

Sun and the city



Gran Canaria capital Las Palmas combines winter warmth with a wealth of culture, history and even a cheese made with flowers, writes **Yolanda Zappaterra**

in the famous words of *Games of Thrones'* Ned Stark, winter is coming. And we all know what that means. Not, hopefully, murderous ice-eyed White Walkers, but rather ice-filled streets under steely-grey skies and a deepening sense of gloom as the months progress.

OK, maybe it's not that bad, but British winters can feel never-ending, so getting away from the cold for a spell of sun has undeniable appeal. For those who want sightseeing as well as sunbathing, city life paired with sun and sand, one destination that combines those laid-back vibes with a slice of urban life is Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

CAPITAL LANES

As one of the two capitals of the Canary Islands archipelago, Las Palmas is so cosmopolitan that

you could easily mistake it for a mainland city – similar to Seville or Málaga, but with warmer winter temperatures and a beach to rival any on the Iberian Peninsula. At just under two miles long, Las Canteras is a glorious city beach, with gentle waves and clear waters, that is frequently awarded Blue Flag status. Buzzy and filled with restaurants, cafes, ice cream parlours and bars, the promenade is bookended at one end by the magnificent Alfredo Kraus Auditorium music venue designed by Catalan architect Óscar Tusquets, and at the other by the headland that separates this part of town from the more workaday area of La Isleta. As it lacks big attractions, few tourists venture here, though the two miles from Las Canteras to the Mirador de la Cruz are an enjoyable hike, and the hilly peninsula's streets are lined with independent shops and bars filled with locals. ➤

DESTINATIONS

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OF THE
BEST

ISLAND EXPERIENCES



Cueva Pintada Museum and Archaeological Park, Gáldar

Gran Canaria's Indigenous Guanche islanders lived in volcanic caves, decorating them with geometric drawings and symbols. A cluster of them form the focus of this fascinating museum.

cuevapintada.grancanaria.com



Coffee plantation tour at Finca Los Castaños

This coffee farm in the lush Agüimes valley has been growing beans for close to 70 years. A stunning location for an absorbing 90-minute tour.

fincaloscastanos.com/en



Cheese tasting at Santa María de Guía market

The island's famous Guía flower cheese can be sampled and bought at almost every stall at this Sunday market. Try it with hot potato bread baked in a firewood oven.

proquenor.com

PICTURE: Marcos Cabrera



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Las Canteras beach; banana plantation near Arucas; Santa Ana Plaza and Cathedral PICTURE: Nacho Gonzalez Oramas

PAST AND PRESENT

Where tourists do head is the capital's old town of Vegueta. A Unesco World Heritage Site filled with architecture spanning five centuries, this elegant enclave houses most of the city's popular attractions, including Santa Ana Cathedral, the old Town Hall, the Episcopal Palace and the Renaissance-era Casa Regental.

Culture is abundant too, from the Atlantic Centre of Modern Art to the Christopher Columbus Museum, the Canarian Museum and the Sacred Art Museum, while the 19th-century market is the perfect place for sampling and buying local produce and handmade souvenirs.

With many of the city's best restaurants and bars, boutique hotels and a sophisticated air here, it's an area you can come back to again and again. For clients not so bothered about the beach, it's a great base from which to explore both the city and its nearby suburbs, where a wide variety of natural and cultural attractions draw those looking for more than fly-and-flop winter sun.

INTERIOR LIFE

Just a short journey from one of the two bus stations in Las Palmas lies the lush, banana tree-filled area of Tafira, home to the Jardín Botánico Viera y Clavijo. Alternatively, head towards characterful Telde, filled with cave complexes dating back to pre-Hispanic times.

Agüimes, another east-coast spot that's easy to reach from Las Palmas, boasts Guayadeque, a deep

valley housing buildings and a church hewn out of the mountain rock, contrasting with sandy spots such as Cabró Beach, which is rich in marine life.

Away from the coast, the mountainous interior offers a vastly different landscape. Teror, with its cobbled streets, hanging balconies and a church dedicated to the island's patron saint, Our Lady of the Pines, is just 12 miles from the city, while Tejeda is less than 30 miles from Las Palmas, along the winding GC 15. Tropical scenery lies in every direction, and the island's pre-Hispanic past is palpable through burial caves, ancient dwellings, rock carvings and the Roque Bentayga Archaeological Park, making this region a great place to learn about and understand this heritage. As a frequent visitor to the island, I might be biased, but it offers an absolute feast for winter sun seekers in search of food for the brain, as well as the body and soul. **TW**

BOOK IT

Tui offers four nights at AC Hotel Iberia Las Palmas from £401 per person, based on two adults sharing a standard room, flying from Southend on February 4, 2026. tui.co.uk

Jet2CityBreaks offers three nights' room-only at Santa Catalina A Royal Hideaway Hotel from £519 per person, based on two sharing, with flights from Manchester on January 29, 2026, and 22kg baggage. jet2holidays.com

GOING FURTHER

● Puerto de las Nieves

You could be forgiven for thinking you'd gone back in time to a small Mexican fishing village, in this ridiculously cute, traditional seafront village backed by cliffs on the northeast coast of the island, near the similarly sedate town of Agaete.

● Dunas de Maspalomas

No trip to the island would be complete without a visit to this astonishing dune complex. As you clamber up and down across almost 1,000 acres of sand dunes, it genuinely feels like being in the midst of a vast desert.

● Puerto de Mogán

Expect another 'where am I?' moment as you cross the canals and wander the colourful streets of this west-coast seaside village, where bright bougainvillea tumbles down whitewashed walls at every turn.