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← Canary Island pines dot volcanic slopes.

↓ One of Fuerteventura's abundant windmills in the Valle de Santa Inés.



ABOUT THE TRAIL

→ **DISTANCE** 89 km (55.3 mi)

→ **DURATION** 5 days

→ **TOTAL ELEVATION GAIN** 4,530 m (14,862 ft)

→ **LEVEL** Moderate

The Canary Islands are a volcanic archipelago located 100 km (62 mi) off the coast of Morocco. Consisting of seven main islands (Tenerife, Gran Canaria, La Gomera, Fuerteventura, La Palma, Lanzarote, and El Hierro), they have been a Spanish territory since the 15th century and, in recent decades, have become a population destination for European tourists, drawn by gorgeous beaches, mild climate, and budget airline

prices. From a hiking perspective, the Canary Islands' coastal and interior landscapes boast a number of ambulatory options, the longest and most immersive of which is the mighty GR131.

Spanning the archipelago—with nautical assistance from the islands' ferry network—the GR131 measures 650 km (404 mi) and takes an average of a month to complete. For those with less time at their disposal, arguably the trail's most varied and scenic section is on Tenerife, where it traverses desert, cloud forest, and volcanic moonscapes during its 89-km (55.3-mi) course. Apart from its biodiversity, other distinguishing characteristics of the Tenerife leg include: 1. It's the only island on which the trail doesn't stretch from coast to coast (it both starts and ends inland); 2. It passes through fewer towns and villages, which means less accommodation and resupply options; 3. It's more forested and boasts more opportunities to observe the archipelago's plant

and animal life; and 4. It is home to the majestic El Teide volcano, Spain's tallest mountain at 3,718 m (12,198 ft).

The GR131 Tenerife begins in the village of La Esperanza, a 10-minute taxi ride from the World-Heritage-listed San Cristóbal de La Laguna. Before setting out, be sure to pack sufficient food and water for the day, as there is nowhere to top up your bottles or purchase supplies until the end of stage 1 at La Caldera. (Note: This same strategy holds true for each of the trail's five legs.) From the village plaza, climb through dense woodland on a combination of well-graded dirt roads, paths, and log steps (more than 1,000 in total). Passing through enchanting forests of pine and laurel, watch for trail markings (the classic red-and-white GR blazes), as the way is occasionally convoluted with intersecting tracks and paths. After 30 km (18.6 mi) of oscillating terrain, you'll reach the bar-restaurant and bus stop of La Caldera, where hikers who >