

Canary Islands (Las Islas Canarias)

Overview:

The Canary Islands are an Autonomous Community within the Kingdom of Spain located in the Atlantic Ocean.

Territory:

The Canary islands are an archipelago of seven main islands and six smaller ones of volcanic origin. The seven main islands are: Gran Canaria (capital is Las Palmas de Gran Canaria); Tenerife (capital is Santa Cruz de Tenerife); Lanzarote (capital is Arrecife); La Palma (capital is Santa Cruz de la Palma); La Gomera (capital is San Sebastian de La Gomera); El Hierro (capital Valverde), and Fuerteventura (capital is Puerto del Rosario). Total Coastal Length: 1,583km % of National Land Area (Spain): 1.5%

Location:

In Atlantic Ocean, off northwestern coast of Africa

Latitude and Longitude:

Between parallels of 27 4 and 29 3 N and meridians of 13 3 and 18 2 W.

Time Zone:

GMT

Total Land Area:

7447

EEZ:

Climate:

The northern side of the islands (with the exception of Lanzarote and Fuerteventura) is subtropical, and the south, including the two exceptions, are drier and warmer. The average temperature is 18 degrees Celsius (64 F) in the winter, and 24 degrees Celsius (75 F) in the summer. The sirocco, the wind that carries sand from the Sahara, blows in the summer. The trade winds have a strong influence on weather patterns and precipitation on the islands.

Natural Resources:

Deep coastal waters (for strategically located ports); strong trade winds and dependable sunshine for wind and solar energy production; rich marine and terrestrial environment; fertile volcanic soils. The islands have very fertile soil due to their volcanic origin, but no rivers, and apart from the northern areas of the islands, all suffer from a water shortage.

ECONOMY:

Total GDP:	
2003	219,000,000.00 USD

Per Capita GDP:	
2003	14,000.00 USD

% of GDP per Sector:			
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
2003	2%	20%	78%

% of Population Employed by Sector			
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
2003	5%	17%	78%

External Aid/Remittances:

Growth:

The Canary Islands have a serious trade deficit. Their imports totaled 10,178,908.35 Euro in 2004, and their exports 2,327,170.83 Euro. This leaves a deficit of Å-7,851,737.52 Euro.

Labour Force:	
2002	830,220
2003	870,160

Unemployment	
Year:	Unemployment Rate (% of pop.)
1999	14.5%

Industry:

The Canary Islands are one of Spain's more important shipping ports, and is quickly establishing itself as an important transshipment point on international shipping routes from the Americas to Europe, the Middle East and Africa. The location of the islands is key as a crossroads between continents. Some of the other industries the islands are involved in are extractive industries; petroleum refining; the production of energy and desalination of water; the production of food, drinks and tobacco; textiles; paper and printing; the chemical industry; plastic materials; the production of mechanic and electric equipment; the production of shipping related products, as well as other manufacturing industries. While total employment in industry is dropping, the construction industry is booming (increasing the number of employees from 90,000 to 132,000 between the years of 1999 and 2003). The leading exports are currently bananas, sugarcane, tomatoes, potatoes and tobacco. Its main international trading partners are Germany, the U.K., France, and Italy. The Canaries are extremely dependent on foreign entities to supply enough food and beverages to meet local demand. Other things imported are paper, electronic and mechanical goods, and electricity.

Niche Industry:

The Canary Islands use their autonomous status to attract international investment. They claim that the high degree of jurisdiction that they have gives them the competency to improve education, health, infrastructure, the environment, water quality, etc. to the benefit of potential investors. The absence of primary materials to generate energy and the lack of freshwater resources led to the creation of the Technological Institute of the Canaries (a public company established in 1992), which is dedicated to researching alternative energy technology and the production of drinking water. The islands have become a world leader in the process of desalination. The Canaries have also used their key location on international shipping routes to their economic benefit and are quickly moving up to occupy an important role in international shipping.

Tourism:

The service sector is the most important contributor to both GDP and employment on the islands. The main visitors to the islands are from the Americas (mainly South America); Europe; Africa; and small numbers from Asia. The islands currently receive around 14 million visitors annually. Despite, or perhaps precisely because of its key role in the local economy, tourism is currently dropping dramatically. Overdevelopment in response to economic exploitation of the industry has resulted in built-up coastal areas, air pollution, sewage problems, etc. Tourism dropped 8% during the last year alone. The government is responding by implementing a massive renewal project aimed at cleaning up the tourist attractions, increasing the quality of the existing developments rather than building more, improving infrastructure, and developing alternative energy sources. Whether or not these efforts will be a success remains to be seen. The main tourist activities are "beach-lazing", cycling, hiking, surfing, windsurfing, swimming, snorkeling, scuba diving, deep-sea fishing, and sailing.

Imports and Exports:	
The Canary Islands have a serious trade deficit. Their imports totaled 10,178,908.35 Euro in 2004, and their exports 2,327,170.83 Euro. This leaves a deficit of -7,851,737.52 Euro. The leading exports are currently bananas, sugarcane, tomatoes, potatoes and tobacco. Its main international trading partners are Germany, the U.K., France, and Italy. The Canaries are extremely dependent on foreign entities to supply enough food and beverages to meet local demand. Other things imported are paper, electronic and mechanical goods, and electricity.	
Tot. Value of Imports	10,178,908.00 Euro (2004)
From Eu:	
Import Partners (EU):	The leading exports are currently bananas, sugarcane, tomatoes, potatoes and tobacco. Its main international trading partners are Germany, the U.K., France, and Italy. The Canaries are extremely dependent on foreign entities to supply enough food and beverages to meet local demand. Other things imported are paper, electronic and mechanical goods, and electricity.
Partners Outside EU:	
Import Partners:	
Tot. Value of Exports	2327170 Euro (2004)
To Eu:	
Export Partners:	
Partners Outside EU::	
Export Partners:	
Main Imports:	
Main Exports:	

**TRANSPORTATION/ACCESS****External:****Number of Airports: 7**

All of the islands have airports but Gran Canaria, Tenerife and Lanzarote receive the bulk of the flights from international destinations and mainland Spain. Flights are available to the islands from most European cities with or without stopovers in Spain. From North America flights go to Madrid and then on to Corsica. The local airline is Binter.

Number of Main Ports: 4

The main ports on the islands are Las Palmas, on Gran Canaria; Santa Cruz, on Tenerife, Puerto del Rosario, on Fuerteventura; and Arcefe on Lanzarote. The Canaries are connected by roll-on, roll-off ferries, hydrofoils, and jetfoils. There is a weekly ferry from the southern Spanish port of Cadiz to the islands. The number of connections increases during peak tourist periods. The Las Palmas Port Authority administers three ports for cargo shipping: Puerto de Arcefe, Puerto del Rosario, and Puerto de la Luz, the latter being the most important on international shipping routes, receiving 90% of container traffic. Puerto de la Luz is currently 64th in world rankings.

Internal:**Air****Road:**

Buses (guaguas) on each island serve most of the main destinations, but the number of runs is limited – especially on the smaller islands. In 2001, 47.4% of the population had one car, 19.6% had two cars, 4.6% had three or more, and 28.4% had no car. In 2003 there were 67,337 cars registered on the islands. All of the big rental car companies are present in the Canaries, as well as taxis (which are nevertheless very expensive).

Sea:**Other Forms of Transportation:**

Other Forms of Transportation: Small group ferries between the islands can be organized, and small planes connect the islands too, although at a considerable cost. Bicycles are available for hire on the main islands.

Economic Zones:

The islands also have a Special Economic Zone (ZEC) in which all operations carried out are exempt from all indirect taxes. Active refining operations are not subject to economic conditions, and no tax is paid on the processing of raw materials or on value added generated. If the product being manufactured is exported to a European Union territory then taxes must be paid for the finished product, but not if it is exported to a third country.

Energy Policy:

A 20,100Kw wind farm was installed on Gran Canaria in 1995. A second wind farm was built in Fuerteventura. There are currently wind turbines on Gran Canaria (235), Lanzarote (53), fuerteventura (51), Tenerife (147), La Palma (18), La Gomera (2), and El Hierro (2). In total the turbines are producing 147.855 Kw of energy. The islands are in a prime location for tapping the power of the trade winds which blow very consistently across the region. There are also currently 51,000 solar panels installed, mainly for heating water. A number of thermal solar energy and photovoltaic solar energy plans are being implemented, and mini-hydraulic projects are being explored. Despite these efforts, in 2001, 99.4% of the islands' energy supply was coming from petroleum. The government's goal is to reduce this to 78% in 2011. In 2005 two natural gas plants are being built on the islands, but the gas has to be imported also, thus only shifting the dependence on an external source rather than increasing the islands' degree of self-sufficiency in energy supply.

Year	Total Energy Production (Mwh)	Type			Total Energy Consumption (Mwh)	Sector				
		Thermic (Mwh)	Geothermic (Mwh)	Other (Mwh)		Domestic (Mwh)	Commercial (Mwh)	Public Service (Mwh)	Industry (Mwh)	Public Lighting (Mwh)

Official Currency:

Euro

Banking and Insurance:

Number of Banks and Credit Unions:

Number of Agricultural Credit Unions:

Number of Insurance Companies:

Financial Services:**Communications/E-Commerce:****Public Ownership:****Land Use:**

Theoretically, the Canary islands are one of the most protected areas in Europe. 42% of their landmass falls under some category of parkland. Currently 301,335.2 hectares of land is protected. This includes four of Spain's thirteen national parks (one having been named a UNESCO biosphere reserve); eleven natural parks (which have seen a greater degree of human intrusion); seven rural parks; eleven integral natural reserves, fifteen special natural reserves; fifty-two natural monuments; twenty-seven protected landscapes, and nineteen sites of scientific interest. About half of the islands' 2,000 plant species are endemic including the Canary island palm, and the dragon tree (an ancient plant that survived the last ice-age). The microclimates on the islands allow for a great diversity of vegetation.

Agriculture/Forestry:

The islands have very fertile soil due to their volcanic origin, but no rivers, and apart from the northern areas of the islands, all suffer from a water shortage. A great deal of the water being utilized on the islands currently comes directly from desalination plants. Just over 10% over the land area is used for agriculture. The main products are corn, potatoes, flowers and ornamental plants, vegetables, oranges, plantain, avocados, almonds, grapes, onions, green beans, cucumbers, peppers, pineapple, tomatoes and forestry cultivations. The most important crops are tomatoes, potatoes, grapes and plantain. Other products produced on the islands are eggs, wool, manure, honey, wax, and milk. The number of inhabitants employed in agriculture has been dropping annually.

Marine Activity:**Fishing:**

Fishing is a small yet important part of the local economy. The fishery receives subsidies from the national government however to keep it viable. Tuna is the main species fished, but other species are also caught.

Marine Life:

About half of the islands' 2,000 plant species are endemic including the Canary island palm, and the dragon tree (an ancient plant that survived the last ice-age). The microclimates on the islands allow for a great diversity of vegetation.

Critical Issues:

Despite the relatively large amount of autonomy that the islands seem to have been afforded, some problems do exist. One of these is that the islands want control over the waters between their islands, which the national government has thus far been reluctant to hand over to the regional authorities. Another is that when policies which are environmentally detrimental to the islands are pursued by countries neighbouring the Canaries, these issues can only be dealt with diplomatically at the levels of Madrid or Brussels.



JURISDICTIONAL RESOURCES

Capital:

Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and Santa Cruz de Tenerife

Political System:

Canary Islands Government: Structure and Autonomous Powers: On August 10, 1982 the Statute of Autonomy for the Canary Islands was passed (its latest modification was on December 30, 1996), and on August 16, 1982, the islands were granted the status of a Comunidad Autonoma. The Autonomous Community consists of two provinces, Las Palmas and Santa Cruz de Tenerife, whose capitals, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, and Santa Cruz de Tenerife, are co-capitals of the community. Each of the seven major islands is ruled by an assembly named Cabildo Insular. Santa Cruz de Tenerife includes Tenerife, Palma, Gomera, and Hierro. Las Palmas includes Gran Canaria, Lanzarote and Fuerteventura. The government is made up of ten advisors and one commissioner, plus a president (currently Adan Martin). The commissioner deals with foreign action and institutional relations with Europe. The president of the Canaries alternates his base between the two capitals per legislative period. The vice-president is located in the city where the president is not. The Canarian parliament is located in Santa Cruz de Tenerife. The term of the parliament is four years, and the parliament elects a president, two vice-presidents and two secretaries. The government consists of the president, the vice-president, and councilors. Each island has an island council. The Autonomous Community of the Canaries has exclusive competence in social services and assistance; public institutions concerned with the education and protection of minors; planning and zoning; natural protected areas; public works that only affect the local community; roads and transport, as well as cargo terminals; maritime transport that only stops in the islands' ports; education; the management of forests and forest products, pastures and grazing; healthcare; environmental protection, including spills and dumps in the region; fishing in the coastal and interior waters and aquaculture; hunting; water management, distribution, treatment, and use (agriculture, urban and industrial); cultural and artistic foundations and associations; scientific and technical investigation in coordination with the state; culture, historical patrimony, art, monuments, architecture, archaeological and scientific sites, as well as archives, museums and libraries that are not state-run; handicrafts; leisure activities, sports, and performances; ports and airports that are not of importance to the state, as well as refuse ports and export airports; tourism; statistics of local interest; cooperatives, unions, etc, that are not connected to social security; publications; instillation of energy plants, distribution and transportation of energy; meteorological services of the Canaries; casinos, gambling centres; the establishment and laws governing merchandise centres; pharmaceutical establishments; determining the criteria by which the fiscal and economic policies function; agriculture and livestock farming; industry; internal commerce and consumer protection; economic planning and regional public sector activities; policies on public cooperative credit unions and savings banks; and media. Despite the relatively large amount of autonomy that the islands seem to have been afforded, some problems do exist. One of these is that the islands want control over the waters between their islands, which the national government has thus far been reluctant to hand over to the regional authorities. Another is that when policies which are environmentally detrimental to the islands are pursued by countries neighbouring the Canaries, these issues can only be dealt with diplomatically at the levels of Madrid or Brussels.

Political Parties:

Important Legislation:

The Law of Autonomy enables the government of the Canaries to participate in negotiations with the E.U. in matters that are of interest to the archipelago. The regional government can also request permission from the central government to sign conventions or treaties.

Principal Taxes:

Associated Power:

Kingdom of Spain (EU)

Citizenship:

Paradiplomacy:

HUMAN RESOURCES

Population: 1,843,755 (4.4% of Spain)

2003			
Island	Area (km sq.)	Population	% of Total Population
El Hierro	0	10,668	%
La Palma	0	86,062	%
La Gomera	0	21,952	%
Tenerife	0	852,945	%
Gran Canaria	0	807,049	%
Fuerteventura	0	89,680	%
Lanzarote	0	127,457	%

In 2003, 0.5% of the population lived in El Hierro, 1% lived in La Gomera, 4.5% lived in La Palma 6.1% lived in Lanzarote, 4.0% lived in Fuerteventura, 41.7% lived in Gran Canaria, and 42.2% lived in Tenerife. The percentage of the inhabitants residing on the islands of Lanzarote, Fuerteventura, and Tenerife are increasing. The populations on all of the other islands have either remained stable since 1991, or are decreasing. The population density in 2003 was 254 inhabitants per square kilometer.

Population:	
Year	Resident Population

Age of Population:	0-14	15-24	25-49	50-64	65 and up
1991	22	0	0	0	9
2001	16	0	0	0	12

Migration:

In 1999 the gross migration rate was 17 per 1,000 inhabitants (a positive migration rate).



Crude Birth Rate:	
2003	11%

Life Expedctancy:

Number of Births: 2001: 19,257 ; 2002: 19,153 Number of Deaths: 2001: 11,928 ; 2002: 11,750 In 2003 there were eleven births and 7.2 deaths per 1,000 people. Nevertheless, between the years of 1991 and 2001 the percentage of inhabitants below the age of 15 dropped from 22% to 16.5%, and the percentage of inhabitants over the age of 65 went from 9.5% to 12.04%.

Crude Death Rate:	
2003	7.2%

Ethnicity:

A person from the Canaries is known as Canario/a.

Class Division:**Languages:**

The official language is Spanish, or Castilian.

Religion:

The majority of the population is Roman Catholic, but other religious groups are represented on the islands in small numbers.

Literacy:

In 2001, illiteracy was at 3.4%; 18.4% of the population had no education; 20.2% had primary; 27.5% had middle-school education; 17.9% had high-school education, and 16.1% had continued to do higher education.

Education System:

In 1997/98, there were 1,214 schools excluding universities on the islands. In 1998/99, this figure had risen to 1,217; in 1999/00 it had dropped back to 1,214, and in 2000/01 it was down to 1,186. These figures include language institutes, music and dance schools, adult education programs, etc. In 2001/02, there were 25,985 teachers in the Canaries. 22,044 were public teachers and 3,941 were private.

Total Pre-schools:()	
Total Primary Schools	
First Level:	
Second Level:	
Third Level:	
Total Secondary Schools:	
Total Professional Schools	
Universities:	

Number of Schools per Island:										
	Pre-school		Elementary			High-school		Prof.	University	
	Pub	Priv	1	2	3	Pub	Priv		Pub	Priv

Students Enrolled:					
Year:	Pre-School	Elementary	High-school	Prof.	University

Teachers							
Year	Pre-School	Elementary			High-School	Prof.	University
		1	2	3			

The total number of students is dropping annually: in 1998/99 there were 348,355, and in 2002/03 there were 323,486. There were about 247 libraries on the islands in 2000 (28 state-run, 10 public, 160 run by local entities, 18 private, 20 university-owned, and 11 others). The islands are also home to a number of scientific centres such as the Institute of Astrophysics which houses one of the world's most important telescopes; the Institute of Natural Products; the Institute of Oceanography, and the Institute of Aerospace Technology.

Medical Services:

In 1998, there were 47 hospitals in operation, with 4.51 beds available per 1,000 inhabitants (total 7,451). There were 220 directors and administrators, 2,949 medical specialists, 9,975 other medical personnel and 5,041 non-medical employees. In 1999 there were 38 doctors per 1,000 inhabitants.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

History:

The Canary Islands are estimated to be 30 million years old, which is considered relatively young geologically-speaking. The first settlements are thought to have been around 200 BC. The first known inhabitants were the Guanches, tall, powerful people with blue eyes and long fair hair. Their exact origins are not certain but some theories are that they were Celtic from mainland Spain or Protugal, or Norse invaders. There is also mention of Berber immigrants arriving on the island from Saharan Africa. In the Middle-Ages when Europeans first "discovered" the islands, they were inhabited by many tribes who were often hostile to one another. Tenerife alone was divided into 90 tiny fiefdoms. The Guanches relied on farming, herding, hunting and gathering, and the majority lived in caves. Many Europeans came through the islands (explorers, missionaries, slavers wanting to fill their holds), but it was the Portuguese-Italian mission of 1341 that finally put the Canaries on the international map. The first Europeans to conquer the Guanches were the Normans from France (1402-1495). There were many massacres and the Guanches were sold off as slaves, their language disappeared, and the few that survived intermarried with the invaders, converted to Christianity, and took Spanish names. Spain's control was challenged by Morocco in 1569 and 1586, the British in 1595, and the Dutch in 1599. In 1657 the British defeated the Spanish at Tenerife, but somehow the Spaniards managed to keep a hold on the islands, which were officially declared a province of Spain in 1821. Several boom-bust agricultural cycles have passed through the Canaries: sugar cane, wine, cochineal (which was used to make dyes), bananas, and tomatoes and potatoes. During World War I, the British blocked Europe, destroying the islands' banana trade. Many islanders emigrated to Latin America. Spain fell into the civil war, and in March 1936, Franco was sent to the Canaries because the national government was suspicious that he was trying to overthrow the government. The Canaries suffered immensely in the aftermath of war in Spain, and many escaped to Venezuela. In the 1950's alone, 16,000 left the country, one-third of these drowning as a result of poorly constructed boats. In the early 1960's Franco opened the islands to tourism which has been the backbone of the economy ever since.

Referenda:

Recent Significant Events:

Music, Dance, Handicraft and Patrimony:

Cultural Resources: Santa Cruz de Tenerife has three museums: Museo de la Naturaleza y El Hombre, Museo de Bellas Artes, and Museo Militar de Almeyda. In 2003, there were 257 cultural sites on the islands: 21 historical groups, one historical garden, 184 monuments, 45 archaeological sites, and six historical sites. Archeological Sites: The islands have a wealth of archaeologically interesting sites dating back to the first inhabitants. Festivals: There are many festivals, celebrations and religious commemorations on the Canaries. In February and March there is the Carnaval; in June the Bajada de la Virgen de las Nieves, a primary religious festival on the islands, but only held once every five years (will be held in 2005); The most important religious festival on the Canaries is Fiesta de la Virgen del Pino, and festivities last two weeks from the end of August to the beginning of September. The islands also host many arts festivals including the Festival de Musica de Canarias (January); festival de Opera (February-March); Festival de Ballet y Danza (May); Festival Internacional de Cine (international film festival held every two years in October and November); and Encuentro Teatral Tres Continentes, which brings theatre companies from Europe, Latin America, and Africa to Aguiemes (Gran Canaria) in September.

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