

La Palma



Photography

In the Canary Islands

Often referred to as “La Isla Bonita”, La Palma is considered as the most beautiful of all of the Canary Islands due to its lush landscapes and stunning natural features.

The ancient volcano of the Caldera de Taburiente is a vast, ancient crater at the centre of the island, with steep cliffs, waterfalls, and hiking trails. Colourful flowers and forest tumble down into cloud-inversions below.

A designated Starlight Reserve, La Palma provides pristine night skies and is home to the Roque de los Muchachos Observatory: one of the world’s most important astronomical observatories. Its location above the clouds and minimal light pollution make it ideal for astro and landscape photography.



La Palma



Welcome

Thank you for booking on the La Palma photography workshop.

This document contains everything you need to know to prepare for the trip.

Please read this guide thoroughly.

- **Travel**
- **Accommodation**
- **Eating Arrangements**
- **Equipment & Kit**
- **Weather & Climate**
- **Clothing**
- **Tuition Structure**
- **Terrain**
- **Insurance**
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- **Other Info**

Travel

Flights

To reach La Palma, there are only a few direct flights to choose from:

- Daily from Madrid
- Twice a week from London Gatwick and Manchester
- Sometimes airports in Germany and Netherlands.

Most people arrive via a connecting flight in Madrid, Gran Canaria, or Tenerife South Airport (TFS).

You can fly to La Palma via all the other Canary Islands, with Tenerife and Gran Canaria being the easiest with no changes.

Binter – quick and easy, relatively inexpensive flights between the islands:

<https://www.bintercanarias.com>

Coming via Tenerife:

For Tenerife, please be aware it has two airports, north and south. South is international and North is domestic. It is a 1 hour drive between the two. There are buses, or a taxi is easier.

Ferries

You can reach La Palma by ferry, via the other islands.

The primary route is to come from Los Cristianos, Tenerife. You can also catch the ferry from other islands if required (however these also come via Tenerife, see notes below)

Fred Olson – fast boat

<https://www.fredolsen.es/en>

Naviera Armas - slow boat

<https://armastrasmediterranea.com/en>

Coming via Tenerife:

As with the airports, please be aware that Tenerife has two ferry ports, north and south.

North is located in Santa Cruz.

South is located in Los Cristianos.

ARRIVAL DAY

Arrival Airport: La Palma Airport (SPC)

Arrival Ferry Port: Santa Cruz de La Palma

Book your flights/ferry to arrive before 15:00 hrs on the arrival date.

We will collect you from the airport and depart for the villa at approx 15:00hrs

- Earlier arrivals will need to wait in the coffee shop in the airport (see meeting point). If the whole group arrives earlier than 15:00 an earlier collection time can be arranged.
- Later arrivals will need to taxi to the villa independently, arriving no later than 19:00 as we will be going out to location. Please be aware that it can be up to a 30 min drive from the airport to the villa.
- Anyone arriving earlier than the arrival date, we can collect you from a hotel near the airport or Santa Cruz de La Palma. Or you will need to bus/taxi to the airport to rendezvous with the group.
- Those arriving by ferry, we will collect you from the ferry port either en-route to, or back from, the airport on collecting the rest of the group.

DEPARTURE DAY

Departure Airport: La Palma Airport (SPC)

Departure Ferry Port: Santa Cruz de La Palma

Book your return flights for after 12:00pm.

- We will arrive at the airport for 10-10:30am. You will then need 1.5 hours for baggage check in and security.
- Those wishing to take earlier flights will need to book a private taxi to collect them from the villa independently (30 mins from the airport)
- If you are not flying home and are staying longer in La Palma, we can drop you to a hotel either close to the airport region, or near to Santa Cruz de la Palma. Email us to request this.

Airport Meeting Point:

The meeting point is the Lavazza coffee shop in the main airport foyer. As you exit the baggage claim, go straight ahead. It is opposite the car hire desks in the main area.



Accommodation

Location: Puntallana

Accommodation on La Palma is far more “rustic” than the neighbouring islands, and large multiple room accommodations offering a peaceful environment are hard to come by.

We use a large complex consisting of 7-bedrooms and 4 WC’s over two villas within the same grounds. The interior is furnished in a traditional style and has a huge downstairs communal area with ample space for post-production. There are two fully equipped kitchens and ample fridge/freezer space.

Facilities include:

- Outdoor medium size swimming pool
- Hot tub
- Tennis/pickle ball court

*Please bring an eye mask and earplugs. Whilst we try and use accommodation that is away from the tourist zones and as quiet as possible, neighbourhood noise is beyond our control. (This villa has proved one of the quietest places we have ever rented anywhere in Spain or the Canaries, however, things change year by year and new dogs or different neighbours cannot be accounted for).

Address for luggage tags:

Calle la Lomadita, 36 Puntallana, Canarias, Spain



Eating arrangements

We are self-catered and the villa has a fully equipped kitchen.

We will visit a supermarket before checking into the villa, to do a 'big' food shop. Throughout the rest of the stay we can make small shop runs whenever we are running low on supplies in the afternoons.

We will need to prepare our own evening meals to take to location with us such as sandwiches, pasta/rice bowls etc.

Those with dietary requirements:

Supermarkets in La Palma do supply gluten-free, lactose free and vegan based products. The range of products can be limited at times however, so if you have any favourite particular products then its a good idea to bring a few supplies with you from home.

Clothing

- Summer clothing for villa/daytime
- Hiking boots/trainers
- Thermal socks
- Hiking trousers/tops
- Thermal base layers/multiple mid-layers
- Winter coat
- Gloves, hat, snood/light scarf

Extras

- Swimsuit / shorts
- Sun block lotion
- Mosquito repellent (not vital but helpful)
- Travel sickness tablets (if you suffer from car sickness). See 'Terrain' section.

Equipment & Kit

We use an array of lenses for astrophotography, primarily wide, fast lenses when starting out, but also longer focal lengths as we progress.

We will spend a night shooting towards the telescopes where we use longer focal lengths, up to 200mm (tracked), however, this is more advanced and some of the group often use wide-angle instead at this location.

Camera Equipment

- Camera body
- Wide lens (fast if possible but F4 can be used if the camera has high ISO capabilities)
- Lenses with a range of focal lengths (i.e. 16, 35, 50, 70-200mm)
- Sturdy tripod
- Spare batteries for torch/camera/remote etc.
- Head torch with a red light on so we don't blind each other when looking at one another.
- Remote timer or long exposure bulb control built-in on the timer (most newer cameras can shoot for over 30 seconds as native shutter speeds now, i.e 60, 90, 180 secs up until about 15 minutes. However, many older cameras, and Sony's don't have this function and a remote control will be needed as we undertake 2 – 5 minute long exposures.
- Star Glow Filters, the best ones are Tiffen Fog filters, either a Fog 2 or double fog 2, after this the Kase filter by Alyn is half decent; don't bother with the NISI one it does not perform well – Optional, and can be demonstrated leaving you to decide on purchase after the workshop.
- Star Tracker (optional)
- ND/polariser filters (optional)
- Portable chair/stool if required – very long hours standing in one position on location for this trip, even if it's a low-tier model.
- Laptop running Lightroom, Photoshop (or equivalent) - see post production section.

Star Trackers

If you are bringing a tracker that you have not set up before and need some help, and it is not iOptron or Skywatcher, please email us stating exactly which one; also bring any downloadable or physical manuals for it.

Anyone that is unsure about trackers, and whether they are at the level to progress to one, please send an email to discuss if required.

A good start-out tracker is the iOptron Skytracker Pro, or, for longevity regarding progression, though a little bulkier is the Skyguider Pro. There is a new MSM (Move Shoot Move), though currently, this has not appeared on the workshops to comment on how well it works.



Weather & Climate

At 2400m on the caldera around the Roque de los Muchachos peak, it's clear skies 85% of the year, though high cloud can occasionally occur, as can Calima (sand storms from the Sahara). Sometimes the cloud inversion can rise too high and cloud the ridge.

It is cold on the mountain at night and correct winter clothing is required.

Parque Nacional Caldera de Taburiente will be warm/hot in the day/evening and sun lotion is required, but as the sun sets and night falls it can drop down to anything between -2° - +8° at altitude, so make sure you have thermal layers, wind proofs etc as a slight wind will add serious chill factor.

Our accommodation is in the east, so it can be anything from a cool 19/20° to 28/32° depending on the time of year, it is often cloudy during the day as the cloud inversion hangs over the island.

La Palma Mountain Weather

<https://www.mountain-forecast.com/peaks/Roque-de-los-Muchachos/forecasts/2423>

Rough workshop temperature guide:

Spring workshops

Daytime temperature +18 – +26 °C
Nighttime temperature coastal +14 - +18 °C
Nighttime temperature high elevation +6 – -2 °C

Summer workshops

Daytime temperature +22 – +32 °C
Nighttime temperature coastal +16 - +22 °C
Nighttime temperature high elevation +12 – +4°C

Autumn workshops – as spring

Winter workshops

Daytime temperature +16 – +22 °C
Nighttime temperature coastal +10 - +14 °C
Nighttime temperature high elevation -+2 – -6°C

Often we have to add wind chill to the mountain temperatures.



Tuition Structure

Fieldwork

The Canary Islands are intuitive workshops with structured tuition to suit location each night, and adjusted to individual skill levels on the day, we follow up as much as possible in post-production via some afternoon sessions in the villa. We will record our sessions on the phone and distribute the video to the group for future reference.

Everyone will be at different levels so we will start the nightscape tuition right from the start on a beginner's level on the first night.

If you have not been out at night for a while/before, try and get used to basic settings with your camera in a dark room at home or the garden:

- ISO
- Shutter speed
- Aperture
- Main menu,
- Manual focus ring on the lens

Sitting in a dark room sounds daft, but its good practice. The quicker everyone familiarises themselves with their headlight red light off/on location, the more we cover and the more images we create. Try to get fluent with your equipment and settings in the dark so you know where to reach for on the camera - it will be a huge help during our workshop.

We will try and cover as much as possible that is listed on the workshop description, on the website; but it is unlikely we will get through all of it.

Timelapse - It's not often we undertake time-lapses as a group, but photographers with experience sometimes bring a second camera and tripod and place their 2nd camera somewhere for the duration of the night to timelapse, which anyone is more than welcome to do.

We will shoot some landscapes in the evening, some sunsets, but absolutely no sunrises. There will be at least two very late finishes, we generally head off the mountain between 2am/4am. Out of the 5 nights, we would expect us to get around 3.5/4 nights out in the field.



Post-production

Please bring a laptop running Lightroom and Photoshop (or equivalent but it will be up to you to translate Adobe commands into the chosen software). If this is not possible, bring a platform for taking notes.

Post-production sessions will be in the afternoons at times agreed to coincide with what time we arrived back at the villa from the night shoot.

Mornings and early afternoons are downtime.

Apps/further programs

PhotoPills

Stellarium full mobile version

Stellarium desktop

Other visual night sky guides such as StarWalk ii

Polar Scope Align Pro or similar

Terrain

Terrain – Fieldwork

There are a few short, but steep trail hikes on La Palma, one 20/30-minute walk each way to reach the scopes, and one rough underfoot caldera trail that we will frequent with a few ups and downs.

The national park (Parque Nacional Caldera de Taburiente) are slowly improving the trails each year and making them slightly easier underfoot in places.

However, it's worth bringing a lighter neck scarf/snood due to fine dust everywhere.

Terrain – Driving to location

It takes around 1 hour to drive up to the top of the mountain from our accommodation. Once we start our ascent up the mountain, straight roads are non-existent, please pack travel sickness tablets if you struggle in the back of a minivan. The switchbacks from the east approach to the ridge are relentless.

Insurance

Please make sure you have adequate insurance to cover this trip, and your equipment; including the correct value of cover for your hold luggage.

Note - For anyone visiting the islands early, or staying on longer, don't leave valuables in cars, the Canaries are a hot spot for petty theft and tourist vehicles are prime targets for easy pickings.

Wildlife

There is nothing poisonous on La Palma, with the exception of the Tiger Centipede which are very shy and predominantly nocturnal. Just don't go sticking your hands between dry rocks, stone walls etc!

Mosquitos; La Palma does not usually suffer badly from mosquitos due to the trade winds, however, there are some around, so insect repellent as a backup, nobody has had a mosquito bite yet on the Canary Island workshops.



Other Info

Communications

A week or two prior to the workshop we will set up a WhatsApp group for coms on arrival day and general group chat.

Please email your current phone number.

Spanish Law – Check-in

Due to an update on Spanish tourism laws, there is a form to be filled out to enable us to check you in alongside this PDF.

Currency

Cash is not needed for the Canary Islands, cards are accepted everywhere though naturally Euros can be used too if you have them.

Contact

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Looking forward to meeting and working with you all on La Palma.
Ollie



