

36 hours in...*Lanzarote*

*The tranquil beauty of this volcanic island makes for an autumn beach break unlike anywhere else in the Canaries, says **Fiona Hardcastle***

Why go?

The smart set have long held a dim view of the Canaries – more hoi polloi than stylish hideaway, they reason, favouring the trendy party islands of the Balearics instead. Strange, as Lanzarote – with its secluded sandy coves, stark beauty, simple white dwellings offset by brooding volcanic landscape and guaranteed year-round sun that scorches – offers little to sniff about. Sights may be scarce, but if relaxation rather than a Grand Tour is your goal, this unhurried island does the trick. Explore inland tranquillity, as the Camerons did at Easter, or the flawless beaches and clear waters of its southern coast. Go now for a steady injection of equatorial heat that will permeate the bones more than an Indian summer ever could.

Get there

Lanzarote is served from airports across the UK. Scheduled operators include British Airways (0844 493 0787; ba.com), Norwegian (0843 3780 888; norwegian.com), Monarch (0871 940 5040; monarch.co.uk), Jet2 (0871 226 1737; jet2.com), Ryanair (0871 246 0000; ryanair.com) and easyJet (0843 104 5000; easyJet.com), all of which service Arrecife airport, to the south of the island. I travelled with

Sovereign Luxury Travel (0843 770 4526, www.sovereign.com), which offers a week at the Princesa Yaiza Suite Hotel Resort (see below) from £2,345 per family of three, based on two adults and one child sharing, including return flights from Gatwick with Thomson and private transfers.

Stay at

Special treat Try the Princesa Yaiza Suite Hotel Resort (1) (Avenida Papagayo 22, Playa Blanca; 0034 928 519 222; princesayaiza.com). This elegant yet informal hotel sweeps down to the white sand beaches of the Playa Dorada. Ideal for families, it is also a perfect retreat for couples, with an excellent spa and a good selection of gourmet restaurants. Doubles from €206 including breakfast.

Mid-range The Volcan Lanzarote (2) (Calle Castillo del Aguila 1, Playa Blanca; 0034 928 51 91 85; hotelvolcanlanzarote.com). A curious entrance – through the candle-lit nave of a former church to the accompaniment of monastic incantation – gives way to a comfortable hotel with views of the marina. Doubles from €131 including breakfast.

On a budget Ocean Dreams, marina and spa villages (3) (0034 928 519 394; oceandreams.es). A pretty

complex of compact villas, perfect for those requiring a simple base from which to explore. Villa with two bedrooms from €100 per night, self-catering.

On arrival 6pm

Stroll along the ocean promenade of the former fishing village of Playa Blanca (4) – less gaudy than many of its Canarian counterparts – and drink in the glorious views of Fuerteventura as the sun begins to dip.

8pm

Set beneath the twinkling lights that thread through the trees of the Yaiza boulevard is the welcoming terrace of Don Giovanni (0034 928 51 93 00). Opt for a main course from the concise but comprehensive fresh fish menu. Follow a starter of beef carpaccio with marinated artichokes and a lime vinaigrette (€14.50/£11), with a pleasingly fleshy sea bass with rocket salad and potato tart (€19/£15). Finish with a homemade tiramisu (€7/£5.60), washed down with a bottle of Griffio (€28/£22), a deliciously crisp local white. Reservations essential.

9pm

Browse through the handcraft market on the Yaiza boulevard



on Friday evenings from 7pm (also Mondays, 11am-4pm). Good for pretty, locally made trinkets.

Day one 7am

Early risers who like to breakfast al fresco should

make the most of the late opening (9am) of the Yaiza's only restaurant with an outside terrace, the Hacienda, by heading out for a morning stroll. Turn left out of the hotel and stride along the seafront, passing the smart new development of the Marina Rubicon. A small climb will deliver you to a rocky headland and the Castillo de las Coloradas (5). One of the few historic sights of the Playa Blanca, this 18th-century watchtower once protected the island from pirates.

10am

Head east on the Playa Blanca to the coves that make up the Papagayo beach (6). One of the best beaches on the southern tip of the island, this crescent of white sand fringed by an absurdly turquoise sea, is sheltered by cliffs in a nature reserve. Be warned, however, that there are no sunbed or parasol facilities. But if you are happy to relinquish the lounge for a few hours, render yourself to the exfoliating pleasures of sand and sea. The beaches are accessed via a track, for which there is a €3 (£2.35) charge, which covers parking. Or take the Princesa Yaiza glass-bottomed boat from Playa Blanca (€15/£13 return).

Midday

Back to the promenade and a waterside restaurant. Note that the further west you walk, the higher the prices. Típico Canario (7) is a friendly spot offering simple fare. Canarian casserole (seafood and potato

stew) is a local speciality (€6.95/£5.50).

2pm

The historic capital of Tegüise (8) is only a 40-minute drive. Avoid the resort and head for the quiet cobbled streets that give a flavour of Lanzarote's pre-tourism existence. Sunday is market day.

6pm

Back to the Playa Blanca and the smart new development of the Rubicon Marina (9) to explore the boutiques, galleries, wine bars and restaurants. The influence of native architect César

Manrique, who decreed no building should be over four storeys tall and for every house to be painted green and white (blue and white if you have a view of the sea), is everywhere. Fans of the great man can pay homage at Fundacion César Manrique (10) (Calle Jorge Luis Borges 10, Tahiche; 0034 928 84 31 38; fermanrique.org; admission €8).

7pm

Pull up at Vino Blanco, and tuck into tapas. Deep-fried baby cuttlefish with onion rings (€6.75/£5.40), grilled red prawns with salt (€12/£9.60) and grilled mushrooms with roquefort cheese sauce (€6.25/£5) washed down with a bottle of bone-dry Bermejo.

Day two 10am

As close as any of us are likely to get to the Moon landings – and no doubt as busy, should the solar system open for business – the Timanfaya National Park (11), where 360 volcano cones rise up from the black sand, is the island's most famous tourist attraction. You can't walk

around unaccompanied, but there are coach tours with commentary available in English (€8/£6.40). A three-hour walking tour is also available and highly popular, so book in advance (0034 928 11 80 42). Alternatively, go by camel and be prepared for hilarity: Carry On Up the Volcano camel trains (and coaches) depart every 20 minutes.

1pm

A whistle-stop tour of the black-ash vineyards of La Geria, alongside the east of the Timanfaya National Park, is a worthy finale. Sample the moreish Malvasia and marvel at the fruits of this barren land.

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Lanzarote checklist

1 The Canary Islands are part of the EU, which means the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), is valid for EU citizens.

2 Carry your passport with you when venturing further than the beach, as you may be required to show it when paying by debit or credit card.

3 The tourist office in Playa Blanca is next to the ferry terminal; 00 34 928 5 17794. For more information on the island, see turismodecanarias.com

Lanzarote

Hotels

Restaurants / bars

Attractions

Papagayo beach

Orzola
Haría

LANZAROTE

Tinajo
Caleta de Famara
Arrecife
Puerto del Carmen
Playa Blanca

Mariscos

La Geria

2 miles

500 metres

PLAYA BLANCA

DAVE J WILLIAMS/ALAMY; PZAXE