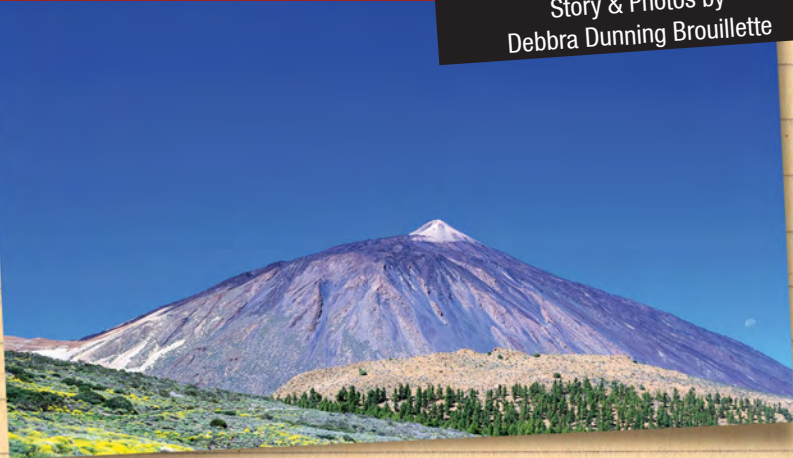


## Island of Eternal Spring - Tenerife, Canary Islands

Story & Photos by  
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If spring is your favorite season, you may want to travel to Tenerife, the largest of the seven Canary Islands, commonly called the Island of Eternal Spring. Tenerife is known for its near-perfect climate; temperatures range from 68 to highs of around 82 Fahrenheit. With its many microclimates providing varying temperatures in different parts of the island, Tenerife is warmest in the sunny south, cooler in the north, and coldest at elevations on its volcano, Mount Teide.

Situated only 60 miles off the northwest coast of Africa, Tenerife has been a part of Spain since the Spanish Conquest of 1494. Unless you visit from a cruise ship, you'll likely fly first into Madrid before taking a flight into one of two airports located on either end of the island. My flight landed at the Reina Sofia Tenerife

South airport, a short distance from the Gran Hotel Bahia Del Duque Resort & Spa at Costa Adeje, near the most popular area for tourism, Playa de Las Americas.

The Gran Hotel Bahía del Duque Resort & Spa covers 25 acres and includes 356 rooms; 46 are suites. Forty villas, with a private helipad for celebrity arrivals and a Spa-Thalasso, were opened in 2009 when the resort was fully refurbished. This expansive, lushly landscaped resort, with its nine restaurants, seven bars and five pools, not to mention its private beach, can only be called a luxury residential complex, fully earning its five-star designation for accommodations and services.

Designed to be a mixture between a typical Canarian village, a Venetian plaza

and a botanical garden with ponds, springs and waterfalls, the hotel is built directly on the seafront of the Atlantic Ocean. The view from my balcony was magnificent, like a postcard come to life, overlooking one of the garden-setting pools, a clock tower, colorful colonial buildings, and beyond, the sea.

For my first meal on Tenerife, I chose the resort's Asia-Kan Restaurant, offering a fusion of Japanese, Chinese and Thai cuisines. The next day, following a tour of the picturesque fishing villages that line Tenerife's southern coast with one of my travel companions, we arrived in La Caleta, considered one of the Costa Adeje region's best villages for seafood. Our guide had chosen Masia del Mar, housed in an historic building dating back to 1568, for our midday meal, which ended up being the most memorable lunch of my time in Tenerife. Soon after being seated on the terrace overlooking the bay, we were enjoying crusty bread slices with a glass of the Tágara blanco seco wine (D.O. Ycoden-Daute-Isora, Bilma



The Gran Hotel Bahia del Duque  
Resort & Spa at Costa Adeje

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Pilot whales swim off Tenerife's southwest coast

S.A.T. Winery), preparing us for the pièce de résistance—a seafood paella as delicious for the eyes as for the tastebuds. Ours contained giant prawns, mussels, calamari and sweet red peppers, served on a bed of rice and seasoned to perfection.

We left the following morning for a full day of activity, beginning with whale watching in Los Gigantes, a small resort town located on the westernmost point of Tenerife named for the giant cliffs that rise out of the sea. A resident population of more than 550 pilot whales hangs around these waters because they love to feed on squid that are found here in abundance.

Soon after boarding the *Gladiator*, a speedy 39-foot monohull vessel, for a two-hour excursion, we began to encounter multiple small groups of pilot whales, some with their babies following them. Lenses at the ready, we focused on the blue waters with intensity and were rewarded time after time

with surfacing whales and a few dolphins, too. The island's southwest coast is one of most reliable places in the world to observe and photograph whales, attracting more than half a million visitors annually.

Our next stop was the *Paradore Hotel*, a mountain lodge located within *El Teide National Park*, more than 7,000 feet above sea level. As our bus climbed higher and higher, tall *Canarian pines*, partially obscured by the clouds, surrounded us.

Soon we were above the cloud line with the magnificent *Mount Teide* in the distance, the third highest volcano in the world at 12,198 feet, after *Mauna Kea* and *Mauna Loa* in Hawaii, and Spain's highest point. In 2007, the *Teide National Park* was added to the list of *UNESCO World Heritage Sites*, taking into account the park's magnificent scenery and the fact that it attracts four million visitors each year.

The next morning we were driven to the car park, located at 7,730 feet, where we boarded a cable car for the eight-minute ride up to the lookout area known as *La Rambleta*, just 508 feet from the top of *Mount Teide*. Our guide motioned for us to follow him on a rugged, rocky path around the other side of the viewing area. While the vistas were incredible, and I'd bundled up as best as I could with layers, it was colder and windier than I was prepared for. Tip to travelers: pack gloves, hat and winter outerwear.



Mount Teide in Teide National Park

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There are many reasons to visit Tenerife and, for the wine lover, there are more than 100—wineries, that is. Regrettably, we had time to visit only one of them—Bodegas Monje in El Sauzal at a spot known as La Hollera. Its stunning location overlooking the sea from 1,640 feet above sea level, had our group oohing and ahing even before we tasted the wine.

Bodegas Monje is a family vineyard dating back to 1750, placing the Monje family among the island's original wine producers. Five generations have been cultivating these vines and bottling wine from the three grapes grown here—Listán Negro, Listán Blanco and Negramoll. We walked past the old oak barrels and dust-covered bottles of past vintages, then arrived in the more modern portion of the cellar, containing stainless steel barrels and mechanized grape-crushing equipment. No grape-stomping feet needed here!

The next part of our winery visit was held upstairs in a large room overlooking the vineyard, where we enjoyed a lunch of traditional Canarian foods, served with three Bodegas Monje wines. Slow-roasted pork, salad, bread served with green and red mojo sauces, and a dense type of flan rounded out our menu, a satisfying ending to our visit to this unique example of a Tenerife winery.

No matter when you plan to visit, there is likely to be a fiesta, be it one of the many religious festivals, or the dancing, music and revelry associated with its February Carnival. Our early May visit



View from Mount Teide, the world's third highest volcano

was timed to coincide with one of the island's most anticipated festivals, the 300-year-old Festival of the Cross in Los Realejos.

After watching young men carry a large golden cross through the streets, we joined a neighborhood viewing party atop one of the buildings to watch what is said to be the largest fireworks exhibition in Europe. As we took in this amazing display of color, light and sound, I thought back to all we had experienced in our short time on Tenerife. Not only had my senses been filled with new sights, sounds, tastes and smells, but my heart had been filled, too, with the warmth and welcoming spirit of the people.

For information to help you plan your visit to Tenerife, visit [WebTenerife.com](http://WebTenerife.com)

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The Festival of the Cross is one of the island's most anticipated celebrations