity of cetaceans. Excursions also leave from Valle Gran Rey's port to observe the Natural Monument Los Órganos. This enormous basalt structure in the form of organ pipes can only be fully enjoyed from the sea. Alternatively, there are companies offering kayak trips along the jagged coasts of the island. This is one of the most interesting ways of practicing active tourism on the Island.

Besides trekking on foot you can go horse riding or mountain biking.



Golf is another of the leisure activities you can enjoy in La Gomera. Located in Lomada de Tecina, 1,200 meters from Playa de Santiago, is the Tecina Golf which is exceptional from several points of view. It offers 18 holes (Par 71) on a wide surface and covers 6,205 meters, offering the most spectacular landscapes of the "Isla Colombina" as La Gomera is also known.

## Leisure activities

### Hiking

#### **Ymaguara Turismo Sostenible**

La Puntilla, 14  
Vallehermoso  
+34 922800329  
[www.ymaguara.com](http://www.ymaguara.com)

### Boat trips

#### **Tina Excursiones**

Puerto de Vueltas  
Valle Gran Rey  
+34 922805885

If you wish to find other leisure and excursion companies available on the island you can access the complete list on La Gomera's tourism web site [www.lagomera.travel](http://www.lagomera.travel) or through this link.



## January

**06 th**  
**The Epiphany**  
Valle Gran Rey

**20 th**  
**San Sebastián**  
San Sebastián  
de La Gomera

## February

**Carnival**  
San Sebastián de La Gomera

## April

**24 th**  
**San Marcos**  
Agulo

## May

**15 th**  
**San Isidro**  
La Palmita (Agulo), Epina y Alajeró

## June

**13 th**  
**San Antonio**  
Valle Gran Rey

**24 th**  
**San Juan**  
Hermigua,  
Vallehermoso,  
Valle Gran Rey y  
San Sebastián

**29 th**  
**San Pedro**  
Valle Gran Rey,  
Vallehermoso y  
San Sebastián

## July

**08 th**  
**San Benito**  
Los Aceviños.  
Hermigua

**11 th**  
**San Cristóbal**  
San Sebastián

**14 th**  
**Virgin de La Salud**  
Arure  
Valle Gran Rey

**16 th**  
**El Carmen**  
Valle Gran Rey,  
San Sebastián  
y Playa de  
Santiago

**23 rd**  
**Octava de El Carmen**  
Vallehermoso

**25 th**  
**Santiago Apostle**  
Playa Santiago

## August

**02 nd**  
**Virgin of the Pine**  
El Cercado.  
Vallehermoso

**03 rd**  
**San Benito Abad**  
San Sebastián

**08 th**  
**Santo Domingo**  
Hermigua

**10 th**  
**San Lorenzo**  
Arguayoda

## Fiestas and local Religious Feasts

La Gomera's festive calendar is extensive, full of popular, religious and historical celebrations all of which have a strong traditional mood.

The Feast of the Virgen de Guadalupe (Virgin of Guadalupe) is the most traditional religious feast in La Gomera, the Virgin is affectionately called "La Morenita" here. Like in many other coastal villages, those who go to the fiesta go to the Sanctuary of Puntallana by boat; from there, the pilgrims transfer the Virgin to San Sebastián. This tradition becomes particularly solemn every five years, when it is celebrated in a special way.

The popular local religious festivities known



as "romerías" are also a main tourist attraction. The most distinguished is the one taking place in January in the capital in honour of its patron saint, San Sebastián, or the one held in the middle of August in Tapahuga for San Roque. The particularity of this "romería" is that it takes place on the beach and recently it has become an exemplary event in terms of the number of participants both inhabitants and tourists. It is also worth mentioning Our Lady of Mount Carmel's feast which takes place in the coastal villages of the Island; Among these coastal processions the most remarkable are the fiestas of the Paso in Alajeró (September 14-15), one of the best opportunities to enjoy the sound of the chácaras



(a type of large castanet), drums and narrative poetry of La Gomera.

El Ramo (a type of bouquet) constitutes one of the most characteristic symbols in La Gomera's fiestas. Coinciding with the celebration of San Salvador (August 16) the offering of El Ramo (the bouquet) takes place in Arure: a small bouquet made with several products of the earth and adorned with ferns and flowers. One family takes charge of making it, as a payment of a promise, and the following year it will be someone else's turn. The corresponding religious ritual is accompanied by the chácara music and drums, singing of narrative poetry and dancing. San Buenaventura and the Virgen de la Salud (Virgin of Health) (in July) are celebrated by offering a profound meaningful ritual and provide a reason of union among the neighbours.



Las Hogueras de San Marcos (San Marcos' Bonfire) is one of the most deeply-rooted and representative traditions which are part of Agulo's village festivities. Every April 24 one of the most magic nights in the Island of La Gomera takes place, it is San Marcos eve, during which the people jump over the bonfire. It is both a religious and pagan festivity confirming an old tradition which each year is passed on generation after generation, the ancient rituals are conserved; including the characteristic scent of burnt juniper branches enveloping the streets and obvious popular fervour and affection toward the patron saint.

The Carnival of San Sebastián de La Gomera takes place in February like the rest of the Canary Islands it shares the happiness, the abandon, the musical performances and the parades. With the traditional election of carnival beauty queens, announcements, parades and floats, people celebrate these festivities intensely. It is a less famous and spectacular Carnival than Tenerife's, for example, but also more intimate and more personal and in many cases even more amusing. As in other islands like La Palma, the tradition of the talcum powder "powdering" also takes place every year.

## August

**15 th**  
**Virgen de Candelaria**  
*Chipude*

**23 rd**  
**Santa Rosa**  
*Las Rosas*  
*Agulo*

**31 st**  
**Caridad del Cobre**  
*Tamargada*  
*Vallehermoso*

**Last Sunday of the month**  
**Virgen de Lourdes**  
*El Cedro*

**16 th**  
**San Salvador**  
*Arure*  
*Valle Gran Rey*

**24 th**  
**San Bartolomé**  
*Alojera*  
*Vallehermoso*

**Last weekend**  
**Virgin del Buen Viaje**  
*Taguluche*  
*Valle Gran Rey*

## September

**06 th**  
**Fiestas Colombinas**  
*San Sebastián*

**14 th - 15 th**  
**Virgin del Paso**  
*Alajeró*

**29 th**  
**San Francisco Abad**  
*Igualero*  
*Vallehermoso*

**08 th**  
**Ntra. Sra. de La Encarnación**  
*Hermigua*

**24 th**  
**Las Mercedes**  
*Agulo*

## October

**First Sunday**  
**Santa Clara**  
*El Rosario,*  
*(Hermigua)*  
*Santa Clara,*  
*Arguamul*  
*(Vallehermoso)*

**Second Sunday of the month**  
**Virgin de La Salud**  
*Las Nieves*  
*San Sebastián*

**First Monday of the month**  
**Virgin de Guadalupe**  
*Puntallana*  
*San Sebastián*

## December

**13 th**  
**Santa Lucia**  
*Tazo*  
*Vallehermoso*



## Useful telephone numbers

**Civil Guard**

San Sebastián de La Gomera  
+34 922870255

Hermigua  
+34 922144001

Playa de Santiago  
+34 922 89 50 04

Vallehermoso  
+34 922800227

Valle Gran Rey  
+34 922807172

**Tribunal (Law Court)**

San Sebastián de La Gomera  
+34 922870252

**Local Police (City Council)**

San Sebastián de La Gomera  
+34 922141572

Hermigua  
+34 922 144040

Agulo  
+34 922146144 ext. 3

Alajeró  
+34 922895155 ext. 22

Vallehermoso  
+34 922800000

Valle Gran Rey  
+34 922807171

**Emergency Services**

112

**Insular Hospital**

San Sebastián  
+34 922140200

**Health Centre**

San Sebastián de La Gomera  
+34 922872005

Hermigua  
+34 922881929

Agulo  
+34 922146014

Playa de Santiago  
+34 922895160

Vallehermoso  
+34 922801505

Valle Gran Rey  
+34 922807005

**Pharmacies**

San Sebastián de La Gomera  
+34 922870157  
+34 922141605  
+34 922141607

Valle Gran Rey  
+34 922805919  
+34 922805158

Hermigua  
+34 922880078

Vallehermoso  
+34 922800028

Agulo  
+34 922146036

Alajeró  
+34 922895003

Chipude  
+34 922804286

**La Gomera Town Council**

San Sebastián  
+34 922140100

**Delegation of the Government**

San Sebastián  
+34 922997002

**Post offices**

San Sebastián  
+34 922871081

Valle Gran Rey  
+34 922805730

Hermigua  
+34 922880227

Agulo  
+34 922146006

**Garajonay National Park**

San Sebastián  
+34 922800993

**Visitors' Centre Juego de Bolas**

Las Rosas (Agulo)  
+34 922800993

**La Gomera Archaeological Museum**

San Sebastián de La Gomera  
+34 922141586

**Ethno-graphic Museum of La Gomera**

Ctra. Gral. Las Hoyetas, 99  
Hermigua  
+34 922881960

## Tourist Information Centres

**San Sebastián de La Gomera**

Calle Real, 32  
Casa Bencomo  
+34 922141512  
sansebastian@lagomera.travel

**Valle Gran Rey**

Calle Lepanto, s/n  
La Playa  
+34 922805458  
vallegranrey@lagomera.travel

**Playa de Santiago**




Avenida Marítima, s/n  
Edificio Las Vistas, local 8  
+34 922895650  
playasantiago@lagomera.travel





  
**La Gomera**  
The Canary Islands

## Network of paths

-  GR-131 "Hills of La Gomera"
-  GR-132 "Coasts of La Gomera"
-  Other paths



# La Gomera

The Canary Islands



Canary  
Islands   
LATITUDE OF LIFE



Cabildo Insular  
de La Gomera

[www.lagomera.travel](http://www.lagomera.travel)