

Isle be back

Tenerife is flying high for winter-sun bookings, reports **Sasha Wood**

LATEST RESTRICTIONS

The fam trip featured took place before the emergence of the Omicron variant and the introduction of additional restrictions, which may impact family travel to Spain.

EasyJet holidays has since updated its booking policy to allow families, with children aged 12 to 17 years old, booked to travel before December 31, to cancel for free and receive a full refund, adding to its existing flexible policy and Protection Promise.

[easyjet.com/en/holidays](https://www.easyjet.com/en/holidays)

The peak of mighty Mount Teide encircled by clouds welcomes me to the Canaries – the Spanish islands warmed from within by seismic forces and from above by the strong north African sun.

I was flying into Tenerife for a winter warmer and had hoped to catch sight of the eruption on neighbouring La Palma from the plane, but instead Teide, the third-largest volcano in the world, dominates the scene.

Tenerife has essentially formed around the cone of Mount Teide, with black and red ashen hills sloping down to the Atlantic, and a ring of pretty Spanish tourist resorts hugging the shore. When I land, the island is distinctly busy for November – it turns out holidaymakers are much more

likely to fly south for the winter if they haven't had their summer dose of vitamin D and sea.

RACE TO THE SUN

Short-haul winter sun is selling better than ever thanks to the lost summer this year, and the subtropical Canary Islands – just a four-hour flight from the UK – are an obvious holiday hotspot.

"It's our most popular winter-sun destination this year and for next year it's already in our top 10," says Brad Bennetts, easyJet holidays' head of distribution. "It's an all-year-round destination, and with lockdowns lifting quite late, people are looking for destinations close to Europe that are still hot."

Travel agents have noticed a similar trend, including those

DESTINATIONS

WINTER SUN | TENERIFE



HARD ROCK HOTEL Tenerife

Smart branding plus laid-back glamour equals rock-star luxury at the unpretentious but chic Hard Rock Hotel, which will appeal to anyone who loves sunshine and music.

The five-star hotel channels a classic rock vibe with edgy boutique decor, music memorabilia and live music day and night.

There are 624 guest rooms, including 260 suites, split across two towers. The Rock Royalty Level, on the top floors of the Nirvana Tower, house deluxe suites with exclusive services such as a private concierge and VIP check-in.

My room was impressive and spacious with a large comfortable bed, deep whirlpool bath, sweeping views of the southern coast and access to the luxurious Rock Spa. Six restaurants and five bars include a brilliant rooftop venue on the 16th floor.

hardrockhotels.com



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Pool at Hard Rock Hotel; Costa Adeje promenade; fam trip group outside the hotel

PICTURES: Hard Rock Hotels/Roberto Lara Fotografia; Shutterstock/Pawel Kazmierczak



joining this easyJet holidays fam trip, one of its first since it began selling through agents in August 2020.

Jo Shayler from Holidaysplease says the Canaries are the company's top short-haul destination, with a big uptick in bookings this winter. Meanwhile, Stuart Swords from Swords Travel says the rush for winter sun is finally putting them back in profit.

For many agents, Tenerife's popularity this season has been helped along by its wealth of affordable beach hotels and regular airlift, with up to 10 flights a day from London this winter, plus direct flights from other major airports such as Bristol, Manchester, Belfast and Glasgow. EasyJet alone has added an extra 10,000 seats over the festive period, operating 56 flights out of the UK per week to a portfolio of more than 100 hotels on the island, most of which are clustered in the south.

SOUND WAVES

There's a wonderful buzz and energy about the Hard Rock Hotel Tenerife when I arrive and it isn't just the music – after months of lockdowns and restrictions, the staff seem glad to be back at work and holidaymakers seem happy to be travelling again.

From the balcony of my 14th floor suite, I have a great view of the island's dramatic scenery from purple peaks and blue sky to long azure coves between the

“ Nightly performances of soaring guitar anthems in the lobby get the whole resort rocking, including the bar staff

dark tendrils of ancient lava flows that once snaked down from the interior. Over the centuries, erosion has created glittering obsidian sand that seems reflected in the glossy jet-black decor of my hip Hard Rock room.

Wandering the large hotel, music is ever-present but gently attuned to the surrounds. Jo Peters from property owner Palladium Hotels tells me they have 'vibe managers' to make sure it always suits the mood. I spot loads of great music memorabilia, from an original illustration from Pink Floyd's Wall video and handwritten lyrics from Slash to a Stevie Nicks outfit and Elton John costume. It reminds me of an exhibition at the V&A.

Nightly performances of soaring guitar anthems in the lobby get the whole resort rocking. After a few of the expertly mixed cocktails from the UTC bar – world-class margaritas, mojitos and daiquiris – everyone including the bar staff are lifting their arms in the air and singing the chorus to *Livin' on a Prayer*. ➤



ABOVE: Torviscas beach on the Adeje coast of Tenerife PICTURE: Shutterstock/Cristian Mircea Balate

BEACH LIFE

A short taxi ride from the hotel, we zip past banana plantations to a trio of south coast resorts – Costa Adeje, Playa de las Americas and Los Cristianos – all linked by a promenade skirting the shore. A stroll down the sloping lanes of Costa Adeje reveals a classic Spanish beach resort with colourful colonial houses and whitewashed villa-style hotels facing twin sandy bays. Visitors can take their pick of bars and restaurants clustered beside the beaches in a traffic-free area.

A pleasant place to relax in the sun, it has the added bonus of a marina offering exciting excursions such as whale and dolphin watching. The volcanic islands are a magnet for Atlantic-dwelling mammals in the winter and spotting a playful pod of bottlenose dolphins or a pilot whale breach the waves is almost guaranteed.

Back at the hotel, I venture down the tiered complex to the gorgeous white and aqua oasis set between

“The Hard Rock Hotel Tenerife is the ideal island base to lift the spirits and proves the perfect antidote to winter blues

the sea cliffs. Luxe cabanas sit on a strip of golden sand above a glittering black beach shelving into emerald ocean. Over a relaxed lunch at the Beach Club, the smell of the sea air and taste of fresh calamari and paella takes me back to pre-pandemic holidays and all our travel worries seem to melt away into the warm Spanish breeze.

At the San Borondon watersports centre by the beach, I book to go paddleboarding in the calm clear cove. Sheltered from the

Atlantic, it’s perfect for a cooling dip. Snorkelling and diving is also popular in Tenerife, and clients can easily arrange it from the hotel.

NIGHT VISION

We wrap up warm for an evening stargazing excursion into the other-worldly volcanic uplands of Mount Teide. Not only is it a unique experience, but a chance to see the lunar-like landscape of Unesco-listed Mount Teide National Park crowned by Spain’s highest peak. Long-range telescopes are set up 2,536 metres above sea level in one of the top dark-sky sites in the world, letting visitors gaze at a sea of stars not usually visible.

With a classic combination of upbeat music and warm sunshine, the Hard Rock Hotel Tenerife is the ideal island base to lift the spirits post-pandemic and proves the perfect antidote to winter blues. From rock stars to real stars, it’s been a dazzling trip, and I’ll certainly be back. **TW**

ASK THE experts



Jo Peters,
senior business
development
manager,
Palladium

Hotel Group

“I love the stargazing, I think it’s something a bit different and Tenerife is one of the best places as it’s just so clear. Catamaran cruises are really popular here. We have a lot of catamarans that go round the coast – either chill-out or party boats, depending on the age group – and they do lots of whale and dolphin watching too. It’s very rare to go out on a sailing and not see them.”



Brad Bennetts,
head of
distribution,
easyJet
holidays

“As well as being a beach holiday destination, the island is great for people who love the outdoors and nature. You can go hiking in Mount Teide National Park and see amazing volcanic rock formations and landscapes you won’t find anywhere else. Up in the north, the small town of Garachico is one of my favourite places in Tenerife. It’s off the tourist trail and has a pretty centre and a beautiful harbour.”

BOOK IT

EasyJet holidays offers seven nights at the five-star Hard Rock Hotel Tenerife in Playa Paraiso, staying on a B&B basis for £767 per person, including flights from Bristol airport, luggage and transfers on February 2. [easyjet.com/en/holidays](https://www.easyjet.com/en/holidays)