

WALKING ON GRAN CANARIA



About the Author

Paddy Dillon is a prolific walker and guidebook writer, with over 90 books to his name and contributions to 40 other titles. He has written for several outdoor magazines and other publications and has appeared on radio and television.

Paddy uses a tablet computer to write as he walks. His descriptions are therefore precise, having been written at the very point at which the reader uses them. Paddy is an indefatigable long-distance walker who has walked all of Britain's National Trails and several European trails. He has also walked in Nepal, Tibet, Korea and the Rocky Mountains of Canada and the US. Paddy is a member of the Outdoor Writers and Photographers Guild and President of the Backpackers Club.

Other Cicerone guides by the author

Glyndwr's Way
Mountain Walking in Mallorca
The Cleveland Way and the
Yorkshire Wolds Way
The GR5 Trail
The GR20 Corsica
The Great Glen Way
The Irish Coast to Coast Walk
The Mountains of Ireland
The National Trails
The North York Moors
The Pennine Way
The Reivers Way
The South West Coast Path
The Teesdale Way (Martin Collins;
updated by Paddy Dillon)
Trekking in Greenland
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Trekking in the Alps
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Walking on Guernsey
Walking on Jersey
Walking on La Gomera and
El Hierro
Walking on La Palma
Walking on Lanzarote and
Fuerteventura
Walking on Madeira
Walking on Malta
Walking on Tenerife
Walking the Wales Coast Path

WALKING ON GRAN CANARIA

45 DAY WALKS INCLUDING FIVE DAYS ON THE
GR131 COAST-TO-COAST ROUTE

by Paddy Dillon

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Front cover: A dirt road winds down to Ayagaures (Walk 33)

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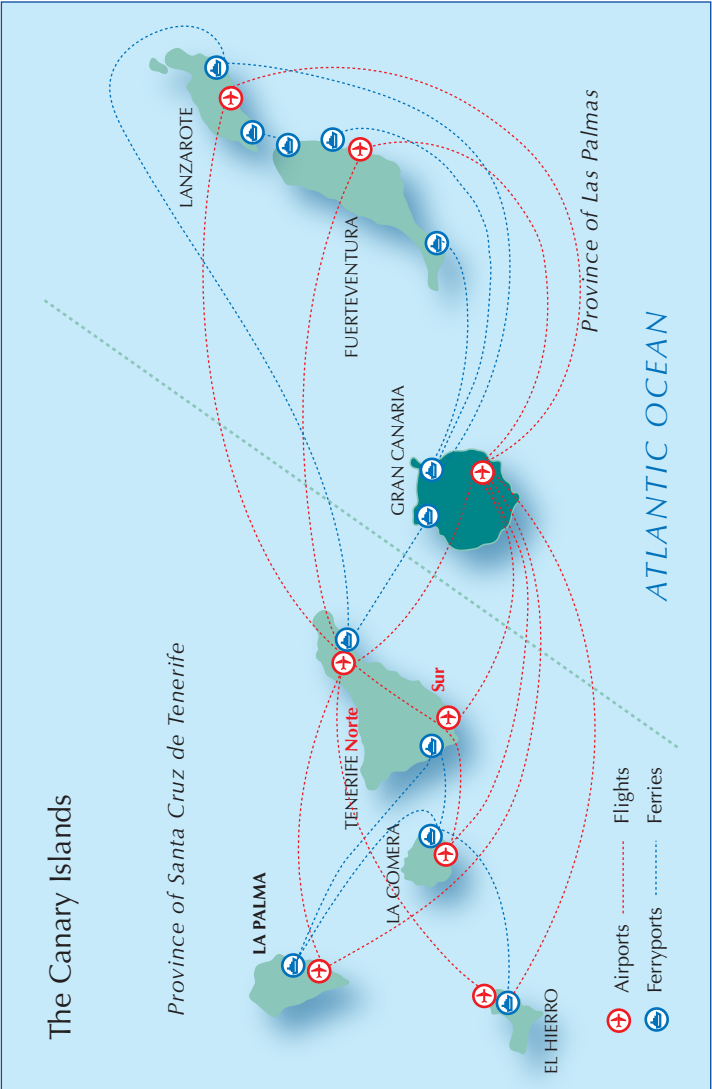
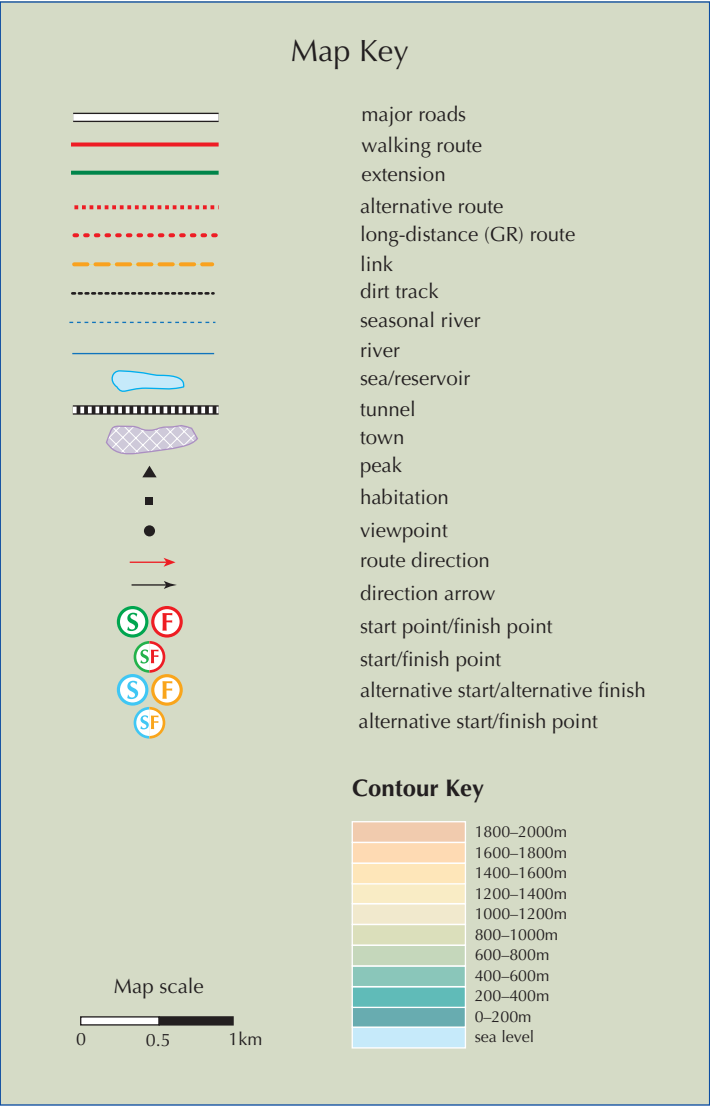
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Forest fires

Forest fires occur frequently in the Canary Islands, but a fire in 2019 on Gran Canaria was particularly severe. Expect to find extensive fire damage in the north-west of the island, in the forested uplands. Recovery will take place within two or three years.







A walker climbs towards the high gap of Degollada de Aguas Sabinas (Walk 17)

INTRODUCTION



Rugged mountains, rocky ridges and deep, steep-sided barrancos on Gran Canaria

The seven sub-tropical Canary Islands bask in sunny splendour off the Atlantic coast of north-west Africa. Millions of sun-starved north Europeans flock there for beach holidays, but increasingly visitors are discovering the amazing variety of landscapes throughout the archipelago. Conditions range from semi-deserts to perpetually moist *laurisilva* 'cloud forests', from rugged cliff coasts to high mountains, from fertile cultivation terraces to awesome rocky *barrancos* carved deep into multi-coloured layers of volcanic bedrock. Some areas are given the highest possible protection as national parks, but there are many more types of protected

landscapes, rural parks, natural monuments and nature reserves.

More and more walkers are finding their feet, exploring the Canary Islands using centuries-old mule tracks, rugged cliff paths and forest trails. Paths pick their way between cultivation terraces, squeeze between houses and make their way to rugged coves and hidden beaches. Some paths run from village to village, following old mule tracks once used to transport goods, while other paths are based on pilgrim trails to and from remote churches and *ermitas*. Many have been cleared, repaired, signposted and way-marked in recent years, ready to be explored and enjoyed.

This guidebook explores the way-marked trail network on the large island of Gran Canaria. It includes routes of all types, from easy strolls to hands-on scrambling, from simple day walks to long-distance trails. As these routes are often fully signposted and waymarked, walkers can follow them with confidence and enjoy the island to the full. Almost 580km (360 miles) of trails are described in this guidebook.

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 west to east over 450km (280 miles). Although administered by Spain, the mother country is 1100km (685 miles) away. The narrowest strait between the Canary Islands and Africa is a mere 110km (70 miles). The total land area is almost 7500km (2900 square miles), but the sea they occupy is 10 times that size.

GEOLOGY

Most of the world's volcanic landscapes are formed where huge continental or oceanic 'plates' collide with each other. When continental plates collide, the Earth's crust crumples upwards to form mountains, and when plates are torn apart, basaltic rock from deep within the Earth's mantle erupts to form mountains. The Canary Islands,

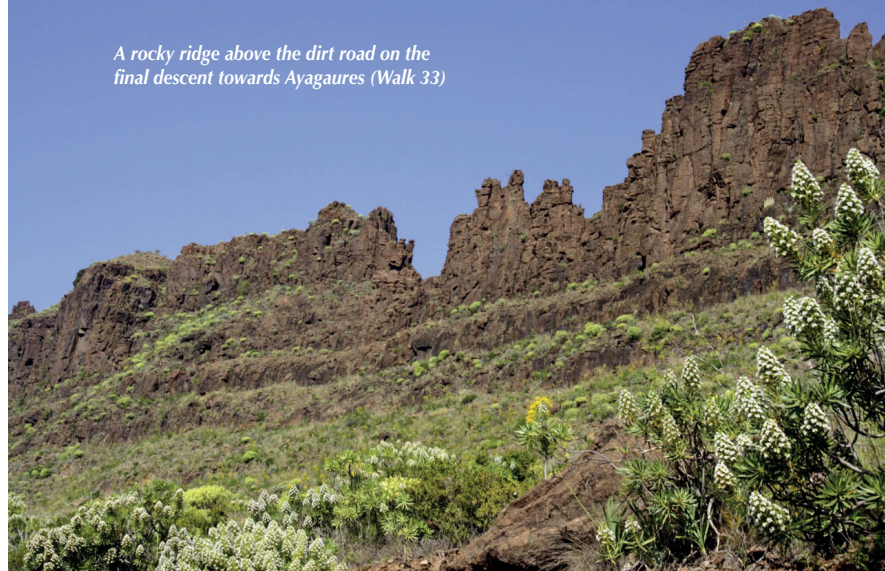
however, are different, and have a complicated geological history.

The African landmass is the visible part of a continental plate that extends into the Atlantic Ocean, but the Canary Islands lie within the oceanic crust of the eastern Atlantic Ocean, close to the passive junction with the African continental plate. It is thought that the islands now lie directly above a hotspot, or mantle plume, some 2500km (1550 miles) deep within the Earth. The mantle plume is fixed, but the oceanic and African plates are drifting very slowly eastwards. Every so often a split in the oceanic crust opens above the mantle plume, allowing molten rock to vent onto the ocean floor. As more and more material erupts, it piles higher and higher until it rises from the sea. Each of the Canary Islands was formed this way.

Lanzarote and Fuerteventura were the first Canary Islands to form, and were subsequently pulled eastwards. The next time a rift opened, the islands of Gran Canaria and Tenerife were formed, and these were in turn pulled eastwards. A further oceanic rift led to the formation of La Gomera, La Palma and El Hierro. Looking forward in geological time more islands will appear as the rift is torn open in the future.

The forces at work deep within the Earth can scarcely be imagined. Every single piece of rock throughout the Canary Islands once existed in a molten state. Consider the energy needed to melt one small stone, and

A rocky ridge above the dirt road on the final descent towards Ayagaures (Walk 33)



WILDLIFE

Plants and flowers

While the northern hemisphere was in the grip of an Ice Age, the Canary Islands were sluiced by rainstorms, with powerful rivers carving deep, steep-sided barrancos into unstable layers of ash and lava. As the land-masses emerged from the Ice Age, the Canary Islands dried out and the vegetation had to adapt to survive. Some species are well adapted to semi-desert conditions, while on the highest parts of the islands, laurisilva are able to trap moisture from the mists and keep themselves well watered. Laurisilva forests once spread all the way round the Mediterranean and tropical regions. Small remnants of this forest survive on the higher, northern slopes

multiply that to imagine the energy required to melt everything in the island chain, as well as the immense amount of rock beneath the sea that supports them all!

Over time huge amounts of volcanic material were piled high, but erosion has led to great instability. During recent geological time, vast chunks of the islands collapsed into the sea, creating features such as El Golfo on El Hierro, the Caldeira de Taburiente on La Palma, and the Orotava valley on Tenerife. With each catastrophic collapse, tsunamis devastated places around the Atlantic Ocean. Geologists predict that similar collapses could occur in the future on the Cumbre Nueva on La Palma or the north face of El Teide on Tenerife.

WALK 1

Las Palmas to Santa Brígida

Start	Triana, Las Palmas
Finish	Santa Brígida
Distance	16km (10 miles)
Total Ascent	550m (1805ft)
Total Descent	50m (165ft)
Time	5hr
Terrain	Easy roads and tracks, with occasional rugged paths, rising through a valley.
Refreshments	Plenty of choice in Las Palmas. Bars near Jardín Canario. Shop at Las Meleguinas. Bars in Santa Brígida.
Transport	Regular daily buses link Santa Brígida and Las Palmas, serving Jardín Canario and Las Meleguinas.

Triana is one of the oldest parts of the big, bustling city of Las Palmas, close to the notable Cathedral. Surprisingly, there is rapid access from the city into the Barranco de Guinguada. Either walk all the way to Santa Brígida, or just walk halfway and explore the exotic Jardín Canario.

Route uses SL-2
and PR GC 02.

Down to the left,
beside the dual
carriageway, are
signposts for the PR
GC 02 and SL-2.

◀ Most traffic avoids Triana and hurtles along the coastal Avenida de Canarias, while a busy dual carriageway, the Autovia del Centro, heads inland. Start at the Centro de Salud in Triana and follow Calle San Nicolás uphill. Keep left to leave the little Plaza de San Nicolás and continue up Calle Álamo to reach the Callejon del Molino.

◀ Follow the quiet road onwards as it descends and narrows, becoming a track into the **Barranco de Guinguada**. Recent improvements to the surface enable the track to be used as a cycleway.

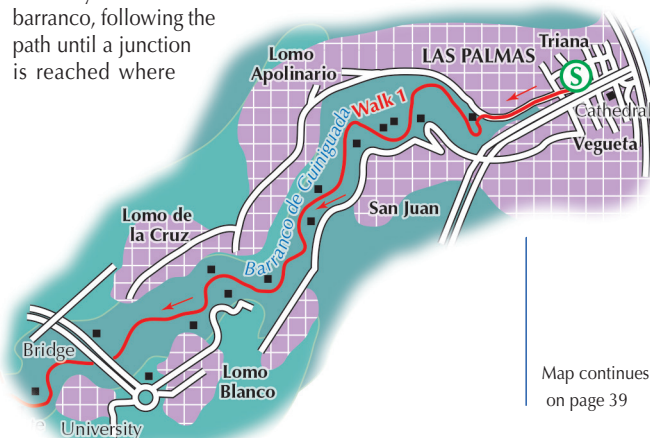
Turn right to follow the track gently up the bed of the barranco, which is flanked by masses of tangled scrub (dominated by bushy white tajinaste), but also supports banana plantations and palms. Always stay in the bed of the barranco, avoiding other tracks climbing from it.



The steep slopes are sometimes terraced, sometimes buttressed with concrete, with quarries and caves in a couple of places. Sprawling suburbs rise above the cliff-tops.

Eventually, pass beneath a slender dual carriageway bridge on towering concrete supports, passing a picnic site. Stay in the bed of the barranco, following the path until a junction is reached where

The path entering the barranco has been improved as a footpath and cyclepath



Map continues
on page 39

This is worth a visit. Climb steps to explore 'El Túnel' – a narrow tunnel ending with a 'window' overlooking the barranco.

Free entry from 0900 to 1800 daily.

A cyclist passes through jungle-like vegetation deep in the barranco

the recreational site of **Fuente Morales** lies off-route to the left. ◀

Turn right along the track, Camino del Maípez, reaching a signposted junction beside some pines. The SL-2 runs straight ahead along another narrow and pebbly path, squeezing through cane thickets and tajinaste bushes. Follow another track onwards, which rises from the barranco and passes a few houses at La Fuente, overlooking another steep-sided barranco. Keep left at a junction, then the track later drifts right. A small bridge is reached at Maípez where a busy road crosses, beside the Bar Restaurante Maípez, over 200m (655ft). Walk straight ahead up the road, with a decorative fence alongside. A pleasant garden can be explored here, but further along, just past the Bar Cafeteria Flor Canaria, is the **Jardín Canario**. ◀

Jardín Canario

Walkers with a particular interest in botany could happily spend the rest of the day here. The paths in the barranco and on the steep cliffs beyond are worth exploring, using a free map from the exhibition centre. Steep

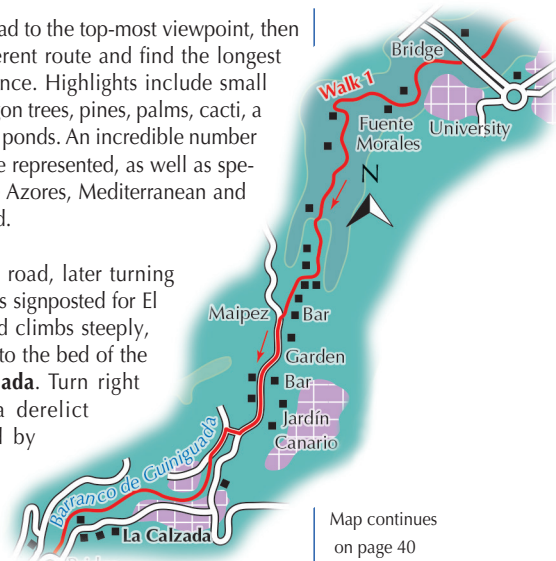


flights of stone steps lead to the top-most viewpoint, then come down by a different route and find the longest way back to the entrance. Highlights include small areas of laurisilva, dragon trees, pines, palms, cacti, a small waterfall and lily ponds. An incredible number of Canarian species are represented, as well as species from Madeira, the Azores, Mediterranean and other parts of the world.

Continue up the busy road, later turning quickly right and left as signposted for El Cañón. When the road climbs steeply, turn left along a track to the bed of the **Barranco de Guiniguada**. Turn right up the bed, under a derelict footbridge supported by a stone column. The path is narrow and pebbly, flanked by grass, with steep scrubby slopes either side. Go under a narrow bridge and pass a few houses, sometimes walking on concrete, but mostly on pebbles. There are floodlights up to the left, and a path zigzags up to the village of **La Calzada** if an exit is needed.

The broad, pebbly bed of the barranco features masses of tabaibal and is flanked by cliffs. A number of slender aqueducts span the barranco, as well as a graceful arched road **bridge**. The rugged path reaches tree-shaded picnic tables near a *lavadero* (communal washing place), where things become easier. A track leads away, reaching a junction beside an electricity pylon. Turn right and stay on the clearest track through a broad area dotted with fields, farms and houses. Pass a picnic site shaded by eucalyptus beside another lavadero. Join a road and turn left to pass the **Estadio Municipal del Guiniguada**.

Again, follow the most obvious track through the barranco, eventually passing a lavadero beside two palms. The barranco narrows and there are two road bridges



Map continues on page 40

An early finish is possible before the bridges, climbing steps to a road, where buses can be caught to Santa Brígida or Las Palmas. There is a shop nearby too.

Walk 37 also finishes here.

ahead, at **Las Meleguinas**, over 400m (1310ft). ◀ To continue onwards, walk under the bridge on the left to find a three-way signpost. Back is for Las Palmas, left is for Santa Brígida and right is for Las Lagunetas (Walk 2).

Turn left and the path narrows, going through a tunnel beneath a house. The barranco is flanked by tall walls, while terraces above bear oranges. Follow the path to a junction where the Camino Pa'l Pino (Walk 4) is signposted to the right. Turn left instead up a winding, stone-paved and then concrete path. Walk up Calle Muro into **Santa Brígida** and turn right along Calle Real to a busy road junction, over 500m (1640ft) (shops, bars, post office, banks with ATMs, buses and taxis). ◀



WALK 2

Las Meleguinas to Las Lagunetas

Start	Las Meleguinas
Finish	Las Lagunetas
Distance	14km (8½ miles)
Total Ascent	850m (2790ft)
Total Descent	50m (165ft)
Time	5hr
Terrain	A rugged barranco walk with occasional narrow paths, then a good track, mostly gently uphill, but steep at times.
Refreshments	Shop at Las Meleguinas. Bars at Utiaca and Las Lagunetas.
Transport	Regular daily buses from Las Palmas and Santa Brígida to Las Meleguinas. Occasional buses from Utiaca to San Mateo, Santa Brígida and Teror. Occasional buses from Las Lagunetas to San Mateo, Cruz de Tejeda and Maspalomas.

The walk up through the barranco from Las Meleguinas is quite difficult in places, but later a fine track rises gently and easily to Utiaca. Careful route finding is needed further upstream on steep slopes, then a clear track climbs from the barranco to a road network at Las Lagunetas.

► Start at the shop at **Las Meleguinas**, around 400m (1310ft). Take the Pino Santo road, but almost immediately turn right under a road bridge. Turn right again under another road bridge and walk towards a three-way signpost for the PR GC 02. Left is for Santa Brígida (Walk 1), so keep right and a narrow path quickly expires in the bouldery bed of the **Barranco Alonso**. Some parts of the bed are impassable, so watch carefully for paths running parallel on the right or left. Rampant vegetation includes tangled scrub and trees. Apart from a good stretch of path

Route uses PR GC 02 and S-16.