

Gran Canaria – island of contrasts

Cruise the Canary islands and discover what they have to offer. Mike Westin and Oliver Solanas Heinrichs look at Gran Canaria



ALL CHARTS, MAXINE HEATH



PHOTO: PAUL BROWN/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Gran Canaria is the third largest island of the Canary Islands archipelago but its capital Las Palmas is the biggest city of the Canaries and home to the largest and cheapest marina, which, with its various chandlers and services, attracts the majority of visiting sailors.

This tall island (at 1,949m Pico de las Nieves is the highest point) has a varied climate. The north side is

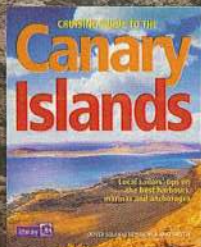
green and often wet and cloudy, while the south is an almost wholly brown desert and where the majority of the tourists congregate. The varied climate around the island makes it almost seem a continent in miniature.

The average temperature is a pleasant 21°C throughout the year and in November and December it's still a good 19°C, but may fall to 14-15°C at night. Compared to northern Europe it's still like summer and is the reason why millions of tourists visit every winter.

Local sailing conditions

The acceleration zones are strong on both sides of the island, the strongest being at El Descojonado on the west coast. There is a similarly strong zone near the airport on the east coast and at Punta de Tenefé, where you will see many wind turbines. However, conditions should not be too bad when you're one or two miles outside these zones. The prevailing wind direction is north-northeast. Expect to experience the Canary Current of 1-2 knots going south. When you reach the south, the wind will normally drop considerably.

There are many harbours and marinas on Gran Canaria and it is fairly easy to find a berth or anchorage outside high season of Oct-Nov. There are few shallows and navigation is easy.



Cruising Guide to the Canary Islands, by Oliver Solanas Heinrichs & Mike Westin. Imray, £29.50. This is a handy guide for those who want to explore the Canary Islands in depth or simply pass through on their way across the Atlantic.



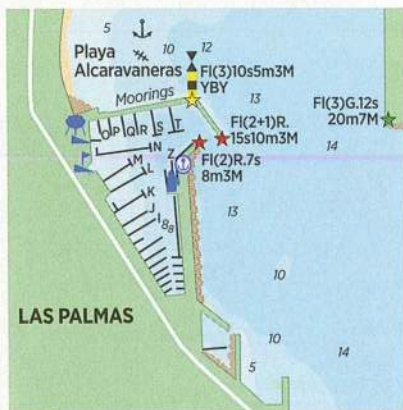
As well as a good choice of harbours and marinas there are some secluded anchorages to be found

Muelle Deportivo Las Palmas

Formerly known as Puerto de la Luz, the port lies in the heart of Las Palmas. It is one of the most suitable ports in which to prepare for an Atlantic crossing and is the hub for the ARC (Atlantic Rally for Cruisers), which involves some 300 boats from all around the world.

Entering the marina

Ideally, you should call Port Control on VHF Ch12 for permission to enter the harbour. However, as there are many bunkerships without AIS, tankers at anchor, working pilot launches, tugs and scurrying fishing boats, all mixed together with ordinary sailing boats and numerous children in dinghies from the many sailing schools, your



The plans in this article are derived from those drawn by Imray for the book Cruising Guide to the Canary Islands. They are not to be used for navigation. They are designed to support the text and should at all times be used with navigational charts.



PHOTOS: OLIVER SOLANAS HENRIGS & MIKE WESTIN UNLESS SPECIFIED OTHERWISE

There are future plans for another 1,000 berths at Las Palmas marina

call may be ignored. A keen lookout will usually keep you out of harm's way and the marina staff will appreciate it if you call them in advance on VHF Ch11.

It is fairly easy to enter the marina at night, but the many lights of the city and other vessels can make it difficult to distinguish navigation aids from other lights. However, as you get closer, it will all become clear. Tie up to the reception dock on port side as you enter or call the office/marineros on VHF Ch11.

If the marina is full, you will be asked to wait in the anchorage, Alcaravaneras, north of the marina.

Do not even try to get into the marina during the ARC period (October to November) as you will be rather brusquely turned away. Even the anchorage at Alcaravaneras (about €2-3 per day with use of the harbour facilities) will be rather full. It may be

possible to anchor outside and wait until the ARC fleet has left before moving into the marina, but the best advice is to avoid Las Palmas completely during this period.

There are a few yacht chandlers in the marina, but more can be found in the industrial area of El Sebadal (also called La Isleta) north of the town and reachable by bus (Line 19: Santa Catalina – El Sebadal), or taxi (about €10).

Vela Latina, next to the main marina, is currently under rebuild and will accommodate more yachts this winter



Essential facts

- **General:** Large, 1,250-berth marina close to the town of Las Palmas (another 1,000 berths are to be added at some point), which is the main hub for cruisers in these islands. Here you will find the best technicians and most of the equipment that you may need.
- **Approach:** Call office on VHF Ch11 as you approach (Mon-Fri 0900-1400 & 1600-2000; Sat-Sun 0900-1300; Oct-Nov all day) for directions. The easy entrance is marked by two red lights.
- **Berthing:** Possibly just 100 berths available, many of which are occupied by long-stay boats. Try to avoid the

marina during the ARC (Oct to Nov). Example rates: 12x4m €18.9/day (€291/month) + water/electricity €1.23/day + €9.51 connection

- **Facilities:** Four ablution blocks with toilets and showers.
- **Electricity/water:** Blue three-pin Euro-socket. On big boat wall, red five-pin 30A socket (+400v). 20mm inside water connection.
- **Communications:** Airport served by many low-cost airlines. Taxi €25 from airport or €2.95 Global (turquoise) bus; every second bus from airport with destination 'Santa Catalina'.
- **Internet:** There is an inadequate pay-for-use service (Aspira.es) or use any of

- the bars/café. The library, a 15-minute walk away and next to St Telmo bus station, has fast and free Internet. There are a few Internet cafés around.
- **Food & drink:** Quite a few bars and restaurants inside the marina. More options a short walk away.
- **To do:** Las Palmas is great for shopping and provisioning.
- **Don't miss:** Alcaravaneras beach next to the marina, or the larger Playa de las Canteras beach.
- **Contact:** Muelle Deportivo, Joaquín Blanco Torrent, 35004 Las Palmas. Tel: (+34) 928 214 750 / 928 214 755; marina@palmasport.es; www.palmasport.es

Puerto Rico



Panoramic view of Puerto Rico marina



Puerto Rico, the oldest marina in the Canary Islands, is a two-part harbour and marina: the western harbour is home to fishing and tourist boats and has a fuel dock but little else; the eastern marina has visitors' berths

on pontoon 8, closest to the entrance and alongside some Norwegian and German long-term liveaboards.

All necessary services can be found close by, though at tourist prices. The office staff are very friendly and welcome visiting boats.

Essential facts

■ **General:** Large private marina, mainly full of local boats, with possible berthing for visitors on pontoon 8.
 ■ **Approach:** VHF Ch08. Easy entrance, but don't confuse it with the commercial harbour a little further west, which is smaller and has no space for visiting yachts.

- **Berthing:** Example rates: 12m x 4m €26.4/night, €638/month. Water extra.
- **Facilities:** Toilets/showers/laundry in the small harbour office building.
- **Electricity/water:** Blue three-pin Euro-socket. 20mm inside water connection. Potable desalinated water.
- **Fuel:** The fuel dock is to port as you enter. Open 0800-1700.
- **Travel-lift 30T:** Contact the office.

- **Security:** 24/7
- **Internet:** €6/day, €40/month.
- **Food & drink:** Many options in town.
- **To do:** Beach life. Daily shuttle to various marinas.
- **Contact:** Avenida Tomás Roca Bosch s/n. Mogán. Tel: (+34) 928 561 141/3 or 928 560 595; email: pricomarina@puertoricosa.com; www.puertoricosa.com Boatyard: (+34) 928561141/43



This small port is sometimes referred to as the 'Venice of the Canaries'. As purpose-built tourist complexes go, it is a rather pretty one, with low houses, a couple of canals and ornamental balconies decorated

with flowerpots and large colourful bougainvillea. The staff are friendly and, despite its location in a rather touristy area, it is a very pleasant harbour.

There is a market in the harbour every Friday, and on Mondays a craft market is held, largely for tourists.

There are several restaurants in the area and some nightlife.

The harbour is a popular end stop for the many along-the-coast ferries that bring in hordes of tourists every day. If berthed near the quay, expect to be frequently photographed! ⚠

Essential facts

■ **General:** Pleasant marina, 246 berths. Visitors welcome when space permits.
 ■ **Approach:** Call VHF Ch12 for instructions. The reception pontoon is to starboard as you enter the marina, just under the tower-like building where the office is located. This is also used by shuttle boats.
 ■ **Berthing:** Example rates: 12m x 4m €23.1/night, €616/month. Discounts for pre-paid longer stays. Pre-book and

- follow up with a telephone call as emails do not always reach the marina office. Water/electricity connection 2 x €12.80 + consumption.
- **Facilities:** Toilets and showers. Access card available from reception.
- **Travel-lift 70T:** Managed by the Cofradía. Contact the office.
- **Fuel:** Opposite the reception pontoon, to port as you enter, open 0900-1300 and 1500-1800.
- **Electricity/water:** Blue three-pin Euro-socket. 20mm inside water

- connection. Desalinated water.
- **Security:** CCTV. No gates onto the pontoons, just a thin chain and a sign saying 'Only Crew/Sólo Tribulantes'.
- **Internet:** €6/day. Ask at office.
- **Food & drink:** Many options nearby.
- **To do:** Whale watching excursions. Market Fridays.
- **Contact:** Torre de control, 2nd floor, 35138, Mogán. Tel: (+34) 928 565 151 or 928 565 668; email: info@puertomogan.es; www.puertodemogan.es