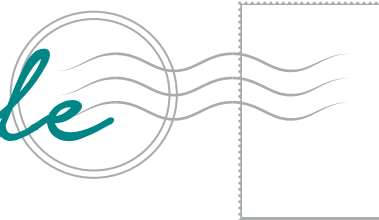


DESTINATIONS

SPAIN & PORTUGAL | CANARY ISLANDS

POSTCARD

North Tenerife



Swap busy beaches for nature and night skies in the north of the Canaries' largest island, writes **Juliet Dennis**

As magical experiences go, stargazing from a volcano is out of this world (forgive the pun).

The island ranks alongside La Palma, Chile and Hawaii for having the best skies in the world for stargazing thanks to low levels of light pollution.

I could hardly contain my excitement. Stars littered the night sky – the Plough, bear, swan and eagle; Scorpius, Libra and Sagittarius – and the planet Venus, all clearly visible with a little help from long-range telescopes.

Mount Teide, Spain's highest point, is in the centre of Tenerife, a marker between the touristy, sunny south and lush landscapes of the north. The former is known for its smorgasbord of sun, beach and bars, but the less-busy north has a surprising number of activities, making it the perfect stay for experience-hungry clients.

The climate is cooler but its off-the-beaten-track adventures, from caving to nature trails, more than make up for it. It's home to Europe's longest volcanic tunnel, Cave of the Wind, as well as natural rock pools created by old lava flows. These saltwater pools provide the chance for a quiet dip surrounded by spectacular views and crabs galore. I lost count of how many large, red crustaceans I spotted in the Garachico rock pools, known as El Caletón – and they even stayed still long enough to pose for the camera.

For nature lovers, the Unesco World Heritage Site La Laguna, Tenerife's former capital, and Biosphere Reserve Anaga Rural Park, are both in the north, and for those wanting to see how the locals live, there are sleepy, hillside towns and villages brimming with historic buildings, churches and market squares. We had dinner surrounded by banana plants at La Calabacera organic farm, and lunch at Bodegas Monje vineyard in El Sauzal, where the views are almost as delicious as the food and wine.

The other delights of the island – from kitesurfing, kayaking, gorge walking and cycling, to spotting pods of pilot whales and dolphins on a catamaran cruise – are within easy reach of the north, but with such a wealth of nature and activities, clients might not have to venture too far to experience another side of Tenerife. **TW**



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Prestige Travel offers seven nights' B&B in a deluxe room with Mount Teide view at Hotel Botanico & The Oriental Spa Garden from £1,685, including flights from Gatwick and private transfers. The price includes a five-hour Mount Teide stargazing excursion with an expert guide. prestigettravel.co.uk



FROM TOP: The Milky Way as seen from Teide National Park; Torre de la Concepción, La Laguna

PICTURE: Shutterstock/Mikhail Grachikov