

in the woods

Tenerife has sunshine and beaches galore, plus so much more, finds **Helen Ochyra**

feel like I'm strolling through a children's book; thick branches twist up from the path on both sides, joining in a thicket of greenery that dapples the sun overhead, while all around I can hear birdsong. This is the Anaga rainforest – and you might be surprised to learn that it's in Tenerife.

The popular Canary Island may be best known for its year-round warmth and sun-baked beaches, but its dramatic volcanic landscape also lends itself to adventure. And to getting off that sunlounger.

LAND: PEAK PERFORMANCE

The main temptation pulling visitors away from the island's resorts is Mount Teide, the soaring volcano at Tenerife's heart. This is Spain's highest mountain and the perfect place for a hike. For the experienced, there's the five-hour trail from Montaña Blanca, which climbs steeply through the black lava to reach the crater; while those seeking an easier ride can hop aboard the cable car and reach the 3,555-metre summit without breaking a sweat.

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WHERE TO stay

BEST FOR FAMILIES Kids will love the

Cinderella-style castle that dominates the pool area at the Fantasia Bahia Principe Tenerife, while parents will be delighted with the kids clubs. From £171 per night all-inclusive. bahia-principe.com

BEST FOR ROMANCE

The Hotel Botanico is surrounded by tropical gardens and has plush rooms plus the island's best spa (complete with massages alfresco). There are good dining options too, including The Oriental, which serves Asian haute cuisine. From £161 per night B&B. hotelbotanico.com

BEST FOR FUN WITH FRIENDS

Hotels don't get more rock 'n' roll than the Hard Rock Hotel Tenerife (below). with live music at the Beach Club. poolside DJs and even the chance to borrow a guitar for an in-room party. From £158 per night B&B. hardrockhoteltenerife.com





From the upper cable car station it's just an hour's

walk to the crater and you'll be rewarded with sweeping

views across the Atlantic to neighbouring islands La

back at the beach in time for sundowners.

was filmed here (it wasn't).

WATER: BEACH BREAKS

Gomera, El Hierro and La Palma. No matter how you

get to the top, you can descend on the cable car and be

out among the Roques de García on an easy two-hour

hike around a weirdly wonderful landscape of twisted, cooled lava. Here the Finger of God reaches up to

pierce the sky and the vast cathedral stands alone in the

badlands. This is the sort of landscape you imagine might

appear on the moon, and a myth persists that Star Wars

walk from Cruz de Carmen towards Llano de los Loros,

a viewpoint reached in about 15 minutes; or continue to

Las Carboneras village before looping back through the

Rather be in the water? Tenerife's sandy beaches and

perpetually warm waters make the island an enticing

playground for watersports enthusiasts. Head to Playa

de la Tejita, near the town of El Médano, and you'll

trees on a four-hour rainforest exploration.

Alternatively, delve into that storybook rainforest on a

Don't fancy standing atop a steaming volcano? Strike



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Teide National Park; Las Carboneras; La Tejita each PICTURES: Shutterstock.com

Cueva del Viento is like nothing I'd seen before and, I can safely say, it was worth getting off my sunlounger for

find reliable waves and wind for surfing and kitesurfing. The schools strung along the sands offer lessons for beginners and the beach is ideal for those first stumbling forays out to sea – the bottom is sandy, making the inevitable falls far less fearsome.

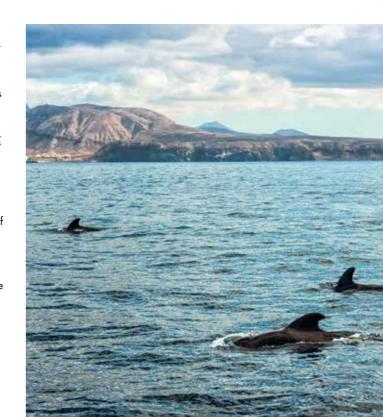
There are also reliable surf breaks for beginners offshore from Playa de las Americas at El Conquistador, while the experienced should head to the north and northwest coasts for more powerful waves at spots such as El Socorro and Baja de Martiánez.

Tenerife's waters are also home to spectacular marine life, especially between the west coast and La Gomera. Several operators lead kayaking tours in these waters - if you're lucky you might see dolphins cruising along beside you - while Los Cristianos is the jumpingoff point for whale-watching cruises in search of pilot

and sperm whales. Find a spot to stand on deck and survey the sea you're looking for the tell-tale puff that often comes before a whale emerges, or takes a dive, flicking its tail in greeting as it descends.

UNDERGROUND: LAVA TUBE

There are so many adventures to be had in Tenerife but, for me, the best was a walk beneath the lava at Cueva del Viento. It's Europe's longest lava tube and 250 metres of it is open for tours. As I followed my guide into the bowels of the island I switched on my headlamp. Tiny blisters of lava covered every surface including the earth underfoot, and the roots of a bush growing above around huna in mid-air beside me. This is a tunnel forever frozen in time, formed by molten lava in an ancient volcanic explosion. It's like nothing I'd seen before and, I can safely say, it was worth getting off my sunlounger for. TW



ABOVE: Pilot whales



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BOOK IT

Classic Collection Holidays

offers seven nights' B&B at the Hotel Botanico from £1,459 per person, including flights from Gatwick and private transfers. Departs December 4. classic-collection.co.uk

Jet2Holidays offers seven nights' B&B at the Hard Rock Hotel Tenerife from £649 per person, with flights from Manchester departing December 13, including 22kg baggage and return transfers. jet2holidays.com