

# CANARY ISLANDS

## Magnificent seven set new tourism records

Millions are discovering why the striking Spanish archipelago is so much more than just a beach destination, with stunning terrain, year-round temperate climate and superb connectivity

Popular for decades with sun-starved northern European tourists seeking guaranteed sunshine in summer, winter and the shoulder seasons, the Canary Islands broke all records in terms of international tourist arrivals last year, with more than 14.1 million foreign visitors enjoying the stunning archipelago's countless charms in 2023.

That impressive figure represented a robust 6.9% year-on-year increase versus pre-pandemic levels of around 13 million tourist arrivals to the seven-strong island chain, which comprises Tenerife, Gran Canaria, Lanzarote, Fuerteventura, La Palma, La Gomera and El Hierro.

With each of the islands boasting its own distinct terrain, rich character, culture and history, tourists often find that one visit is insufficient to enjoy and experience all the welcoming and safe Spanish archipelago has to offer, including its outstanding local and international cuisine, high-end accommodation and lively nightlife.

As the largest and most populous island, Tenerife also attracts the greatest share of international arrivals, with the long-established destination especially famous for its black and gold beaches and Mount Teide volcano. While local government officials are, understandably, delighted with this excellent track record, they are determined to follow their successful "quality



While blessed with an array of beaches, Tenerife is also known for Teide National Park, over which volcano Mount Teide towers

**ROSA DÁVILA**  
PRESIDENT, ISLAND COUNCIL OF TENERIFE  
"The Canary Islands' variety of experiences go well beyond the traditional sun-and-beach tourism."



**Rosa Dávila**  
President, Island Council of Tenerife

over quantity" approach to developing the industry over the next few years and longer term.

"A very important factor in the Canary Islands' recent success in tourism terms is due to us having a very clear strategy for recovery, not only returning to pre-pandemic levels, but exceeding them," says Rosa Dávila, President of the Island Council of Tenerife.

"This growth is not just in terms of the number of tourists, but how much they spend, which is of more importance to us. We also focused on offering new experiences to our visitors, which has likely influenced the perception of the Canary Islands as a high-quality destination.

"This variety of experiences go well beyond the traditional sun-and-beach tourism. Visitors can enjoy nature, gastronomy and other unique experiences and adventures. For instance, between Tenerife and La Gomera, we have one of the three largest whale sanctuaries in the world. "Not only do we have a fantastic climate — one that is also pleasant throughout the year — but we have placed significant focus on quality, sustainability and safety in all aspects. We have also worked intensively on maintaining and expanding connectivity, including our direct route to New York (Newark Airport).

"We are very well positioned compared to competing destinations like the Caribbean, which is the usual choice for many American tourists. Our focus is on growing sustainably, ensuring that quality is prioritized over the number of tourists."

**Sustainability at Gran Canaria's heart**  
Like Tenerife, Gran Canaria blends incredible scenery with a broad range of tourism activities that have been fine-tuned over many decades



**Antonio Morales**  
President, Island Council of Gran Canaria

terminated to develop innovative niches in the economy. These efforts are spearheaded by an economic promotion society specifically aimed at attracting resources and facilitating the establishment of investors on the islands, as well as promoting local entrepreneurs overseas.

"We also have two outstanding tax initiatives: the free trade zone and the special tax zone, which offers incentives for investment, making such investment in the island very attractive for foreign capital," highlights Antonio Morales, President of the Island Council of Gran Canaria.

His talented team has designed a comprehensive sustainable development plan that encompasses the concept of an 'eco-island'. This strategy aims to build on Gran Canaria's enviable reputation for enjoyable vacations while ensuring its future is secured. The plan rests on three fundamental pillars: energy sovereignty, water security and food sovereignty.

"Additionally, we aim to strengthen the audiovisual sector and the renewable energy sector, which are essential for the development and generation of industry on the island," the senior official explains. "At the same time, our social policy is inclusive.

"The US tourism market is very important to us. In the 1970s, 20% of our tourists were American. Our goal is to regain that high-quality tourism, which is loyal, has a high average stay and generates significant spending here."

of hosting international visitors of all ages, including young families and large groups.

Tourism accounts for more than a third of the beautiful island's annual income — generated by around 4.5 million visitors — and is also responsible for nearly 40% of all employment. Like many of its peers, Gran Canaria's infrastructure and facilities are on a par with major European cities, including connectivity, healthcare services and public amenities.

As well as tourism, local officials are de-

## Balancing tourism pressures with daily life

While Tenerife's tourism boom shows no sign of slowing, island officials are eager to ensure such success is not to the detriment of locals, while a fiscal diversification drive is also gathering pace

Tenerife's outstanding tourism offering means it remains the leading destination in the archipelago for domestic and foreign tourists, but ensuring its popularity among visitors does not detract from locals' quality of life is a tricky balancing act.

Spearheading these efforts of equilibrium between large numbers of overseas arrivals' desire for fun and adventure, but almost one million residents' wishes for a safe, tranquil and social situation is the Island Council of Tenerife.

The public body has a wide range of roles and responsibilities, among which are helping the island optimize its tourist, business and investment potential. As well as promoting Tenerife's natural and human resources to a wider audience, the council works hand in hand with the private sector and supports enterprises of all sizes and across all fiscal sectors to help improve the quality and profitability of their respective operations and activities.

**LOPE AFONSO**  
VICE PRESIDENT  
ISLAND COUNCIL OF TENERIFE  
"We have a destination that is ambitious in terms of quality in all areas of the economy."

"We have to exercise responsible leadership, because we are aware that the arrival of so many visitors also implies tension with other factors that have to be compatible with the life that takes place on the island," states Lope Afonso, Vice President, Island Council of Tenerife, who also wears the hat of Councillor for Tourism.

"In addition, the preservation of the natural environment — which is one of the main tourist attractions — is extremely important. Our strategy has to focus on ensuring that the tourism that comes to Tenerife has a perception of quality in everything that is done.

"This means having the guarantee of managing the territory well, of sustainably managing natural resources and of offering good public services."

**Green light to economic diversification**  
Tenerife is currently enjoying a stellar year for visitor numbers and leads the regional market with an impressive 40-45% share. While tourism is clearly the main economic driver, officials are eager to embrace economic diversification, hence their commitment to internationalizing the economy via many initiatives and projects.

"We have a platform called 'Why Tenerife?'" Afonso adds. "Why Tenerife? Because we have this combination of climate and tourist company; a logistics platform for exchange with Africa, and cultural flow towards America that allows us to be the bridge for many investments.

"We have a destination that is ambitious in terms of quality in all areas of the economy and society, but tourism in particular is so important that if it's capable of functioning well with these levels of demand that we impose, it has a driving effect for other sectors of the economy.

"If tourism works well, it demands more quality construction activity, more quality auxiliary services and generates better professionals to deal with all areas. The driving effect of tourism is definitive and essential generally in the Canary Islands, and specifically in Tenerife.

"Diversification has led us to take advantage of the rural environment and natural heritage, cultural and sporting events, identity and gastronomy to vary the profile of the visitor, gradually reducing the profile of the traditional sun and beach visitor in favor of those who come looking for different, new experiences."

In recent years, Tenerife's tourism industry has become so large and successful it has created stresses on local infrastructure like housing. Officials have acknowledged such concerns and are working to address them while ensuring the sector continues to grow and thrive.



Tenerife's welcoming waters and outdoor swimming pools are popular year-round



**Lope Afonso**  
Vice President and Councillor for Tourism,  
Island Council of Tenerife

"A lack of housing makes it more difficult for us to find workers who can live on the islands because rents have multiplied," states Jorge Marichal, President of the Hotel Association of Santa Cruz de Tenerife (ASHOTEL) and President of the Spanish Confederation of Hotels and Tourist Accommodation (CEHAT).

"In addition, the traffic situation has made it more difficult for workers to get to their jobs. They can no longer live next to their workplace because housing is very expensive and commuting to work from far away is very costly as they have to spend two hours on the roads.

"With tourism being the main economic



**Jorge Marichal**  
President, ASHOTEL and CEHAT

sector, everyone looks at us, for the good and the bad. Generally, no one talks about the good, but everyone tries to multiply the bad by 10. That is precisely where we have to focus."

While the number of hotels and hotel beds has only increased by 4% over the last 15-20 years, other types of accommodation, especially holiday rentals, have changed the housing fabric of the island and created shortages.

"The great challenge is to achieve social sustainability not just for our workers, but for society," Marichal adds. "It's the most important challenge we face, not only on these islands, but everywhere with respect to tourism activity."



Protecting and preserving its natural assets for future generations while also optimizing them for the here and now makes for an exciting transition to renewable energies

## Sustainability push means investment openings abound

The islands' decarbonization drive is moving up a gear as exciting renewables projects featuring state-of-the-art technologies help accelerate the region's energy transition

As an isolated archipelago that overwhelmingly relies on its natural resources for its tourism-based economy and socioeconomic development, sustainability sits at the heart of public and private sector activities and strategies, with the Canaries striving to become "eco-islands".

While each member of the Canary Islands has its own specific targets and challenges, they all fall under the same sustainability umbrella. Three fundamental pillars — energy and water security as well as food sovereignty — provide the strong foundations for the construction and launch of environmental and economic diversification projects on islands like Gran Canaria.

Progress has certainly been made as official data shows that over the past three years, the islands' tourism sector has reduced its carbon footprint by more than 20%, meaning it is well on the way to achieving its challenging target of a 50% reduction by the end of the current decade. Energy-saving measures, the adoption

of ambitious renewable energy sources and expansion of water conservation initiatives are behind this ongoing success.

At the vanguard of environmental protection implementation and policy creation to promote sustainability is the regional government. In adherence to this commitment, the localization process of the UN's 2030 Agenda within the Canary Islands was concretized as "Agenda Canaria 2030" a few years ago following a lengthy participatory process involving many parties.

Born out of the need for a comprehensive approach to current, emerging and future challenges, the Innovation Center for Sustainable Development (ICSD) was subsequently launched. According to its creators, ICSD aims to promote cooperation among the university and scientific community, economic and social agents of the archipelago and the regional government in the field of research regarding the structuring of productive activity and the creation of quality employment.

Regarded as the region's showcase energy transition project, Salto de Chira is a cutting-edge strategic infrastructure development on Gran Canaria being developed with the significant fiscal support of major financial institutions like the European Investment Bank.

The huge project combines a pumped-storage hydroelectric power plant of 200 megawatts installed power capacity and a desalination plant. It will strengthen the island's electricity system, providing a fundamental back-up to guarantee energy security and electricity supply, critical issues for citizens as well as businesses.

"We have designed a unique proposal that has no equivalent anywhere else in the world," says Antonio Morales, President of the Island Council of Gran Canaria. "The Chira hydroelectric facility is more than just a hydroelectric plant; it's a groundbreaking project. It will produce 700,000 cubic meters of water annually to support the primary sector, retain population in the territory and help combat fires.

"In Gran Canaria, 90% of the water we consume is produced from seawater, and we are working to utilize 100% of wastewater for irrigation — this includes natural grass fields, sports facilities, gardens and the primary sector.

"We have been experiencing a decade of continuous drought, but the island now has more than 70 large dams, making it one of the regions with the highest density of dams globally. Gran Canaria will also be the only island in the archipelago to implement offshore wind energy, with a potential of 900 megawatts. Many international companies are interested in this initiative as the island has enormous potential to generate economic activity centered around renewable energy production."

### Range of renewable investment projects

With the Canary Islands promising to become carbon neutral by 2040, the comprehensive decarbonization drive has created a favorable environment for foreign direct investment (FDI), which the regional administration actively encourages and welcomes as it looks to build on its sustainability pledges.

"We believe that with our emphasis on renewables, the Canaries can become an ideal destination for initial renewable energy projects," says Mariano Hernández, Councillor for Ecological Transition and Energy at the regional public authority.

"The opportunities here are abundant and we are confident that the future lies in attracting strategic investments in our region. We have an exceptional climate and a landscape well-suited for various renewable energy technologies, such as offshore wind and geothermal energy.

ANTONIO MORALES  
PRESIDENT, ISLAND COUNCIL  
OF GRAN CANARIA

**"The Chira hydroelectric facility is more than just a hydroelectric plant; it's a groundbreaking project."**

"We are committed to becoming a green, environmentally responsible region that sets an example in the global effort to decarbonize. Our goal is to showcase how a territory can successfully transition away from fossil fuels, creating a blueprint for others to follow. With this vision, the Canary Islands offer an attractive opportunity for testing and developing renewable energy solutions that can be exported worldwide."

What has been particularly impressive about the Canary Islands' sustainability strategies is the way they have been embraced by companies of all sizes and across all sectors. This is particularly true of the tourism industry, where leading accommodation providers like Dreamplace Hotels and Resorts are setting the benchmark.

"We have been working on measures to improve sustainability for several years," explains Marco López, CEO of Dreamplace Hotels and Resorts. "Every year we set different goals and we've been awarded several certifications for our achievements in terms of sustainability. We're continuing to move forward and each year do a little more; we're making progress."

## Tenerife's charms open to the world as airline and cruise visitors flock

Showcasing its natural, cultural and traditional treasures to more than half a million people a month, Tenerife has plenty to offer visitors

By far the most populous and most visited member of the Canary Islands, it stands to reason that Tenerife is also the best connected of its archipelagic associates, with leading airlines offering flights to over 150 airports worldwide, including to New York (Newark).

Just over two hours by air from the Spanish mainland and around four hours from most European capitals, such enviable connectivity is one of the key drivers behind the rise of a powerful tourism sector that attracts 6.5 million travelers to its sun-kissed shores each year, arrivals who collectively spend around \$8 billion.

Predominantly of European origin, most visitors originate from the traditionally reliable sources of the UK, Germany and Spain, reveals Dimple Melwani, CEO, Tenerife Tourism Corporation. While obviously delighted with the rebound in tourist arrival numbers post-COVID-19, the tourism agency chief insists officials adopt a quality over quantity approach to protect its reputation.

"Our objective as a destination is not so much to increase the total number of travelers, but to attract more tourists interested in exploring and enjoying everything that Tenerife offers in a respectful and conscious way, while generating more income for the island," she says.

"We offer a subtropical climate with an average annual temperature of more than 71 degrees Fahrenheit, beaches of volcanic origin and extraordinary laurel forests. Fun outdoor activities such as hiking, windsurfing, kite surfing, diving, golf and paragliding are also available year-round.

"Our original gastronomy, with fresh products and unique wines, charming towns and cities, such as La Orotava, Garachico, Icod de los Vinos or La Laguna — a UNESCO World Heritage Site — as an example of an open-walled colonial city that



Dimple Melwani  
CEO, Tenerife Tourism Corporation

served as a model for cities in the Americas, such as Havana, Lima and Cartagena de Indias, are truly stunning."

### Fun in the sun for young families too

As a family friendly destination, Tenerife is not just about fine dining and high-end shopping at the end of a relaxing day on the beach. The island boasts a range of excellent water and theme parks, meaning children of all ages can enjoy thrilling rollercoasters, exciting waterslides and great shows and entertainment.

Other popular outdoor activities include whale watching as the island's waters are home to stable colonies of tropical pilot whales and bottlenose dolphins, while stargazing once the sun goes down is also increasing in popularity. With a favorable



La Laguna's colonial old town is ideal for tasting the island's mouth-watering cuisine

geographical location and extremely clear skies due to strict policies on maintaining natural light influence and pollution, Tenerife is an official Starlight Reserve, making it a haven for the emerging market of astronomical tourism.

"As our slogan says, 'Tenerife, awakens emotions', and everything that awakens emotions always remains in our hearts," Melwani states. "Tenerife has the largest and most modern four- and five-star accommodation facilities in Europe, as well as villas and boutique hotels that make a stay unforgettable, and where it's possible, in many cases, to enjoy complete wellness facilities with programs and sessions that revitalize body and mind."

### Backdrops to big screen blockbusters

In recent decades, Tenerife's varied landscapes have become a regular feature in mainstream movies as international production companies and box-office stars take advantage of its attractive climate, industry talent, generous tax breaks and other incentives, to shoot movies of all genres.

Cast and crew from North America are especially frequent visitors as they utilize its rather rugged terrain. This means Tenerife has figuratively walked the red carpet many times over the years, having appeared in successful Hollywood films such as Wrath of the Titans, Fast & Furious 6, Game of Thrones, Jason Bourne, Wonder Woman 1984 and Rambo: Last Blood.

Other relevant segments of the tourism industry that offer plenty of untapped potential include those associated with gastronomy, sports and culture, Melwani notes. However, she cautions such activities must appreciate environmental sensitivities and the local impact on civil society.

"Our medium and long-term vision ensures we are committed to responsible tourism that guaran-

tees a unique tourist experience by preserving our natural resources, managing the territory correctly and ensuring a balance between tourists and residents, to guarantee the well-being of citizens and better public services.

"This commitment to sustainability is not only environmental, but also economic and social. That is why our efforts are focused on generating income on the island and promoting employment among the local population by improving training, so that we can take advantage of all the opportunities offered by tourism in the broadest sense."

While highly reliant on spending by European visitors, boosting the island's appeal to visitors from long-haul destinations such as Asia Pacific and North America is among the priorities of Tenerife

DIMPLE MELWANI  
CEO, TENERIFE TOURISM CORPORATION  
**"Last year, 36,500 American visitors, 45% more than in 2022, stayed in establishments on the island."**

Tourism Corporation. Most travelers from those regions who currently visit its shores disembark from giant cruise liners, many of which are run by leading US operators.

"Last year, 36,500 American visitors, 45% more than in 2022, stayed in establishments on the island," Melwani discloses. "For Tenerife, the American tourist, and the North American visitor in general, is key to the development of new markets that provide us with quality tourists. We are making a great effort to promote the island in such regions to ensure a greater influx."

## TOP 5 REASONS TO VISIT TENERIFE

- Unique and original gastronomy with European, Atlantic and African influences
- A pleasant climate, with an annual average of 73 degrees Fahrenheit
- Starlight destination for stargazing and privileged spot for whale watching
- With almost 50% of its territory protected, a visit to the World Heritage Teide National Park is a must
- One of the best 4- and 5-star hotel locations in Europe



## High-end hotels ensure a real taste of luxury

Upscale hotel provider Dreamplace Hotels and Resorts has truly perfected the art of resting

Having opened its first luxury hotel in 1988 in Tenerife, family firm Dreamplace Hotels and Resorts embarked on an ambitious expansion drive and now encompasses four brands, seven hotels and four destinations. Its family spirit, however, has remained unchanged throughout its impressive story of growth.

The award-winning company's sense of belonging and genuine concern and care about the well-being of others continue to define to a great extent what it represents. One of its most successful and popular hotels is the stunning Hotel Gran Tacande. Refurbished in 2017, it stands as a luxury oasis on the island's beautiful Costa Adeje, allowing guests to relax their five senses.

"Located on the seafloor, the Hotel Gran Tacande is so near the shore that you'll be able to smell the ocean, making it a great option if your perfect holiday consists of disconnecting," says Marco López, CEO. "Leave all your worries behind while you discover a hotel designed to give you the rest you deserve.

"Costa Adeje offers an enticing blend of sun, sea, and sophistication for visitors from the US seeking a dreamy escape," he enthuses. "This exclusive resort area, located on the southwest coast of Tenerife, boasts stunning landscapes with volcanic backdrops, pristine beaches, and luxurious amenities that cater to discerning travelers. From world-class resorts and gourmet dining to thrilling water sports and vibrant nightlife, Costa Adeje promises an unforgettable vacation experience."

MARCO LÓPEZ  
CEO, DREAMPLACE HOTELS AND RESORTS  
**"The welcome from the staff [at the Hotel Gran Tacande] typifies the warmth and affection of the Canary Islands."**

Asked what makes the hotel so special — apart from its incredible setting and eye-catching architecture, of course — the experienced industry expert highlights the wealth of gastronomic options that will activate guests' taste buds.

"Other highlights include a wellness center with sweet aromas, rooms so spacious and carefully decorated that you won't be able to stop looking at them and spectacular swimming pools that will make you forget the rest of the world and only focus on the relaxing feeling of the water on your skin," he explains.

"The first thing you feel when you go through the hotel door, after admiring its imposing façade,



Marco López  
CEO, Dreamplace Hotels and Resorts

is the grandeur and tranquility of the atmosphere. The welcome from the staff typifies the warmth and affection of the Canary Islands and you realize that any request or wish you make will be attended to immediately."

With everything so connected — every detail and every corner — the senior executive describes how as soon as visitors enter the hotel, they sink into an oasis of calm and serenity. "All the rooms have been designed to not only cover guests' basic needs, but also to offer them the perfect wellness space with exclusive amenities, welcome details, pillow menu and so much more," he adds.

"Guests can enjoy our fresh, rich and seasonal cuisine, with all kinds of dining options, at the Zurrón Market Buffet. Quick and more daring options during the day are available at our Bocana Beach Club, while sparkling bubbles of champagne and crunchy crudités with sublime views and unparalleled sunsets are found at our rooftop Azotea Sunset Raw Bar."

For guests who love that extra touch of luxury and distinction, the hotel's Gold Level and Suite Imperial rooms are the final word in luxury accommodation. As well as being equipped with jacuzzis or private swimming pools, they give access to the beautiful hotel's most exclusive area with a spectacular infinity pool, Bali beds, wellness drinks and snacks service, and stunning views of the Atlantic Ocean.

"The jewel in our crown is the recently renovated Vitanova Thalasso Spa, offering the latest treatments, massages, therapies and guided holistic activities for complete connection between body and mind," López adds. "All this is complemented by our thalasso water circuit which provides all the benefits of seawater."

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# LA PALMA

## Land of Volcanoes is tourism hotspot

Offering excitement and adventure for visitors of all ages, La Palma blends rugged terrain with beautiful beaches, ancient forests and year-round sun that guarantees a warm welcome for all

Created over tens of millions of years by volcanic activity, La Palma is unsurprisingly known as the Land of Volcanoes. Unfortunately, on Sept. 19, 2021 the Tajogaite cone in the Cumbre Vieja ridge roared back into life after half a century and triggered an eruption so strong that the reverberations are still being felt by locals more than three years later.

While, thankfully, the almost three-month-long lava flows did not cause any fatalities, they caused severe damage to the beautiful and welcoming island's agricultural and tourism-dependent economy, ruined hundreds of homes and offices and badly damaged key infrastructure, both physical and intangible.

Resilience is a common feature of the island's citizens and from an absolutely catastrophic situation, determined officials and residents vowed to turn the disaster into a moment of opportunity and pledged to emerge stronger than before. This strategy includes imminent plans for a state-of-the-art National Volcanological Center staffed by teams of experts to closely monitor and analyze volcanic activity as an early warning system against future eruptions.

SERGIO RODRÍGUEZ  
PRESIDENT, ISLAND COUNCIL OF LA PALMA

**“La Palma is committed not only to geothermal energy but also to sustainable energy. We will promote wind energy and leverage solar power, given our advantageous location.”**

“The Cumbre Vieja eruption destroyed many homes, most of which were primary residences, where the affected people lived but also impacted the economic sector,” explains Sergio Rodríguez, President of the Island Council of La Palma. “Second homes, holiday homes and a significant part of La Palma's primary sector, agriculture, particularly banana plantations, were severely damaged. Many people lost their homes and farms as they were often located in the same place.

“The catastrophe was different from others in the sense that in cases of flooding, earthquakes or fires, the land remains, allowing for reconstruction. However, with volcanic eruptions, the land cannot be built upon until the lava cools down; new terrain must be found to relocate these homes. Over the past three years, five decrees have been approved to allow reconstruction in various areas, and this process is now beginning.”

### Focus on harnessing geothermal energy

Admirably, instead of being fixated on concerns over future eruptions, the senior official and his colleagues are working to ensure La Palma takes advantage of the vast amount of geothermal energy stored in its underground terrain, and exploit its sustainable energy potential from renewable resources like wind and solar power.

“When we talk about an island offering opportunities, we refer to the exploration of areas that are interesting for anyone with economic potential,” Rodríguez adds. “The eruption itself has opened up opportunities to explore geothermal energy. Islands like the Azores — also in the Atlantic Ocean — which I visited to learn about their approach, have it easier as their geothermal resources are at a shallower depth.

“However, we aim to explore high-enthalpy geothermal energy, which is the most powerful. Although this means a larger investment is required, the return on such an investment will be more significant.



La Palma not only boasts spectacular volcanic landscapes, but many stunning golden beaches and crystal-clear warm waters



Sergio Rodríguez  
President, Island Council of La Palma

“La Palma is committed not only to geothermal energy but also to sustainable energy as a whole. We will promote wind energy, including offshore wind sources, and leverage solar power, given our advantageous location. This presents a significant opportunity for investors, supported by favorable legislation.”

### Learning from the past to protect future

Given nearly half of La Palma comprises an active volcano, fresh eruptions are seen as inevitable, hence comprehensive plans and strategies to predict and manage the response to the next volcanic emergency are well advanced.

Quizzed as to how officials are striving to prevent such events from occurring again, and the measures taking place to study and address such issues, Rodríguez confirms lessons have been obtained from previous eruptions across the Canary Islands and also in other nations.

“During my previous tenure as a Member of Parliament, a reconstruction commission was established in the Parliament of the Canary Islands. The conclusions, supported by all political groups, suggested La Palma should be the location for the National Volcanological Center, especially following the recent eruption.

“The Canary Islands are the only place on

Spanish territory where volcanic eruptions can occur. Tenerife has the Teide, but La Palma has the active Cumbre Vieja volcano, which has significantly impacted the island's population.

“The National Volcanological Center would play a crucial role in our economic recovery, given La Palma's commitment to tourism development, renewable energy implementation, and fostering a knowledge-based economy.”

The 2021 eruption was particularly devastating for the island as it compounded the very serious fiscal fall-out from the COVID-19 pandemic that had hit leading tourism destinations around the world hard in the year prior.

While the tourism sector was seriously disrupted for many months by the eruption, once the island reopened, tourism levels failed to rebound as quickly as expected, even though the situation brought a wave of thrill-seekers and people interested in visiting volcanoes.

“Due to the unfortunate messages we conveyed, there was an initial misconception that La Palma was a dangerous place, which was not entirely accurate,” Rodríguez explains. “Volcanic activity is highly localized and closely monitored, both during and after eruptions, especially within clearly defined exclusion zones that require strict surveillance.

“Over time, however, as people have come to understand the true level of risk, a new perspective has emerged. La Palma now boasts Europe's newest volcano, a phenomenon that many have long imagined witnessing. Having seen firsthand its raw power and destructive potential, there is also a profound recognition of the need to co-exist with natural forces. Extensive research is underway, encompassing tourism, scientific exploration and geological studies, all focused on understanding and leveraging this unique volcanic environment.

“From an administrative standpoint, efforts are underway to effectively manage and economically benefit from tourist visits. The goal is to promote the volcano as a unique attraction that draws visitors while ensuring their safety.

“There are still areas affected by CO2 emissions along the coast,” he continues. “This area is the most monitored in the world, equipped with sensors that track CO2 levels. While CO2

itself is not lethal, high concentrations can displace oxygen and pose risks. Rigorous monitoring enables informed decisions to safely accommodate visitors, with sensors acting as a safety measure for those exploring these areas.

“Furthermore, this unique aspect, not found anywhere else in the world, needs to be highlighted to attract interest and curiosity from visitors eager to understand these phenomena unique to La Palma. We need to flip the situation around and effectively market it so that people are intrigued to learn about and experience what happens here, unlike anywhere else.”

The local official says his council is actively promoting the island, not only showcasing its inherent natural beauty — such as its seascape, climate and cuisine — but also emphasizing the resilience and unique character of its people in facing the rare challenges posed by a volcano.

SERGIO RODRÍGUEZ  
PRESIDENT, ISLAND COUNCIL OF LA PALMA

**“We aim to prioritize quality and sustainable tourism. Our focus is on rural tourism accommodations that integrate harmoniously with the landscape and heritage.”**

“The people of La Palma themselves are a testament to human resilience, transforming disasters into economic opportunities for the island,” he adds. “La Palma has historically lagged in tourism compared to other Canary Islands, receiving less than 2% of the total tourist arrivals in the archipelago.

“We aim to chart a different path forward by prioritizing quality and sustainable tourism over sheer numbers. Our focus is on rural tourism accommodations like guesthouses, holiday homes, and villas that integrate harmoniously with the natural landscape and heritage. Once visitors experience the island and its people, they will return often. I've witnessed this often with tourists who purchase homes and split their time between here and their home nation.”

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