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The Culture of Canary Islands

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Geography

- Physically, the Canaries fall into two groups. The western group, made up of Tenerife, Gran Canaria, La Palma, La Gomera, and Ferro islands, consists of mountain peaks that rise directly from a deep ocean floor. The eastern group comprises Lanzarote, Fuerteventura Island, and six islets surmounting a single submarine plateau, the Canary Ridge, that rises about 4,500 feet (1,400 metres) from the ocean floor. The Canary Islands were formed by volcanic eruptions millions of years ago.
- (autonomous community) of Spain, consisting of an archipelago in the Atlantic Ocean



The Canary Islands culture

The first island settlers developed a culture full of forms of expression, such as sculpture, ceramics and other immaterial forms like traditions and customs that have lasted to this day. Songs, dances and other less common expressions, such as Canarian wrestling and silbo Gomero. Cultural expressions that you can discover in the various popular festivals on all the islands.



The Canarian wrestling

- Canarian wrestling comes from the history of the Guanches, the earliest known natives of the Canary Islands
- In 1420, shortly after the Spanish conquest, Alvar García de Santa María first recorded the wrestling techniques, including the use of referees, or hombres de honor (men of honor). Only some of these early rules and techniques have survived to modern times. After the conquest, the sport became part of the islands' folklore, only usually being fought at celebrations or local festivals.



Canarian Pottery

- The first inhabitants of the archipelago did not use a wheel or a kiln in this trade: they made the pieces by hand, employing the urdido method, a form of modelling with rolls or “churros” of clay which are coiled around on top of each other to shape the sides. They usually decorated them with red ochre or incisions, and in some cases even with extremely accurate lunar and solar calendars, like those found in sites on Fuerteventura and La Palma.



Language spoken in the Canary Islands

- As in the rest of Spain, in the Canary Islands the official language is Spanish. However, as in the majority of countries, there are many people who speak English, the second most spoken language, and many people also understand German. In almost all public establishments, such as stores, restaurants, hotels, etc., there is at least one person who speaks English or German

Silbo Gomero



- **Silbo Gomero** is a transposition of Spanish from speech to whistling. The oral phoneme-whistled phoneme substitution emulates Spanish phonology through a reduced set of whistled phonemes. In 2009, UNESCO declared it a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

Fiestas de la Bajada de la Virgen de las Nieves

- La Palma
- Declared of National Tourist Interest, the 'Descent of Our Lady of the Snows' festivities, which have been taking place every five years since 1680, make Santa Cruz de La Palma the centre of numerous celebrations that go on for almost two months. Once the figure of Our Lady is brought into the El Salvador Parish, in the Plaza de España, events begin that attract thousands of people to the island to enjoy concerts, dances, pilgrimages and, especially, the magic of the star show: the Dance of the Dwarves, who dance in the streets to a lively polka all night long until the arrival of 'Our Lady's Boat' just before dawn.



Los Indianos

- La Palma
- One of the most unique events to take place in the Canary Islands is the disembarking of the 'Indianos' in Santa Cruz de La Palma, a fun recreation, worthy of the La Palma carnival, that commemorates and characterises the islanders who returned from the West Indies, particularly from Cuba, with the island inhabitants dressed in white from head to toe and participating in a huge talcum-powder battle as they dance to the sound of Cuban music.



The Day of the Canary Islands



- The celebration of the Canary Islands Day has its roots in history and regional pride. It not only commemorates the achievement of the Statute of Autonomy of the Canary Islands but also serves as a day to exalt and perpetuate Canarian culture. From the Canary Islands flag to its music, dances, and traditional costumes, each element is celebrated to reaffirm the cultural identity of the islands.

Typical Canarian costume

- The Typical Canarian dress is still evident in popular festivals and celebrations, such as the famous Canarian pilgrimages, as well as in the costumes of Canarian folklore and different cultural groups. Of course, there are small peculiarities that allow the inhabitants to be distinguished according to the island (sometimes even from different regions or localities of an island).
- It should be noted that they are very similar to the typical costumes of the Portuguese islands like Madeira and the Azores, which form part of the geographical region of Macaronesia together with the Canarian Islands and the Cape Verde.



Traditional Canarian food

- **Papas con mojo picón (wrinkly potatoes with a spicy red mojo sauce)**
- Possibly one of the most symbolic starters in the Canary Islands. It consists of a portion of small cooked potatoes (known as papas arrugadas, or wrinkly potatoes) served with the famous mojo picón sauce, made from a base of paprika, garlic, cumin, olive oil and vinegar. The dish is equally popular with the mojo verde sauce, a green sauce made from coriander, garlic and cumin.



Traditional Canarian food

- **Roasted Cheese with Mojo**



This simple but delicious starter that originated in La Palma. It is very easy to prepare: cut some very thin slices of soft or semi-cured Canary Island cheese (almost always smoked) and roast them in the oven with a drizzle of olive oil. Then serve with some red or green mojo sauce on top.

Traditional Canarian dessert

- **Bienmesabe**
- Bienmesabe is the name for two different desserts. This simple almond one is from the Canary Islands. It is a sponge cake to which custard, cabello de ángel, and ground almonds are added, and it is typically purchased from the nuns or from pastry shops, rather than homemade



Typical fruit: Banana from La Palma

- Banana plantation in La Palma is an essential activity that supports more than 5,300 producers and up to 10,000 families on the island. This fruit has shaped both the economy and the landscape of the region.
- To grow bananas in La Palma, fertile volcanic soils have been moved from the high areas of the island to the coastal zones. In these areas, gardens with stone walls are built, giving a unique appearance to the landscape. The mild subtropical climate, even in the summer months, allows a slow development of the crops, resulting in fruits with exceptional maturity and a concentration of nutrients and aromatic substances.



Traditional Canarian food

- **Rabbit in Salmorejo**
- An extremely tasty meat dish as the chopped rabbit meat is left to marinade all day in the salmorejo, which is made from olive oil, garlic, paprika, pepper, cumin, thyme, salt and vinegar. Afterwards it is fried and garnished with the sauce. Most restaurants serve this dish with papas arrugadas.



Traditional Canarian food

- **Cocido Canario (Canary Island Stew)**
- Given the islands' warm climate this dish is definitely best kept for the colder days. It is characterised by the typical stew ingredients it contains (chickpeas, meat and vegetables) together with sweet potato, corn, potatoes, pumpkin, parsley and mint.



Typical hairstyles



Traditional hairstyles



Spanish hairstyles in the past



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