

THE CANARY ISLANDS START THEIR WINTER SEASON WITH GREAT SUCCESS

The Canary Islands started their winter season on 23 October. During the weekend, more than 125 international flights from different European countries arrived at the Canarian airports. The following factors have allowed this relaunch:

EU Recommendationⁱ

On 13 October, EU Member States adopted a Council Recommendation on a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Recommendation sets out five key areas where Member States will coordinate their efforts:

- A common mapping system, updated weekly, in a variety of colours depending on the risk in a given region (green, orange, red, grey).
- Common criteria for Member States when deciding whether to introduce travel restrictions, based on incidence (new cases in 100,000 people in the last 14 days) and in percentage of positive tests over the previous week.
- More clarity on the measures applied to travellers from higher-risk areas (testing and self-quarantine).
- Providing clear and timely information to the public.
- Protection of the free movement rights when travelling in the EU during the pandemic, based in the following recommendations:
 - Travel from 'green' regions without any restrictions.
 - Always allowed to go back to the Member State of nationality or residence.
 - Not discrimination.
 - Any measures restricting free movement must be proportionate, and the EU citizens should not – in principle – be refused entry.
 - When travelling from a zone other than 'green', the Member State of arrival could ask to undergo quarantine and/or undergo a coronavirus test after arrival.
 - Possibility of substitution of the test after arrival by a test carried out before departure.
 - Travelers may have to submit passenger locator forms when travelling to another Member State.
 - People travelling because of an essential function or need will not be required to undergo quarantine.

Good epidemiological situation on the Canary Islandsⁱⁱ

Since the end of the first episode of COVID-19 in the months of April and May, and especially since the start of the new rebound in August, the Canary Islands took preventive measures and reinforced their diagnostic, tracking and isolation capabilities, which has allowed them to maintain control of the pandemic. Thus, as of 26 October, the Canary Islands, as a whole, had a **Cumulative Incidence of 82** new cases per 100,000 inhabitants in the last 14 days, a figure much lower than the one of Spain as a whole (362), and lower than those of other countries such as Belgium (1243), France (521), United Kingdom (383), Denmark (120), Sweden (117) or Germany (119). Furthermore, on several of the islands, the rate was lower than 25. On the other hand, the overall percentage of positivity in the tests carried out remained below 4 %.

Safe travel corridors, group insurance and other security measures

The regional government of the Canary Islands, in coordination with the Government of Spain, has taken different measures to reactivate tourism in a safe way, without putting visitors or residents at risk.

Thus, on 9 October, the central government and the regional governments of the Canary Islands and the Balearic Islands agreed on an protocol to establish **safe travel corridors with European countries**. This protocol establishes, among other measures, tests at origin and test at destination for the travellers when returning to their countries (in this case, free for the tourists) if the cumulative incidence in the European region of origin is greater than 50 new cases per 100,000 inhabitants. Reyes Maroto, Minister of Tourism of Spain, pointed out that "the protocols are a useful instrument to reach agreements with our European partners that allow us to recover mobility and reactivate tourist flows in safe conditions".

In addition, if a tourist tests positive while being on holidays, the regional government of the Canary Islands has signed a **group insurance policy** to cover medical expenses, or any expenses due to isolation, extension of stay, or any other kind that may occur. Likewise, it has set up spaces and complementary measures to guarantee, in such cases, adequate isolation for those who may be in that situation.

The Canary Islands have been working in the recent months on the development and implementation of **health security protocols for all the tourist establishments and services** (the "Canarias Fortaleza" project)ⁱⁱⁱ, which provides different grants to hotels and other accommodation centers to properly implement these measures.

Arrival of tourists from different European countries. Tour operators and airlines

In Germany, on 22 October, the Robert Koch Institute decided to remove the Canary Islands from areas considered at risk due to their rates of incidence of coronavirus, so the German government has lifted its recommendation not to travel to the Islands.

On the same date, the British Minister of Transport, Grant Shapps, confirmed that they would include the Canary Islands among the destinations considered safe, which has already been done by the UK Government.

Over half of the 13.2 million international tourists who visited the Canary Islands last year came from just two countries: 5 million tourists from the United Kingdom (37 % of the total) and 2.6 million tourists from Germany (20 %).

Several tour operators, airlines and countries are also considering restoring the trips to the Canary Islands without the obligation of self-quarantine upon return. Thus, the tour operator Ving (Nordic Leisure Travel Group) has resumed its flights to the Canary Islands from Sweden with, initially, four weekly flights (one to Tenerife and three to Gran Canaria), and is considering offering its customers the possibility of a voluntary antigen test at the departure airports, with an approximate cost of 50 €. The tour operator plans to move 179,000 Nordic tourists to the Canary Islands from October to March.

Other tour operators and airlines, such as TUI, Condor, Jet2, EasyJet, Ryanair, Wizzair, Lufthansa (from Tallin and from Germany) and British Airways have already scheduled 70 new flights for this week to the Islands, with about 13,000 seats, which are expected to increase significantly in the coming weeks. Several European countries, such as Austria, Belgium, France, Portugal or the Czech Republic do not currently have any travel restrictions to the Canary Islands, and it is expected that other countries adopt the same criteria in the coming days.

Last year, a total of 350,000 Finns travelled to the Canary Islands; of these, 193,000 did so through “travel packages” sold by tour operators or travel agencies.

Helsinki, 26th October 2020

Salvador Robles

Director,
Spanish Tourist Office
Pohjoinen Makasiinikatu 6 A, 2nd floor
00130-Helsinki
salvador.robles@tourspain.es
+358 (0) 9 25102760

ⁱ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/factsheet_-_coronavirus_-_a_coordinated_approach_to_measures_restricting_free_movement_in_the_eu.pdf

ⁱⁱ <https://grafcan1.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/156eddd4d6fa4ff1987468d1fd70efb6>
<https://cnecovid.isciii.es/covid19/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://turismodeislascanarias.com/en/global-tourism-safety-lab/>