

# Follow the sun



The tide is back in for the Canary Islands, so once Brits can travel again, what should they expect from their winter-sun escape? **Laura French** finds out

**T** opaz waters lapping white and black-sand beaches, fiery sun illuminating film-like landscapes, exceptional Canarian food – the Canary Islands' appeal is easy to fathom in any year.

But with so many other winter-sun destinations off the cards for the coming months, the industry was pinning its hopes on a strong season to one of our best-selling winter destinations.

The surge in demand in the wake of the travel corridor announcement was clear. Jet2holidays reported selling 5,500 holidays to the islands within hours, rising to nearly 30,000 within five days, while Tui, Jet2, Wizz Air and easyJet all reported they would be restarting their programmes.

New lockdown measures at home now put those services in doubt, but with restrictions set to be lifted later in the year, clients might still be looking ahead to much-needed escapes abroad.

So what have tourism providers been doing to get their businesses ready for when tourists return? We asked experts from across the Canaries.

## TENERIFE

José Gregorio Martín Plata,  
minister of tourism for Tenerife

“Tenerife's borders opened to most of Europe on June 22, but the tourist areas have been very quiet.

In terms of Covid measures, the government of the Canary Islands set out a series of protocols. They include face masks to be worn by anyone over the age of six (unless exempt) outdoors as well as in enclosed public spaces, and when entering or walking around beaches and pools.

At restaurants and bars, tables are spaced at least 1.5m apart, and a maximum of 10 people per group. Self-service items including napkin dispensers and menus have been removed, and all establishments must close by 1am. Nightclubs are closed.

Hotels have caps on numbers in communal areas and activities, while buffets have been modified with screens at self-service stations and food plated individually in some cases. Tourist attractions and guided tours must now be booked in advance, and ➤



### BOOKINGS BOUNCE



**Alan Cross,**  
head of trade,  
**Jet2holidays**

"As soon as we put flights and holidays on

sale to the Canary Islands, consumers responded with a flurry of bookings to the Canaries alone. This shows there is a real appetite from customers for a winter-sun holiday."



**Michael Vinales,**  
managing director,  
**Olympic Holidays**

"The Canaries is a key winter-sun destination for

us. When the Canary Islands were added to the quarantine-free list, we saw big demand for Fuerteventura and Lanzarote, with bookings for this year and into 2021."



**Stephanie Robins,**  
head of national  
sales, **Cyplon  
Holidays**

"From volcanic nature and stunning

sand dunes to family-friendly resorts and luxury hotels, the Canary Islands appeal to an array of customers. We have been busy preparing some luxury offers and we have already seen some fantastic demand."



**Christoph  
Kiessling,**  
vice-president,  
**Loro Parque  
Company**

"Our attractions have been closed since March, but we've continued to care for thousands of animals. We look forward to reopening our doors as soon as the situation allows."



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Hard Rock Hotel Tenerife; Timanfaya National Park, Lanzarote; Gran Hotel Bahia Real, Fuerteventura PREVIOUS PAGE: Tenerife PICTURES: Roberto Lara; Shutterstock

all attractions have one-way systems. In terms of atmosphere, life feels relatively normal in the cities and towns, and accommodation has opened, from five-star hotels to villas and guesthouses. Visitors will find uncrowded restaurants, beaches and attractions, providing a chance to get to know the real Tenerife.

### LANZAROTE

**Angel Vázquez, minister of tourism promotion for Lanzarote**

"We opened our borders to international visitors in July, but with the UK and Germany normally our biggest source markets, we had very few tourists coming.

Half of the hotels across the islands are already back in operation, with dozens more bringing forward their reopening dates.

The main tourist attractions, shops, bars and restaurants are also open. Outdoor activities are permitted, beaches and natural swimming pools are open, and locals and visitors comply with the use of face masks and social distancing measures.

Lanzarote's infection rates are well below other destinations'. We launched a specific social awareness campaign to control infection rates among the local population, and implemented an early Covid-19

detection system through the analysis of waste water.

We're also fortunate to have lots of outdoor space, which makes the island ideal for social distancing.

For clients looking for more than just a beach, there are plenty of activities on offer, from hiking and cycling to surfing, diving and windsurfing.

### GRAN CANARIA

**Carlos Alamo Cabrera, president of the Gran Canaria Tourist Board**

"Gran Canaria is very much looking forward to receiving British tourists again. We have fantastic relationships with UK tour operators and great air connectivity.

We have redesigned the entire end-to-end holiday experience, from the hotels and beaches to restaurants and leisure activities, including measures such as limited capacity, frequent handwashing, use of face coverings and so on. The incidence of coronavirus cases in the Canary Islands is currently the lowest in Spain, with around 50 cases per 100,000.

We have been working hard and learnt a lot through these past months to ensure health and safety measures don't affect the relaxing atmosphere, with the aim of guaranteeing satisfaction for all our visitors. ➤



# DESTINATIONS

## WINTER SUN | CANARY ISLANDS

WHERE TO  
*book for*  
WINTER

**Oasis Duna Aparthotel, Fuerteventura:** For a family-friendly stay, Jet2holidays recommends this three-star resort complex in lively Corralejo. It combines spacious one or two-bedroom apartments with the facilities of a resort, including a kids' club and a pool with waterslides. A week costs from £479 self-catering based on a family of four travelling from Manchester on December 21. [jet2holidays.com](http://jet2holidays.com)

**HIO Rubicon Palace, Lanzarote:** Cyplon points to this beachfront five-star for guests after stylish design, excellent dining options and family-friendly entertainment, as well as eight pools, four bars, a multi-sports court and thalasso centre. Seven nights' B&B starts at £649, including flights from regional UK airports and based on two sharing a Standard Room from January 10. [cyplon.co.uk](http://cyplon.co.uk)

**Riu Palace Meloneras, Gran Canaria:** For a luxury stay a short stroll from the beach, suggest this contemporary resort, home to five pools, a wellness centre, lounge bar and three restaurants. It's set in the upscale resort of Meloneras, where stylish bars and restaurants line the promenade. A week's half-board costs from £854, based on two sharing, flying from Gatwick on January 4, 2021. [tui.co.uk](http://tui.co.uk)

**Island-hopping:** For clients wanting to pair two favourites, suggest Olympic Holidays' new Lanzarote & Fuerteventura Island Hop, which combines accommodation on both islands with transfers and ferries between them. Prices start at £599 per person for a week. [olympicholidays.com](http://olympicholidays.com)



ABOVE: Riu Palace Meloneras, Gran Canaria PICTURE: Tui Nederland

### PALLADIUM HOTEL GROUP Nacho Gozalbo, commercial director

At the Hard Rock Hotel Tenerife, we have implemented a series of 'safe and sound' protocols, which mean every guest will have their temperature taken on arrival, luggage will be sanitised before it enters the lobby and guests are required to wear masks in designated areas such as check-in and in lifts. In the lobby, social-distancing markers have been placed 2m apart and Plexiglass fitted at front desks.

In terms of dining, self-service buffets have been suspended and table reservations will be required for breakfast at the Sessions Restaurant or dinner at one of three à la carte restaurants, which are open on select days. Guests can also take advantage of in-room dining.

Pre-booking is required for the Rock Spa, and the Body Rock gym will be open, while younger guests can enjoy the hotel's kids' clubs. All guests are also offered our free Stay Safe medical assistance insurance to cover them for any eventuality regarding Covid-19, and we have extended this to July 2021.

### WALKING GUIDE

Maximilian Biela, tour leader for Explore

We had seen few international tourists on Lanzarote, but this changed quickly following the shift in travel advice from both the UK and Germany, with a 500% increase in hotel bookings in one day alone.

I have been guiding a few small walking groups with domestic clients in recent weeks, and it has been very enjoyable with a quiet, low-season feel.

As walking counts as exercise, clients on our tours don't have to wear face masks while on the move. We do ask that they keep a distance of at least 1.5 metres between each other and we sometimes need to make minor adjustments to the itinerary, but otherwise the tours don't really feel any different from normal.

Being outdoors makes it easy to keep apart and it is especially rewarding for clients wanting to get back to nature and explore the island's unique geological landscapes. **TW**

### COVID-19 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

The Canary Islands government has confirmed travellers will need to present a Covid-19-free certificate (either PCR or antigen), obtained within 72 hours before travel, when checking into accommodation. Travellers who don't get tested prior to departure will need to take a test at a private clinic or public health unit on arrival. Clients also need to fill in a public health form on the Spain Travel Health website ([spth.gob.es](http://spth.gob.es)) within 48 hours before arrival to obtain a QR code to show at the airport.