

TREKKING IN THE CANARY ISLANDS

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The GR5 Trail
The GR20 Corsica
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Walking on Arran
Walking on Gran Canaria
Walking on Guernsey
Walking on Jersey
Walking on La Gomera and El Hierro
Walking on Lanzarote and Fuerteventura
Walking on La Palma
Walking on Madeira
Walking on Malta
Walking on Tenerife

TREKKING IN THE CANARY ISLANDS

THE GR131 ISLAND-HOPPING ROUTE

by Paddy Dillon

CICERONE

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Updates to this Guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/908/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time.

We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

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Notes on mapping

The route maps in this guide are derived from publicly available data, databases and crowd-sourced data. As such they have not been through the detailed checking procedures that would generally be applied to a published map from an official mapping agency, although naturally we have reviewed them closely in the light of local knowledge as part of the preparation of this guide. The islands are densely forested in places, and there is extensive tree cover which may change over time – although the woodland shown is reasonably representative it should not be considered completely accurate.

Front cover: Degollada de Gujara with El Teide beyond (Stage 23)

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Mountain safety

Every mountain walk has its dangers, and those described in this guidebook are no exception. All who walk or climb in the mountains should recognise this and take responsibility for themselves and their companions along the way. The author and publisher have made every effort to ensure that the information contained in this guide was correct when it went to press, but, except for any liability that cannot be excluded by law, they cannot accept responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by any person using this book.

International distress signal *(emergency only)*

Six blasts on a whistle (and flashes with a torch after dark) spaced evenly for one minute, followed by a minute's pause. Repeat until an answer is received. The response is three signals per minute followed by a minute's pause.

Helicopter rescue

The following signals are used to communicate with a helicopter:

Help needed:
raise both arms
above head to
form a 'Y'



Help not needed:
raise one arm
above head, extend
other arm downward



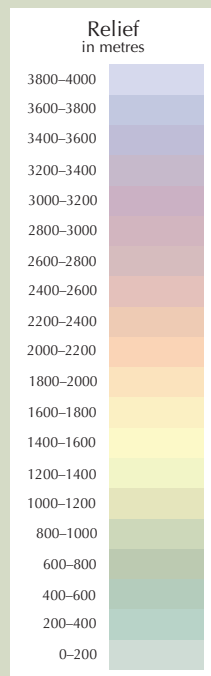
Emergency telephone numbers

International emergency number: 112
Guardia Civil: 062

Mountain rescue can be very expensive – be adequately insured.

Symbols used on route maps

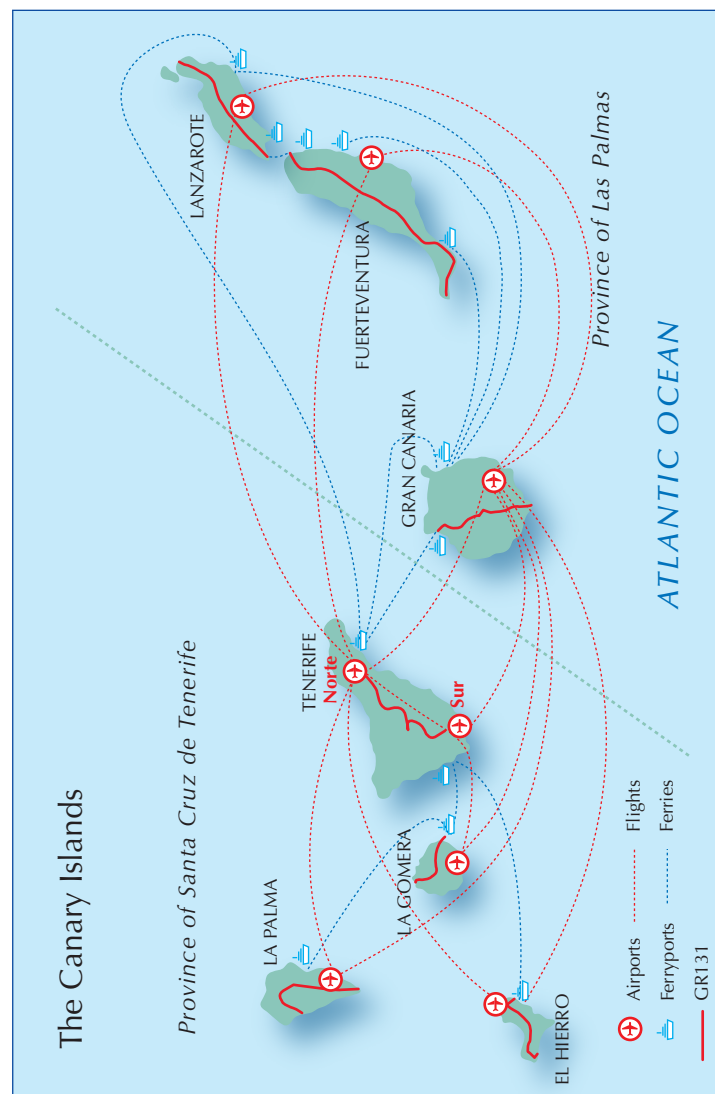
-  route
-  alternative route
-  track
-  footpath
-  start point
-  finish point
-  start/finish point
-  alternative start point
-  alternative finish point
-  route direction
-  woodland
-  urban areas
-  marshland
-  peak
-  other feature
-  building
-  ferry
-  airport



SCALE: 1:50,000

0 kilometres 0.5 1
0 miles 0.5

GPX files for all routes can be downloaded free at www.cicerone.co.uk/765/GPX.





Rock overhangs a splendid paved path high above Cruz Grande (Stage 17)

ROUTE SUMMARY TABLE

Stage no	Start	Distance	Time	Ascent	Descent
Lanzarote					
Stage 1	Órzola	12km (7½ miles)	3hr 30min	470m (1540ft)	190m (625ft)
Stage 2	Haría	13km (8 miles)	4hr 30min	360m (1180ft)	340m (1115ft)
Stage 3	Teguise	15.5km (9¾ miles)	4hr 30min	270m (885ft)	300m (985ft)
Stage 4	Montaña Blanca	17km (10½ miles)	5hr	390m (1280ft)	480m (1575ft)
Stage 5	Yaiza	15.5km (9¾ miles)	5hr	80m (260ft)	260m (855ft)
Lanzarote total		73km (45¼ miles)	5 days	1570m (5150ft)	1570m (5150ft)
Fuerteventura					
Stage 6	Islote de Lobos	8km (5 miles)	2hr 30min	150m (490ft)	150m (490ft)
Stage 7	Corralejo	25km (15½ miles)	8hr	480m (1575ft)	260m (855ft)
Stage 8	La Oliva	17.5km (11 miles)	5hr 30min	210m (690ft)	230m (755ft)
Stage 9	Tefía	17.5km (11 miles)	6hr	530m (1740ft)	340m (1115ft)
Stage 10	Betancuria	17km (10½ miles)	5hr 30min	520m (1705ft)	710m (2330ft)
Stage 11	Pájara	26km (16 miles)	9hr	750m (2460ft)	910m (2985ft)
Stage 12	La Pared	16km (10 miles)	5hr	290m (950ft)	280m (920ft)
Stage 13	Barranco de Pecenescal	16.5km (10¼ miles)	5hr	400m (1315ft)	450m (1475ft)
Stage 14	Morro Jable	20.5km (12¾ miles)	6hr	280m (920ft)	280m (920ft)
Fuerteventura total		164km (102 miles)	9 days	3610m (11,845ft)	3610m (11,845ft)

Stage no	Start	Distance	Time	Ascent	Descent
Gran Canaria					
Stage 15	Faro de Maspalomas	18km (11¼ miles)	5hr 30min	530m (1740ft)	220m (720ft)
Stage 16	Ayagaures	12.5km (7¾ miles)	4hr	900m (2950ft)	320m (1050ft)
Stage 17	Tunte	15.5km (9½ miles)	5hr 30min	1020m (3345ft)	400m (1310ft)
Stage 18	Cruz de Tejeda	17.5km (11 miles)	5hr 30min	750m (2460ft)	1060m (3475ft)
Stage 19	Tamadaba	10.5km (6½ miles)	3hr 30min	50m (165ft)	1250m (4100ft)
Gran Canaria total		74km (46 miles)	5 days	3250m (10,660ft)	3250m (10,660ft)

Tenerife

Stage 20	La Esperanza	29.5km (18¼ miles)	10hr	1650m (5415ft)	1360m (4460ft)
Stage 21	La Caldera	13.5km (8¼ miles)	5hr	1090m (3575ft)	240m (790ft)
Teide Alt 1	El Portillo	11.5km (7 miles)	5hr	1250m (4100ft)	20m (65ft)
Teide Alt 2	Refugio Alta Vista	13km (8 miles)	5hr	450m (1475ft)	1570m (5150ft)
Stage 22	El Portillo	17km (10½ miles)	5hr	260m (855ft)	150m (490ft)
Stage 23	Parador	15.5km (9¾ miles)	5hr 30min	380m (1245ft)	1100m (3610ft)
Stage 24	Vilaflor	18km (11 miles)	6hr	450m (1475ft)	1260m (4135ft)
Tenerife total		93.5km (58 miles)	5 days	3830m (12,565ft)	4110m (13,485ft)
Tenerife total (El Teide alternative)		101km (62¾ miles)	6 days	5270m (17,290ft)	5550m (18,210ft)

Stage no	Start	Distance	Time	Ascent	Descent
La Gomera					
Stage 25	San Sebastián	27km (16¾ miles)	10hr	1960m (6430ft)	880m (2885ft)
Stage 26	Chipude	18.5km (11½ miles)	6hr	420m (1380ft)	1500m (4920ft)
La Gomera total		45.5km (28¼ miles)	2 days	2380m (7810ft)	2380m (7810ft)

La Palma

Stage 27	Faro de Fuencaliente	7km (4¼ miles)	2hr 30min	710m (2330ft)	0m (0ft)
Stage 28	Fuencaliente	17.5km (10¾ miles)	6hr	1450m (4760ft)	720m (2360ft)
Stage 29	Refugio El Pilar	27km (16¾ miles)	9hr	1880m (6170ft)	900m (2950ft)
Stage 30	Roque de los Muchachos	18km (11 miles)	5hr 30min	100m (330ft)	2520m (8270ft)
La Palma total		69.5km (43¼ miles)	4 days	4140m (13,585ft)	4140m (13,585ft)

El Hierro

Stage 31	Puerto de la Estaca/ Tamaduste	18km (11 miles)	5hr 30min	1440m (4725ft)	100m (330ft)
Stage 32	Fuente de La Llanía	22km (14 miles)	7hr	240m (790ft)	1580m (5185ft)
El Hierro total		40km (25 miles)	2 days	1680m (5510ft)	1680m (5510ft)

GR131 total		559.5km (347½ miles)	32 days	20,460m (67,125ft)	20,740m (68,045ft)
GR131 total (El Teide alternative)		567km (352 miles)	33 days	21,900m (71,850ft)	22,180m (72,770ft)



INTRODUCTION

The Canary Islands comprise seven subtropical islands with enviable weather and a great variety of scenery. Who wouldn't want to trek all the way across them, one after another? There are rugged coastlines and occasional sandy beaches, arid slopes of aromatic scrub, steep and rugged mountains clothed in extensive pine forests and curious laurisilva 'cloud forests', with the possibility of snow-capped peaks rising even higher in the winter months. The GR131 is an island-hopping trail that runs coast to coast across each of the islands in turn and often seeks out the highest mountains during each traverse. It measures 560km (348 miles) and would take an average trekker about one month to complete.

The GR131 is described from east to west, starting on the arid, volcanic island of Lanzarote, later taking a short ferry ride to the desert-like Fuerteventura. A long ferry ride leads to Gran Canaria, where the mountains rise higher and feature extensive forests. Another ferry ride leads to Tenerife, where the GR131 stays high, featuring more forests, with even more rugged mountains rising above them. An option is presented to vary the route and include the mighty El Teide – the highest mountain on Spanish territory. A short ferry ride to La Gomera sees the trail climb high into extensive laurisilva 'cloud forest'. A longer ferry ride leads to La Palma,

where the trail climbs high and stays on the highest mountains, offering a particularly tough traverse ending with a steep descent. The GR131 finally finds itself making a high-level traverse through the smallest and westernmost island of El Hierro, ending at a point that was once believed to be the edge of the world.

The GR131 deserves to be one of the classic treks of the world, but because of its fragmented nature and the fact that it has been pieced together over several years, many trekkers aren't even aware of its existence. The signposting and waymarking of the trail is largely consistent across the islands, so there is a fine sense of continuity, despite the frequent breaks while catching ferries from island to island. It is often possible to see the next island ahead, maybe with its highest mountains poking through a 'sea of clouds' that often forms around them. There is always something to look forward to, and something to look back at, on a journey such as this one.

LOCATION

The Canary Islands are more or less enclosed in a rectangular area from 13°30'W to 18°00'W and 27°30'N to 29°30'N. As a group, they stretch from east to west over 450km (280 miles). Although administered by Spain, the mother country is 1100km (685 miles)

STAGE 1

Órzola to Haría

Start	Harbour, Órzola
Finish	Bus stop, Haría
Distance	12km (7½ miles)
Total ascent	470m (1540ft)
Total descent	190m (625ft)
Time	3hr 30min
Terrain	Mostly rugged slopes but crossed by good roads and tracks. Some short paths are steep and rugged.
Refreshments	Bar-restaurants at Órzola, Máguez and Haría.
Transport	Intercity bus 9 serves Órzola from Arrecife, Tegüise and Punta Mujeres. Intercity bus 7 serves Máguez and Haría from Arrecife, Tegüise and Punta Mujeres.
Accommodation	Limited choice in Órzola and Haría.

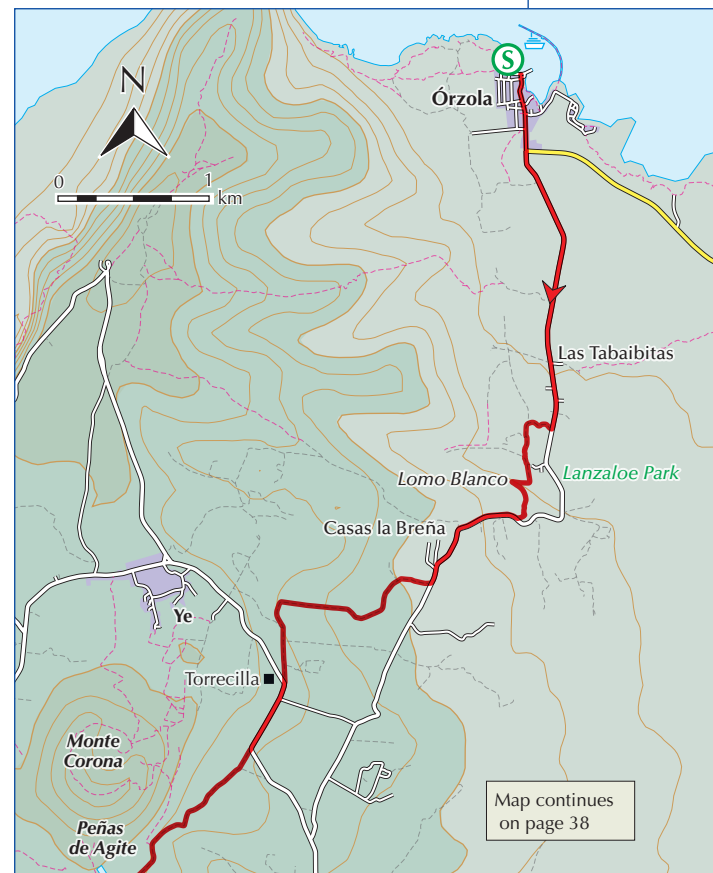
The GR131 leaves the remote village of Órzola by road, passing rugged terrain and an unusual area planted with aloe vera. A gradual ascent into the rugged Malpaís de La Corona, a protected Natural Monument around a volcanic cone, features small vineyards. Fertile black-ash fields are passed near the village of Máguez, before the route crosses a hill to reach the neighbouring village of Haría.

ÓRZOLA

The road-end village of Órzola is busy whenever ferries arrive and depart, serving the nearby island of La Graciosa. It is a pity that the GR131 doesn't include La Graciosa, but there is nothing to stop keen walkers adding a preamble around the island before their trek. Órzola offers a little accommodation, a few bar-restaurants, a couple of shops, an ATM, bus and taxi.

The GR131 starts at a map-board across the road from the ferry ticket office and bus stop. No matter who else is coming and going, it is unlikely that anyone else will be standing at the map-board, ready to walk for one

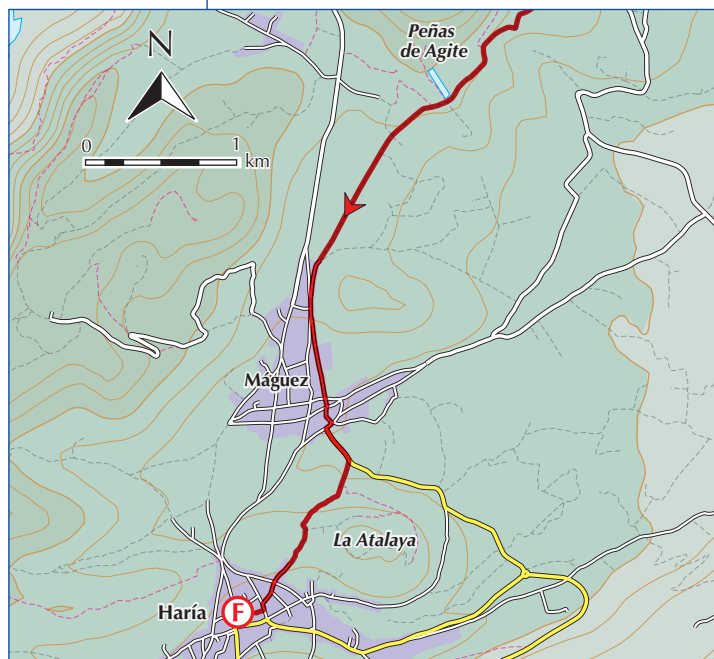
month through the Canary Islands to distant El Hierro. Simply follow the road, Calle La Quemadita, straight through **Órzola**. You might spot small plaques on some of the buildings, reading 'Camino Natural de Órzola a Playa Blanca'. Get used to the style of these, as they will be seen on signposts and waymark posts all the way through Lanzarote.



Turning left gives access to the Lanzaloe Park and an interesting trail through areas planted with aloe vera, tel 928 524 335 www.lanzaloe.com.

Keep straight ahead at a road junction as signposted for Haría, and use the pavement provided. After passing a bus shelter and a chapel note the Km1 marker beside the road. With other markers appearing every kilometre, it is easy to keep track of progress. The broken lava flanking the road bears rubbery *verode* and *tabaibal*, as well as crinkly *aulaga* plants. The pavement continues through the little village of **Las Tabaititas**, then runs out at the Km2 marker.

Pass another bus shelter then turn right as signposted along a track through rugged terrain. Turn left at a junction and the track is stone-paved for a while, giving way to a more rugged path, which quickly reaches a dirt road. ◀ The GR131 climbs a track that becomes more rugged as it makes a pronounced zigzag on **Lomo Blanco**. At a higher level it becomes a rugged path, then



runs more easily parallel to a road. When the path runs out at a signpost near **Casas la Breña**, follow the road past the Km4 marker to another signpost.

Turn right and follow a dirt road uphill, passing a few odd houses, some very rugged areas dotted with *calcosa* bushes, and a few small vineyards. There are tracks to right and left, but stay on the main dirt road throughout, climbing as marked. The Km5 marker is passed on the ascent and, just after you reach a signposted junction with a tarmac road, the Km6 marker is passed. ▶ The prominent early 20th-century mansion of **Torrecilla**, above the road, and the jagged rim of Monte Corona catch the eye.

Follow the road downhill until it bends left, and keep straight ahead as signposted along a dirt road. This crosses the slopes of **Monte Corona**, where loose ash is bound by *calcosa* bushes. Avoid other tracks at junctions and always keep straight ahead as marked. A couple of pits have been excavated on the slope, then a shoulder is crossed at around 360m (1180ft), where a couple of stone-built water stores have been constructed near the Km8 marker. Simply follow the dirt road gently downhill,

The striking mansion of Torrecilla on the slopes of Monte Corona

Turning right along the road leads to the village of Ye and the Restaurante Volcán de La Corona.

There is a bar and an art gallery off-route.

passing fertile ash fields to reach a tarmac road at the top end of the village of Máguez. A range of shapely hills leads the eye ahead to the highest point on Lanzarote – Peñas del Chache.

While following the road down through **Máguez**, fork left at a junction as marked. Go straight through a crossroads at the bottom, and straight through a staggered crossroads to follow Calle las Cruces. Turn right at a junction as marked, then left to follow a road away from the village. ◀

Follow the road past flat fields until it is possible to turn right along a track. This soon gives way to a narrower path that becomes quite rough and stony as it climbs, passing the Km11 marker. There are signposts as the path joins a dirt road at 334m (1096ft), beside the hill of **La Atalaya**. Turn right and walk downhill, joining a tarmac road to continue past houses in **Haría**. Go through a crossroads and keep straight ahead along Calle Molino, turning left when signposted. You will see bus stops ahead, but turn right just beforehand, to reach the Km12 marker at the foot of a rather plain church tower, at around 280m (920ft).

HARÍA

At this point, trekkers will either catch a bus or head for their accommodation in the village. Either way, it is worth wandering around the centre. A tree-lined pedestrian street becomes quite busy on Saturdays when the Mercado Artesanal is in progress, with food and craft stalls offering local produce. The village has a bank with an ATM, bar-restaurants, shops, bus and taxis. It is also home to a museum dedicated to the artist César Manrique, which you will pass further along the GR131. The land around the village features an abundance of palm trees. It was once fashionable to plant two palm trees whenever a boy was born and one when a girl was born.

STAGE 2

Haría to Tegüise

Start	Bus stop, Haría
Finish	Ayuntamiento, Tegüise
Distance	13km (8 miles)
Total ascent	360m (1180ft)
Total descent	340m (1115ft)
Time	4hr 30min
Terrain	Mostly easy roads, dirt roads and tracks, as well as a couple of steep and rugged paths on the ascent and descent.
Refreshments	Bar-restaurants at Haría and Tegüise, Restaurante Los Helechos off-route near Peñas del Chache.
Transport	Intercity bus 7 serves Haría from Arrecife, Tegüise and Punta Mujeres. Intercity buses 7, 9 and 10 link Tegüise with Arrecife, while buses 52 and 53 link Tegüise with La Santa. Additional buses serve Tegüise on Sunday from many parts of Lanzarote.
Accommodation	Available in Haría and Tegüise.

This stage climbs almost to the highest point on Lanzarote, but the summit of Peñas del Chache is occupied by a military installation and is out of bounds to visitors. Despite this, there are wonderful and extensive views if the day is clear. A fairly direct descent leads to the lovely and ancient town of Tegüise, whose narrow, cobbled streets are made for wandering and exploring.

Start at the bus stop beside the church in **Haría**, on La Plaza de Haría. The Km12 marker is at the foot of the rather plain church tower. Walk away from the church along a tree-lined street, turning left and then right at the end to reach the attractive Plaza de La Constitución. The Ayuntamiento is here, with map-boards and a signpost beside the adjacent library.

Most visitors turn left to follow Calle César Manrique, but the GR131 runs straight ahead, turning left later as signposted along Calle Ángel Guerra. The road crosses a