



WHY IS **GranCanaria**
ONE OF THE GREAT
TOURIST DESTINATIONS IN SPAIN?



1) Basic information about our holiday island

Gran Canaria is one of the 7 islands that make up the Canary Archipelago, which is one of Spain's 17 autonomous communities.

Gran Canaria is situated in the Atlantic Ocean, at a distance of some 1,250 kilometres from the Iberian Peninsula, at the southernmost point of the European Union, and 210 kilometres northwest off the coast of Africa.

The island is set to Greenwich mean time, its official language is **Spanish** and its currency is the **Euro (€)**.

By the end of 2014, the island of Gran Canaria registered a census of 851,157 inhabitants. Its capital city is Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, the most populated city in the Canary Islands.

Last year Gran Canaria welcomed 3,580,517 tourists

2) A great fully guaranteed European destination

The island of Gran Canaria is a tourist destination with a considerable turnover. It is a multi-market holiday destination attracting millions of travelers from all over Europe. It has a competitive, modern [range of hotels](#) and alternative accommodation, which is able to provide visitors with high levels of service, along with an extensive portfolio of [tourist products](#).

Gran Canaria forms part of the European Union and the Euro Zone for all intents and purposes. As a consequence it participates fully in the European Single Market, in terms of currency and customs controls. A visit to Gran Canaria, or to any island in the Canaries for that matter, is no different from travelling to Madrid or Barcelona in terms of travel documents required.

As a Spanish territory, Gran Canaria maintains safety standards on a par with all other EU nations, and complies with all requirements regarding economic, food, health, environmental, personal, political, social and legal safety to be expected in any European capital city. This **high level of security** boosts its commerce, its stability and the development of activities such as tourism.

The island has a long tourist tradition, and its popularity with leading European markets is a result of 60 years as the choice for travelers coming over time and again. It has a low variance in seasons, thanks to a mild and pleasant climate that is spread evenly over the 12 months. Summers are generally long, warm and dry, while Winters are fresher, shorter and more humid. These competitive strengths set it apart as one of the leading holiday destinations over the whole of the continental Winter period.

TABLE 1

Gran Canaria as a tourist destination. Basic data

	2012	2013	2014
Population of Gran Canaria	852.225	852.723	851.157
Foreign Tourists	2.819.605	2.970.895	3.131.638
National tourists	414.240	413.369	448.679
Total number of visiting tourists	3.233.845	3.384.264	3.580.517

Sources: Istac. Frontur. Own data.

Gran Canaria has a land surface area of 1.560² kilometres and a coastline measuring 236 kilometres, of which 60 kilometres are beaches. The diversity of its climate and landscape (*with several degrees difference depending on the area and height above sea level*), have led to it being labeled the ‘*Miniature Continent*’ and has given it the distinction, for the wealth of its natural heritage, as **Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO**, [in 2005](#).

The island’s natural features are another of its hallmarks as a tourist destination. Its uniqueness in this respect has made it the perfect spot for the study of the sustainable exploitation of its seas. Gran Canaria, and indeed the whole of the Canary archipelago, are considered one of the leading areas in the world for their wide biological diversity, and as a place of interest for geological studies. The sheer variety and wealth of its endemic species place the islands right at the top of world listings for flora lovers.

Gran Canaria’s **privileged geographical positioning** in the Mid Atlantic also makes it a natural logistical platform between Europe, Africa and America, with whom it has traditionally held deep economic and cultural links. These links are growing even stronger nowadays thanks to extensive airline connections with a whole host of European cities, with a busy flight map that allows it to take full advantage of its short to mid distance flight location.

[Gran Canaria airport](#) is in fact one of Spain’s leading domestic flight hubs (*being the 5th busiest airport in terms of passengers in 2014 with 10,315,132 travelers*), while the harbour at Puerto de la Luz y Las Palmas sits proudly in the top 100 major ports in the world. In 2013 it welcomed some 830,224 cruise passengers, and this number is growing yearly.

Like the other Canary islands, the island’s administration authority is called the Cabildo. The [Cabildo de Gran Canaria](#) in turn set up an autonomous organization to manage the promotion of tourism on the island, namely the [Gran Canaria Tourist Board](#), which takes on the role of DMO.

TABLE 2

Gran Canaria. A wide range of accommodation.

	2014
Choice of hotels	59.137 beds in holiday, urban and rural hotels
Choice of alternative accommodation	89.653 beds in bungalows and holiday apartments.

Source: GC Tourist Board.

3) Tourism as the backbone of the island's economy

In the past Gran Canaria used to base its economy on intensive farming which yielded high demand crops, such as sugar, bananas and tomatoes. However, the emergence of tourism led to a restructuring of its economic growth several decades ago. Today Gran Canaria's economic activity is heavily reliant on the services sector.

The bonanza of the islands' climate, together with its unrivalled natural conditions and highly qualified services, along with the total peace of mind for visitors coming to the Canary Islands, are currently its main assets against competing tourist resorts.

Today, tourism has not only positioned itself as the leading sector in the island's economy, it has also been responsible to a great extent for the maintaining of present day productive structures, employment, consumer spending and quality of life for the island's local population.

TABLE 3

Gran Canaria, a resort with superb connections.

Gran Canaria Airport
The airport on the island of Gran Canaria handles operations for up to 57 different airlines during the year.
<p>In 2014, air traffic recorded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10,315,732 passengers • 102,211 flights • 19,821 tons of goods and merchandise.
In 2014, Gran Canaria airport was the 5th busiest airport in the country in terms of air traffic volume.

Source: AENA

4) A multiproduct range, the launchpad for a great destination

The strength of Gran Canaria in the European markets is not based exclusively on its great climate, however, nor on its privileged geographical situation. Perhaps its main strength in the tourist stage over the next few years will be the sheer quantity of products the island offers its visitors. It has a truly complete portfolio given the limited physical dimensions of the resort itself.

Of these products, the number one attraction would obviously still be the beach and sun. Gran Canaria is fortunate enough to have a [huge number of beaches](#), which are very different from one another, with an enormous diversity between the different enclaves in the north compared to the south. In the south the standout beach is the long strip of golden sands called the Natural Reserve of Maspalomas Dunes, a gigantic series of rolling dunes just a few metres from the sea. This sea of dunes forms a striking background which starts at the Playa del Inglés and extends along to Maspalomas. It is an area of exceptional value and one of the most visited tourist spots in the whole of Europe.

[Maspalomas](#) is also the epicentre for the great tourist city in the south of the island. It is packed full of leisure and entertainment facilities, made up of a multitude of resorts, from San Agustín, to Meloneras and the Playa del Inglés, a veritable holiday hotspot for tourists who pour in from all over Europe, and remains a thriving, bustling area the whole year round.

Following the coastline around to the south, visitors will come to a multitude of coves and mid-size beaches. Several of these form the hub for important tourist resorts, such as Puerto de Mogán, Puerto Rico or Amadores, among others. These resorts are becoming more specialized, allowing for tourists to have a whole range of products on hand, from diving to windsurfing, whale and dolphin watching, to day trips on sailing boats or sailing classes for beginners.

The standout beaches to the north, meanwhile, are Agaete and the urban beach Las Canteras, located in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and possibly the main tourist attraction the city has to offer. It is a carefully protected natural area of priceless value, an exceptional spot for its rich marine life, yet is just a stone's throw away from the bustle of the town centre. Las Canteras brings together most of the capital's hotels and is just perfect for sports enthusiasts who are drawn in like magnets in search of a whole host of sporting activities.

The island has a wide agenda of active tourism, in the form of activities and sports that pushes visitors out geographically all over the island. Along with the places referred to above, choices for tourists are now spreading far and wide into new areas, where visitors can enjoy a new kind of holiday.

However, the main leisure attraction is still the sea, under ever clear blue skies, just perfect for [all types of activities](#). From sailing, charter yachts, surfing, diving, sports fishing and cetacean watching, in a marine holiday world which lives side by side with rich fauna, because another of the peculiarities of Gran Canaria's waters is the coexistence of all kinds of species that live there: from pelagic fish and turtles who live alongside skates, angel sharks or porbeagle sharks, to a multitude of coastal species; sword fish and huge tuna fish together with a colony of mammals with dolphins and bottlenose dolphins.

Gran Canaria is also a [great MICE destination](#), a highly convenient option for holding professional meetings and congresses. The island stands out for its infrastructures and for a sizeable group of companies catering for all kinds of bolt on congress services (*specialized equipment, audiovisual productions, catering, translator and interpreters, temporary staff, public relations, organizers, etc.*)

As for [rural tourism](#), this has developed significantly thanks to the restoration of old buildings, in keeping with local surroundings to maintain traditional styles. It is a culmination of all the home comforts guests demand, the

highest standards of quality service, with easy access to all rural areas. To complement this, a whole new world of open air activities have sprung up over the last few years, such as hiking, mountain walking, trekking, cycle tourism, horse-riding, cookery and handicraft courses, and so on.

In the middle of all this is a 300 kilometre network of footpaths available to hikers, known as the “Royal Paths”, allowing them to get close up to the island’s ever changing scenery.

No less important is the wide [choice for golfers](#). Gran Canaria is one of Spain’s top golfing destinations. The island offers 8 completely different courses, all within a one hour driving radius. Among these is the Real Club de Golf de Las Palmas, in Bandama, the oldest golf club in Spain, which was founded back in 1891.

But if golf goes back a long way on the island, then even more so does the [Spa & Wellness](#) range. Indeed, the origins of Gran Canaria’s tourism were born out of its ideal facilities for healthcare. Europeans would come in their droves to the aristocratic spas in Gran Canaria in the 19th century, in order to flee the cold and find relief for their rheumatic complaints. This tradition only reaffirms the quality of wellness facilities to be found on the island today.

All these tourist products are enhanced even further by Gran Canaria’s exceptional heritage. For centuries the island represented a unique blend of cultures, a refuge for travelers coming in from 3 continents, the last port of call before undertaking the adventure over the Atlantic. Its location as a crossroads led to its own particular cuisine, based on [ingredients](#) from all over the globe, simmering under an open and tolerant culture, a melting pot of flavours, colours and sounds from a thousand different places.

Eagle-eyed tourists will spot the clues left by previous generations of travelers around every corner, with a clear architectural trail lining the narrow streets in Vegueta for instance, in the capital, or at the churches and hermitages scattered all over the island or in tiny hamlets tucked away.

This is the birthplace for cultural tourism, with a priceless historical heritage oozing from the [Museum network](#) in Gran Canaria, thanks also to places like the Pérez Galdós Theatre, the Cuyás Theatre, ExpoMeloneras or the Alfredo Kraus Auditorium of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. It also is the venue for important international events, such as the [Festival de Música de Canarias](#), Canary Music Festival, or the many local popular fiestas, including the Gran Canaria Carnival, a real crowd puller.

In conclusion then, there is a wide selection of products to make tourists’ stay an memorable one, from the coastal areas right up to the lesser known mountainous interior. A fine choice of leisure options which encourage visitors to venture a little further afield, providing a less biased picture of what is the reality and idiosyncratic nature of the ‘*little miniature Continent*’.

Our great little continent looks forward to welcoming you very soon.





Would you like more information?

Please contact the Gran Canaria Tourist Board at:

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