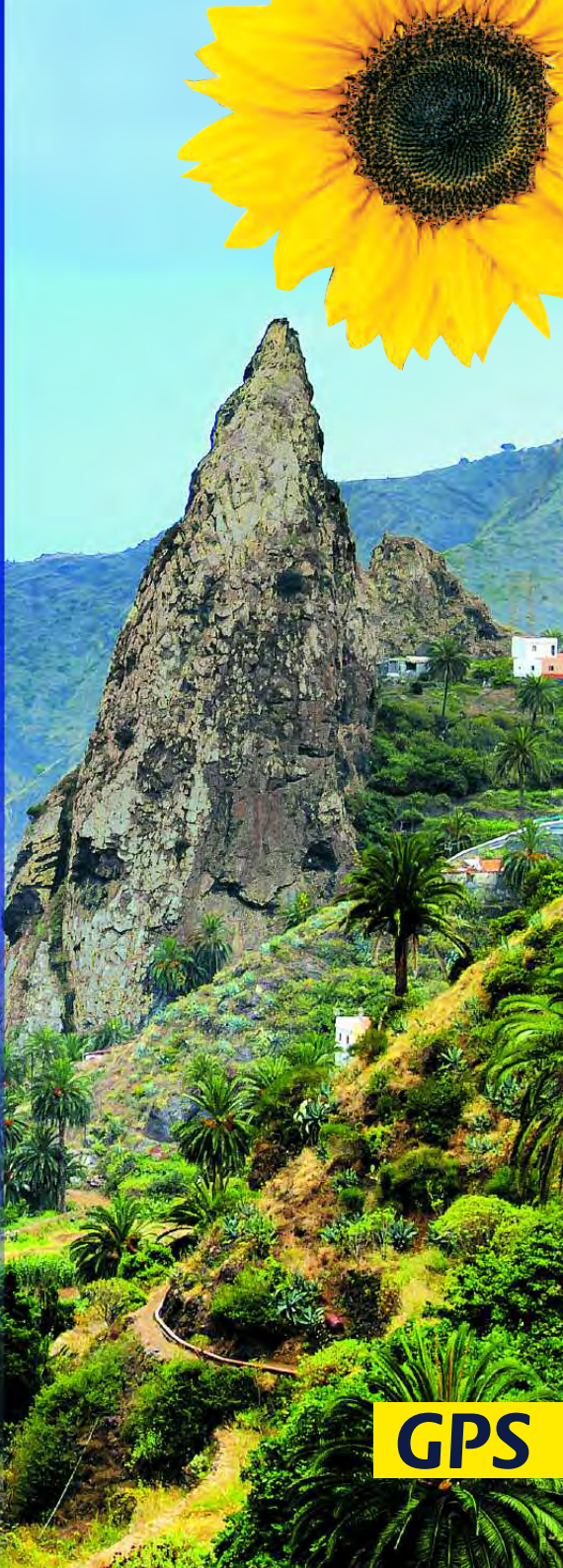


*Southern Tenerife and*

# **LA GOMERA**

*70 long and short walks • 6 car tours*



**GPS**

This is a sample from the  
PDF edition of  
*Landscapes of*  
**SOUTHERN TENERIFE**  
*and*  
**LA GOMERA**

---

*a countryside guide*  
Ninth edition



Noel Rochford  
revised by Sunflower Books  
with Jan Kostura

This shorter sampler includes some of the introductory text, the introductions to each of the main sections (Picnicking, Car Touring and Walking) with an example of each. There is a total of 152 pages, plus two pull-out region maps, in the full book.



SUNFLOWER BOOKS



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# Getting about

## Tenerife

The best way to get around the island is by **hiring a car** (or motorbike). **Coach tours** are also a popular way of seeing Tenerife. While **taxis** cater for those with less time and more money, sharing can make them worthwhile.

If you're not pushed for time, the local **buses run by Titsa** ([titsa.com](http://titsa.com)) are fun and inexpensive — invest in daily or weekly fare-saving travel cards, valid on the tram and all bus lines. The plan on the touring map inside the back cover shows bus stations and some major stops in the southern tourist centres. The bus network is very extensive, but if you're going far from your base in the south, schedules may not permit you to take *long* walks: you may need to arrange alternative transport.

## La Gomera

If you only spend a day or two, a **hire car** is the best way of getting about. If you're visiting from Tenerife, you can either take your car over or hire a car in San Sebastián (near the port or in town). If you're going straight to Gomera, it should be cheaper to arrange car hire at home before you travel. **Coach tours** and **taxis** are other options of course.

Local **buses** ([www.guaguagomera.com](http://www.guaguagomera.com)) service the ferry arrivals/departures. Morning buses bring passengers from around the island for the first departure, return to the villages with arrivals, head back to the port, etc. Together with the **passenger ferry** ([www.fredolsen.es](http://www.fredolsen.es)) mentioned on page 149 most walks can be reached without a car.

*Approaching Cruce de la Zarcita on the GM2, with views to Roque Carmona in the foreground and El Teide on Tenerife in the distance*





# Picnicking

Picnickers are extremely well catered for on both Tenerife and La Gomera. The authorities have set up several well-equipped ‘recreation areas’ around the islands. All have been laid out in harmony with their surroundings. At these *zonas recreativas* (which tend to be crowded on weekends and holidays), you’ll find tables, benches and drinking fountains. Many are also equipped with barbecues, wCs and play areas for children. All **roadside picnic areas with tables** (and sometimes other facilities) are indicated in the touring notes and on the touring maps by the symbol **Ⓐ**.

I’ve also included some other ideas for motorists. Sometimes during a walk I’ve come upon a terrific view or pretty setting not far off the car touring road. If so, I’ve used the symbol **P** both in the car touring text and on the touring map to alert you to it. If it is some way from the roadside and involves a short walk, then look for the symbol **P** on the large-scale *walking* map for the area to find out *exactly* where it is and how to get there. Obviously on Tenerife there are many appealing picnic spots not mentioned in the car tours, since this guide only includes walking maps for the south, so it wouldn’t be possible to pinpoint their locations.

*Two hints:* Do park *well off* the road, so as not to inconvenience other motorists or the local people. And please heed the Country code on page 16 and go quietly in the countryside.

*Walkers are spoiled for choice, of course. Look at this lovely setting in the Barranco de Guarimiar early on in Walk 25, with palms for shade and rocks to sit on.*





# Touring


Most people holidaying on Tenerife and Gomera hire a car for some part of their stay. It's very easy to travel between the islands — just 50 minutes by fast ferry (see timetables on page 149).

The four relatively long tours on **Tenerife** described here will get you well acquainted with the island. If your time is limited, **Tour 1 is a must**, with **Tour 4** making a good follow-up.

There are two itineraries for **La Gomera**: I've simply split the island north/south. Should you only be visiting Gomera for one day, you can combine the two tours, *if you make a very early start* by fast ferry from Los Cristianos. If you're spending more time on Gomera and you're hiring a 4WD vehicle, you may find it helpful to look at the *walking maps* when touring, since only a few *tracks* are shown on the touring map.

The touring notes are brief: they contain little history or information readily available in leaflets freely available from the tourist offices. The facilities and 'sights' of the main towns are not described either, for the same reason. Instead, I concentrate on the 'logistics' of touring: times and distances, road conditions, and seeing places many tourists miss. Most of all, I emphasise possibilities for **walking** and **picnicking**. While a few of the references to picnics 'off the beaten track' (indicated by the symbol **P** in the touring notes) may not be suitable during a long car tour, you may see a landscape that you would like to explore at leisure another day.

**The fold-out touring maps are designed to be held out opposite the touring notes** and contain all the information you will need outside the towns. The tours have been written up starting from Playa de las Américas (Tenerife) and Valle Gran Rey (La Gomera), but they can be joined from other points quite easily. Town plans are on the touring map. **Symbols** used in the text are explained in the map key; note that only *isolated* hotels and restaurants are highlighted: you will find them (as well as medical centres) in all major villages.

**Allow ample time for visits**; my times include only short breaks at viewpoints labelled  in the notes. Calculate time for **detours** as well: villages, picnics and walks shown in ( ) at the top of the tours are only accessible via *detours*. Take along **warm clothing** as well as some **food and drink**, in case you are delayed.

Distances quoted are *cumulative* from the departure point. A key to the symbols is on the touring maps. **All motorists should read the Country code on page 16. Buen viaje!**





# Walking

This book includes 16 long and short walks reached quite easily from a base in the **south of Tenerife**, but I've emphasised walking on **La Gomera**. (The companion volume, *Landscapes of Tenerife*, describes 80 long and short walks in the north and east of Tenerife.)

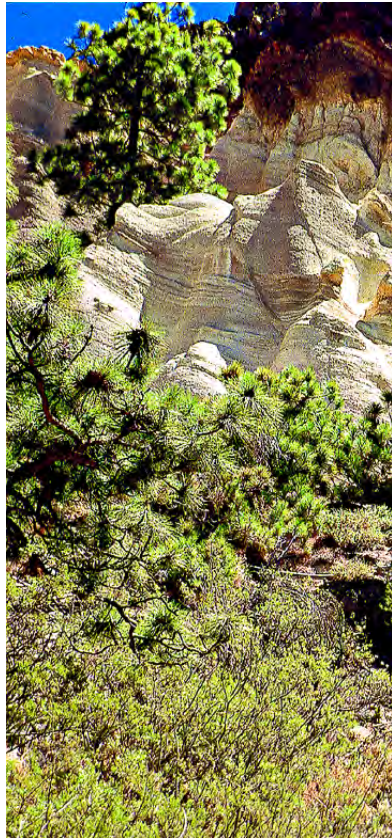
*There are walks in this book for everyone.*

**Beginners:** Start on the walks graded ● or ● — or walk to a picnic spot (see page 8); most of the picnic suggestions make good short and easy walks.

**Motorists:** I have increased the number of circular walks in this edition; almost every walk can be done from a car — and I've given you waypoints for the parking place so that you can set your satnav/GPS. But some walks are unavoidably linear: a good solution is to walk from A to B and take a bus back to your car — or, where timetables permit, drive to the end of the walk, leave your car there, and take a bus back to the start.

**Experienced walkers:** If you are used to rough terrain and have a head for heights, you should be able to tackle all the walks in this book — taking into account, of course, the season and weather conditions. For example, in rainy weather some of the walks will be unsuitable — especially the Barranco de Masca on Tenerife (Walk 8) and any walk on La Gomera involving narrow paths with steep ascents and descents. Always read the 'Grade' section of every walk you plan to do!

**All walkers:** Be sure to check for any updates on Sunflower website *before* you walk! See the 'UPDATE' tab on the Southern Tenerife and La Gomera page.



*The eroded pumice funnels of the Paisaje Lunar (Walk 7)*



## Grading, signposting/waymarking, maps, GPS

We've tried to give you a quick overview of each walk's **grade** in the Contents. But some walks have shorter or alternative versions, and in the Contents we've only had space to show the *lowest* grade of a *main* walk: for full details — including easier versions — see the walk itself. Here is a brief overview of the four gradings:

- very easy — more or less level (perhaps with a short climb to a viewpoint); good surfaces underfoot; easily followed
- easy-moderate — ascents/descents of no more than about 300-500m/1000-1800ft; good surfaces underfoot; easily followed
- moderate-strenuous — ascents/descents may be over 500m/1800ft; variable surfaces underfoot — you must be sure-footed and agile; possible route-finding problems in poor visibility
- expert — only suitable for very experienced hillwalkers; hazards may include crossing landslides or edging along very narrow paths with no respite from constant exposure

Any of the above grades may be followed by:

- ⚠ *possibility* of vertigo — for those with no head for heights at all
- ⚠⚠ *danger* of vertigo — you must have a very good head for heights

**Signposting** and **waymarking** on both islands has been upgraded to European standards. There are two types of walks:



## 12 Landscapes of southern Tenerife and La Gomera

- long-distance footpaths ('Grandes Recorridos' or 'GR' routes), indicated by *red and white* waymarks and wine-red signposts;
- day trails which, on Tenerife, may be prefaced by 'PR' (for 'Pequeños Recorridos') and indicated by *yellow and white* waymarks or 'SE' (for 'Senderos Locales') and indicated by *green and white* waymarks. On La Gomera these routes are usually just numbered and marked *green and white* (although many fingerposts are simply white, like the ones on page 127).

For all routes, horizontal stripes (=) indicate 'continue this way', angled (∠) or right-angled stripes show a change of direction; an 'X' (X) means 'wrong way'.



*Signposting of PR routes on Tenerife; SL routes would have green colour coding. Fingerposts on La Gomera are likely to be just white, like those in the photo on page 127.*

Most signposting of walks on **Tenerife** conforms to European guidelines, as can be seen in the photo at the left, where PR trails are signposted yellow/white. But *in addition* the Teide National Park has maintained its own longstanding system of route marking for 41 walks within the park. These are usually indicated on green metal signs showing route numbers. The map on pages 50-51 shows three

overlapping types of route: the long-distance GR 131, two different day (PR) walks and several national park trails.

**Gomera** adopted the European guidelines in 2004, but due to cost constraints has since abandoned numbering and colour-coding of PR and SL routes, although GR trails are still marked red/white. Instead there are currently 40 signposted and green/white waymarked government-maintained trails (600km), *plus* 18 marked trails in the Garajonay National Park. All official trails are shown on a map, *Camina La Gomera*, published by the island government and available at most tourism offices and the Juego de Bolas Visitors' Centre, where you can also get a brochure about the national park trails.

The **maps** in this book are based on Openstreetmap mapping (see page 2), but have been very heavily annotated from notes and GPS work in the field. It is a pity that we have to reproduce them at only 1:50,000 to keep the book to a manageable size; quite a few walkers buy both the paperback *and* download our pdf files so that they can print the maps at a larger size — or you can enlarge them on a photocopier.

Two things to note about the maps: firstly, *both* islands have

## Organisation of the walks

































The walks in this book are located in those places easily reached from a base in the south of Tenerife and throughout La Gomera. On La Gomera, the walks are arranged anti-clockwise around the island, starting from Valle Gran Rey (VGR). Bus journey times *from the nearest base* are indicated, both for outward and inbound travel. For motorists, GPS coordinates are given for the best parking places.

You might begin by considering the touring maps inside the back cover. Here you can see the overall terrain, main and secondary roads, and the locations of all the walks. Flipping through the book, you'll see that there is at least one photo for every walk.

Having selected one or two potential excursions from the map and the photographs, turn to the relevant walk. At the top of the page you will find planning information: distance/time, grade, equipment, and how to get there. If the grade and equipment specifications are beyond your scope, don't despair! You might be able to reverse the walk (*go downhill*) or else just do *part* of the route, turning back wherever you like. Look at page 8 as well; you can use the maps for short walks to some pleasant picnic spots.

When you are on your walk, you will find that the text begins with an introduction to the overall landscape and then quickly turns to a detailed description of the route itself. **Times** are given for reaching certain points in the walk. **Important:** *do* compare your own times with those in the book on one or two short walks, before you set off on a long hike. Remember that I've included only *minimal stops* at viewpoints; allow ample extra time for photography, picnicking, or swimming. If you are not a reasonably fit walker, these walks may take you *twice as long!* *Do* take this into account, especially when using public transport ... or when it's late in the day. I recommend that you start with a few of the shorter walks so you'll have some idea of how your pace compares with mine.

Below is a key to the symbols on the walking maps:

|   |                         |   |                          |   |                     |
|---|-------------------------|---|--------------------------|---|---------------------|
|  | motorway                |  | spring, tank, waterfall  |  | church; shrine      |
|  | main road               |  | picnic spot (see page 8) |  | cemetery            |
|  | secondary roads         |  | official island trail    |  | picnic tables       |
|  | motor/jeep track        |  | national park trail      |  | pylon; mast         |
|  | trail, path or steps    |  | best views               |  | danger! vertigo!    |
|  | main walk               |  | bus stop                 |  | visitor centre      |
|  | alternative walk        |  | car parking              |  | mill; cave          |
|  | other described walk    |  | ferry port               |  | rock formation      |
|  | official (signed) trail |  | specific building        |  | dyke; gate          |
|  | altitude (metres)       |  | park boundary            |  | walk starting point |
|   |                         |  | watercourse, pipe        |  | waypoint            |



## Car tour 1 (Tenerife): LAS CAÑADAS AND THE NORTHWEST

**Playa de las Américas • Vilaflor • Las Cañadas • La Orotava • Puerto de la Cruz • Icod de los Vinos • Buenavista • (Punta de Teno) • Masca • Santiago del Teide • Los Gigantes • San Juan • Playa de las Américas**

227km/141mi; 8-9 hours' driving; Exit A from Playa de las Américas (plan on reverse of touring map)

**En route:** **⚡** at La Caldera, Las Lajas, Las Cañadas, Los Pedregales; Picnics (**P** symbol on the touring map; **P** on walking maps) Ifonche road, Boca Tauce, Piedras Amarillas, Masca, Los Carrizales; Walks 1, 2, (3-5), 6-9. (For other walks/picnic spots see *Landscapes of Tenerife*.)

*This excursion requires a very early start. You may set off in sunshine, but the north is often under cloud. Less experienced motorists may find the road*

*between Santiago and Masca unnerving. **Important:** the road to Punta de Teno is closed to traffic after 09.00 and sometimes all day; see page 25 and footnote. Puerto, La Orotava and Adeje (Walk 3) are best kept for another day; they are easily reached by bus or motorway. No petrol stations en route between Vilaflor and La Orotava. Parts of this tour will be affected by the 2023 wildfires; see Stop press on page 6!*

**Opening hours:** Agumansa trout farm: 10.00-15.00 Mon-Sat; Botanical Garden, Puerto de la Cruz: 09.00-18.00 daily

**T**his dramatic circuit begins on the dry rocky slopes of the south. Ascending to Las Cañadas, you head up through a forest of Canary pines — among the most beautiful you'll ever see. Las Cañadas is another world; you will cross a vast bare plateau, where rich volcanic hues ooze out of the landscape, and fields of jagged scoria and sunken gravel 'lakes' (*cañadas*) surround you. The north then greets you with the greenery of garden plots and trees; the lush Orotava Valley is a sea of rippling banana palms. Exhilarating coastal scenery takes you to the northwest and its concealed valleys. From gentle, scooped-out basins, you will plunge into precipitous, fathomless ravines.

*Guajara rises on the eastern edge of the Cañadas; it's near the starting point for Walks 7c and d, but also a prominent, if distant, feature on Walk 6.*





Head east along either the motorway or the TF481 just to the south of it, and at Exit 72 turn off right for 'EL TEIDE'. You join the TF28 and pass the **Camel Park** (★). Some 4.5km uphill, turn left on the TF51, passing a road to **Las Aguilas Jungle Park** ★. You climb through a bleak landscape. Cacti and *tabaiba* flourish in this rocky terrain, and mock pepper trees grow alongside the road. Come into **Arona** (11km 🚗📶), a village with a charming shady church square, surrounded by balconied old houses. A short drive leads to El Vento where Walk 2 starts and ends. Further uphill, just before **La Escalona**, the road left to Ifonche (P) would take you to parking for Walks 4 and 5.

Hillocks of all shapes and sizes disrupt the plains. Continue on the TF51 towards Vilaflor. Vineyards on walled slopes border the road as you rise up to **Vilaflor** (25km 🚗📶Ⓜ), the highest town on the island (1400m/4592ft). Nestled on the edge of a plain, this mountain settlement looks up onto the steep forested inclines that run down off the high mountain spurs above. Vilaflor is a good base from which to explore the Paisaje Lunar (Walk 7b).

From Vilaflor follow the TF21 north, passing some of Tenerife's loveliest Canarian pine forests. **Pino Gordo**, a *mirador* 2km past Vilaflor, sits amidst these regal ancient pines (📶). Leaving the viewpoint, at Lomo Blanco you pass the track called 'Pista Madre del Agua' — another approach to the Paisaje Lunar (Walk 7a). Then the road climbs through spectacular mountain landscapes, passing **Las Lajas zona recreativa** (36km 🚗).

You enter **Las Cañadas** ★ at

the pass of **Boca Tauce** (42km (P)), where Walk 6 begins and ends. The twisted uprising of rock over to the left here is more impressive when approached from this direction. A spellbinding lunar landscape unfolds before you. The constant change of colour and rock formation within the encircling crater walls is the highlight of this tour and, I imagine, of your visit. Sharp-surfaced lava flows give way to smooth mounds of scoria, while sunken gravel beds create 'pools' along the floor. Majestic El Teide is with you wherever you go, always more impressive from a distance.

Heading right at the pass, you first skirt the immense gravel plain called **Llano de Ucanca**, almost immediately passing its eponymous *mirador* (📶). Further along, intriguing bright patches of blue and green rock in the roadside embankment catch your attention — **Los Azulejos** (The Tiles). Stop a while at the **Parador de las Cañadas** (49km 🏠🚗📶), where Walks 7c and 7d begin, to admire the **Piedras Amarillas** (Yellow Stones; (P)) and the **Roques de García** on the opposite side of the road. These strange rocky upthrusts, the most famous of which is shown overleaf, stand guard over the eastern edge of the Ucanca Plain.

Pass by the turn-off to the Teide funicular (you would waste most of the day queuing here) and continue via the **Tabonal** and **Minas de San José** viewpoints (📶) to the **El Portillo Visitors' Centre** (🚗wc). This is an excellent source of information on the national park, with a small museum, a film show, and a botanical garden with thriving endemics. While the park covers more than 720 sq kilometres, its

## 24 Landscapes of southern Tenerife and La Gomera

focal point is a huge crater with a diameter of almost 16km (10mi). In spring you may see the exquisite, 2m/7ft-tall *taginaste rojo* flowering here — a magnificent sight when its tapering stem is embellished with bright red florets — as in the photo on pages 46-47. Just beyond the visitors' centre is **El Portillo** (64km ↖↗), the 'Little Gateway'.

From here head left, descending through pines. Soon there are views over the verdant north to Puerto de la Cruz and the built-up coastline. Keep an eye out for the **Mirador Piedra la Rosa**★ (74km ↗), a viewpoint over a rock formation resembling a rose. You'll pass several roadside picnic areas (↗) before you come to the signposted turn-off to **La Caldera**★ (81km ↖↗↘↗).

*Roque Cinchado, the most dramatic of the Roques de García, has been understandably known as 'God's Finger' for years. El Teide rises in the background.*



From this little crater (*caldera*), there are wonderful views over the green slopes of La Orotava and the sea.

Just below the La Caldera turn-off lies the **Aguamansa trout farm**★ (82km ↖↗↘↗). From there lovely countryside scenery of tilled plots amongst sagging, lichen-covered walls and scatterings of aged chestnut trees takes you down to **La Orotava**★ (95km ↘↗↘↗↘↗), known for its Corpus Christi festival (May/June), when the streets are 'painted' with flower petals and coloured sand.

Continue on the TF21 down to Puerto. If you're interested in botany (especially island flora), you might stop at the **Botanical Garden** (🌿). The compact garden is well laid out and contains a substantial collection of tropical and subtropical plants. It's on your route, some 2km south of Puerto, in the suburb of La Paz.

**Puerto de la Cruz**★ (103km ↘↗↘↗↘↗↘↗), once a small port serving the farming town of La Orotava, is a bubbly, rather pleasant resort — as resorts go. What little remains of the old town lies buried amidst hotels and apartment blocks. You may wish to visit the 17th-century remains of the old port's heritage: the church of Nuestra Señora de la Peña, the Chapel of San Telmo and the Castillo de San Felipe (with art exhibitions). The Casa Iriarte, a charming 18th-century house, is held to be the best example of Canarian architecture in Puerto.

From Puerto take the motorway west towards San Juan de la Rambla, continuing on the TF5 for 'SAN JUAN DE LA RAMBLA/ICOD' when it ends. The coastal road passes below cliffs towering up to the left, while breakers crash

below on the right (**Mirador de San Pedro** 113km 📍📍); **Barranco de Ruiz** 116km 🏞️). **San Juan de la Rambla** (119km 📍📍) is a charming, fresh-white village overlooking the sea. Las Aguas, a neighbouring village on the rocky shoreline below, is a picture-postcard scene glimpsed just before San Juan. All the way from Puerto to the northwestern tip of the island, you're immersed in banana palms and bright seasonal blooms.

Keep following the TF5 for 'ICOD' until you can fork right for 'ICOD' and 'GARACHICO' (TF42). Then stay on the TF42 until you can head right again, on the TF82 for the town centre. **Icod de los Vinos**★ (129km 📍📍📍) is set on the fertile, vine-growing slopes below El Teide. No doubt you will want to see the famous ancient dragon tree and the nearby church of San Marcos (16/17C): to get there, go straight over the roundabout for 'DRAGO MILENARIO' (brown sign). Continue uphill and turn right just past the Shell station on your right. To avoid getting caught up in the narrow one-way streets by the church and tree, it's easiest to leave your car in the car park halfway up this street. Return the same way to the Shell station and head left to resume the tour.

Back at the roundabout, ignore the turn-off right to Playa de San Marcos, a resort that never took off with tourists, but is very popular with the locals — a small black-sand beach surrounded by dark jagged cliffs. Go straight over the roundabout, but then be sure not to turn right on the TF5; keep ahead for 'BUENAVISTA' and 'GARACHICO' (TF42). Manorial homes amidst banana plantations come into view as you head west,

soon hugging the coast. Come into **Garachico**★ (135km 📍📍📍📍). This beautifully sited village, once an important port, was destroyed by a volcanic eruption in the early 18th century. But a few buildings of interest survive: the 16th-century San Miguel Castle, the Baroque palace of the Marqués de Adeje, the 17th-century Convent of San Francisco, and the Church of Santa Ana (founded in 1548). Garachico is also known for its inviting natural rock pools. The Roque de Garachico, rising off the shore, bears a cross to protect the site from another catastrophe.

Continuing west on the TF42 you bypass **Los Silos** (141km 📍📍 🏞️). Further along this coastal plain lies **Buenavista** (145km 📍📍📍). The village is walled in by high sharp crags; gorges and valleys cut back into this cataclysm of rock. Just past the Plaza de San Sebastián and a small chapel on the right, the main tour turns left for 'PUNTA DE TENO'\* on the TF445 ... only to be stopped about 3km along at a barrier. To protect the fragile ecosystem, you can no longer drive to the point. But Titsa buses leave from the barrier every hour (just ask the warden when the next bus is due), costing only 1€. The bus winds (sit on the right going to the point and on the left returning!) round and under rough indented cliffs, high above the sea, and then descends to the lighthouse on the dark volcanic promontory of **Punta de Teno** (📍), one of the richest botanical areas in the Canaries.

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\*It will take *at least* 60-90 minutes to go to the lighthouse and back, so you might want to save Punta de Teno for another day. If so, turn left for EL PALMAR at this junction (TF436).



*Masca, where Walk 9 begins and ends*

Back at the junction in Buenavista (151km, if you drove to the barrier), turn right on the TF436 for 'EL PALMAR'. A steep climb through rocky terrain leads you up to El Palmar's lush valley, hidden far above the coastal plain. The reclining valley walls are terraced straight up to the crests. Go through **El Palmar** (157km) and, 1km further on, turn right on the narrow country lane for 'TENÓ ALTO', straight away passing **Los Pedregales** Visitors' Centre (☞☞ and Sunday morning farmers' market). Then continue the steep climb up this gorgeous road to **Teno Alto** (165km ☞☞) — a tiny outpost of farms scattered across a tableland. Try the home cooking in the restaurant here, especially the *cabrito* (kid) and *garbanzos* (chickpeas).

Now return to the El Palmar road and head right. At KM12 you come to the **Mirador de Baracán** (177km ☞) and can take in the dramatic difference between the El Palmar and Masca valleys — the former smooth and sweeping, the latter sharp and turbulent. Then

wind downhill into deep gorges on an increasingly vertiginous road, passing **Los Carrizales** (179km ☞☞), where Walk 9 begins and ends. Various *miradores* (☞ and ☞ at **Cruz de Hilda**) open up magnificent views — especially over **Masca** (182km ☞☞), a favourite village amongst the islanders themselves. Walk 8 descends the spectacular ravine shown on page 55, a narrow corridor of 700m-high rock walls.

Climbing out of the gorges, you quickly pass the starting point for Walk 8 (☞) and cross another pass, where the **Mirador de Cherfe** (☞) opens far-reaching views to La Gomera, La Palma and El Hierro. Then begin the descent, with El Teide making a splendid backdrop. In the attractive village of **Santiago del Teide** (188km ☞☞☞☞) turn right in front of the church on the TF42 for 'LOS GIGANTES'. In **Tamaimo** (195km ☞), a village sheltering below a high rocky protrusion, turn right on the TF454 ('LOS GIGANTES'). Neatly laid out unobtrusive greenhouses cover the landscape, as the route winds downhill. At a T-junction (200km), keep right (same signposting). **Los Gigantes** (202km ☞) is a modern tourist complex, set against a backdrop of sheer cliffs★ rising vertically out of the sea. From here I prefer to go back to the TF47 and quickly make for 'LAS AMERICAS', but you *could* follow the built-up coast to **San Juan** (212km ☞), and take the TF47 from there. At the roundabout below Adeje (Walks 3 and 4), turn right on the TF1, back to **Playa de las Américas** (227km).



## Walk 27 (La Gomera): BARRANCO DE BENCHIJIGUA

See also photos on pages 8, 103 and 110

**Distance:** 11.2km/7mi; 4h20min

**Grade:** ●●● strenuous; ascents/descents of 650m/2130ft. You must be sure-footed and have a head for heights, especially for the narrow, slippery, vertiginous path between El Azadoc pass and the hamlet of El Cabezo. Don't attempt in bad weather. Well signposted trails

**Equipment:** walking boots, walking pole(s), sunhat, fleece, windproof, raingear, picnic, plenty of water

**Access:** 🚗 to/from a lay-by with walkers' signboard at the El Rumbazo turn-off (28° 3.578'N, 17° 12.812'W). No 🚗 access; see Alternative walk.

**Alternative walk: From El Rumbazo to Imada via Benchijigua** (9.7km/6mi; 3h35min). ●●● Very strenuous, with an overall ascent of 750m/2460ft. You must be sure-footed and have a head for heights. Don't

attempt in bad weather. Well signposted trails. Equipment and access as main walk (🚗 start by taxi). Return on 🚗 from Imada (Bus line 3; Timetable 13). Follow the main walk all the way to **El Azadoc** pass (8). From here you can see Imada — the village a couple of valleys away. Walk down the trail to the right. At a signposted junction a few minutes from El Azadoc, ignore the right turn for Pajarito (4); keep straight on. Cross the stream bed, then scramble up a rocky slope to the left. Rounding a ridge, you pass above another small hillside outpost and enter the upper reaches of the **Barranco de Guarimiar** (Walk 25), another tributary of the Barranco de Santiago. The valley narrows to a shady passageway, dropping in leaps and bounds. Passing a lone house, descend into the terraced gardens of Imada, embellished with palms. The trail — by now a beautiful cobbled



path — rises to the upper road in **Imada** (①; 3h35min), opposite the BAR-CAFÉ ARCILIA, base for Walk 26,

an ideal refuelling stop (closed Fridays). Your BUS STOP is just opposite the bar.

**T**he Barranco de Benchijigua, below the imposing mass of Roque de Agando, is a patchwork quilt of terracing dotted with palms. Its hidden hamlets disclose thick-walled homesteads built in traditional style.

**Start out** from the PARKING BAY WITH WALKERS' SIGNBOARD (●) at the turn-off to **El Rumbazo**.

Continue up the valley at the right of the stream bed and go right at the Y-fork after 150m (①; you will return from the left). At the end of the road, just before the ELECTRICITY SUBSTATION, climb a path up to the picturesque village of **Pastrana** (②) and turn left on the village road. When this road ends, follow the wide path straight ahead, at the left of the turning point (FINGERPOST: 'ROQUE DE AGANDO').

You pass a few houses and sheds; then, ignoring minor turn-offs, descend into the **Barranco de Benchijigua**. Soon, looking over the stream bed, an enormous bulging pillar of rock high in the V of the *barranco* captures your attention — Roque de Agando. The trail follows either the stream bed or a small path on the left of the bed. After 100m you pass a small *molino de gofio*\* on the left (③). At first glance it looks like a just another small abandoned house, but it is a mill where maize is ground and roasted. About 100m further on, the trail rises to the right, crosses a water pipe and climbs above two WATER TANKS. The ravine gives one final twist, then straightens

out to reveal the village of Lo del Gato, on a terraced hillside adorned with palms. Grassy inclines and a loose scattering of pines give the surrounding hills an alpine aspect.

Where a path forks left to Lo del Gato (40min), keep right, continuing straight on around the hillside on a path that is very washed out in places. You cross a water-course and come to the Lo del Gato road (1h15min), where you turn left. After 140m, rejoin your path on the right, ascending the hillside.

Eucalyptus and mimosas welcome you into **Benchijigua**. At a T-junction immersed in prickly pear, turn right. You pass below some remnants of the village and some charming renovated cottages. Cross a bouldery stream bed and come to a CREST (④) with a motorable track, where the **Ermita de San Juan** sits up to the left (⑤; 1h30min). The rocky crest here commands a magnificent view over the village, and indeed the whole valley. Both the shady crest and the chapel make ideal picnic spots.

From the *ermita* walk back under 100m, then turn left and continue past a long building with a 'BENCHIJIGUA' NAMEPLATE: follow the farm track descending behind the chained barrier, signposted for 'IMADA'. Some derelict buildings stand above, with houseleeks and *verode* growing out of their roof tiles. Somewhat over 100m downhill, ignore a fork to the left. Five minutes later, pass above some

\**Gofio* is a popular local food. It's made into a thick paste and mixed with stews and soups or with honey, bananas, almonds, even cheese. The savouries are an acquired taste; the sweets are addictive! Freshly-ground *gofio* is very aromatic.



*The ruined hamlet of El Azadoc (above) and El Cabezo (right), caught by a ray of sunlight at the end of the day*

derelict houses. Opposite the last house, where the track descends, turn right on a level path. In early spring the hillsides here are splashed with pink almond blossom. Below you is a small **RESERVOIR**.

Some 20 minutes from Benchijigua, you cross a crest above some **DERELICT FARM BUILDINGS** (6). From here the route scales the steep valley wall ahead in tight zigzags, keeping near the narrow strip of almond trees on the left-hand side of the escarpment. Continue on the gravelly path around the hillside, then ascend to an overgrown **ALMOND ORCHARD** and the grassy slopes beyond it.

On coming to a signposted **T-JUNCTION** (7) near the top, turn right towards 'IMADA'. Ascend to **El Azadoc Pass** (8; 2h40min), from where you look back over the Benchijigua Valley, an immense bowl scooped out of the *cumbre*. Over the pass lies a quite different landscape, where greenery is woven into the sheer valley walls. This valley drops



down into another, deeper and darker valley, the Barranco de Guarimiar (Walk 25). Just below you sit the remains of the hamlet of **El Azadoc**, buried in prickly pear.

Enjoy the view, then return to the **JUNCTION** just below the pass (7). Now keep straight ahead for 'EL CABEZO' (the right-hand fork). Ignore all descending paths. At a faint fork above **Guarimiar** (3h25min), turn left for **EL CABEZO**. The path may be a little overgrown, so keep an eye out for cairns. When you reach **El Cabezo** (9), descend to a road and turn right. At the next junction turn left. Follow this road down to the **PARKING BAY** at **El Rumbazo** (10; 4h)





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