Thomas Cook travel

November/December/January 2012/13

Your essential guide to GOA, INDIA

WALK LIKE AN EGYPTIAN in the Sinai Desert's Coloured Canyon

MAMMA MIA! The *Simply Italian* sisters give us a taste of Emilia-Romagna

The secret side of the Canary Islands

+ NEW YEAR'S TRAVEL IDEAS / CELEBRITY HOTELS / SWEDEN'S COOLEST RESTAURANT

A little birdie told me...

The Canary Islands are a fabulous winter sun escape, but there's more to them than just sea 'n' sand. Five local islanders give **Andrea Montgomery** the inside track on their home turfs' best-kept secrets

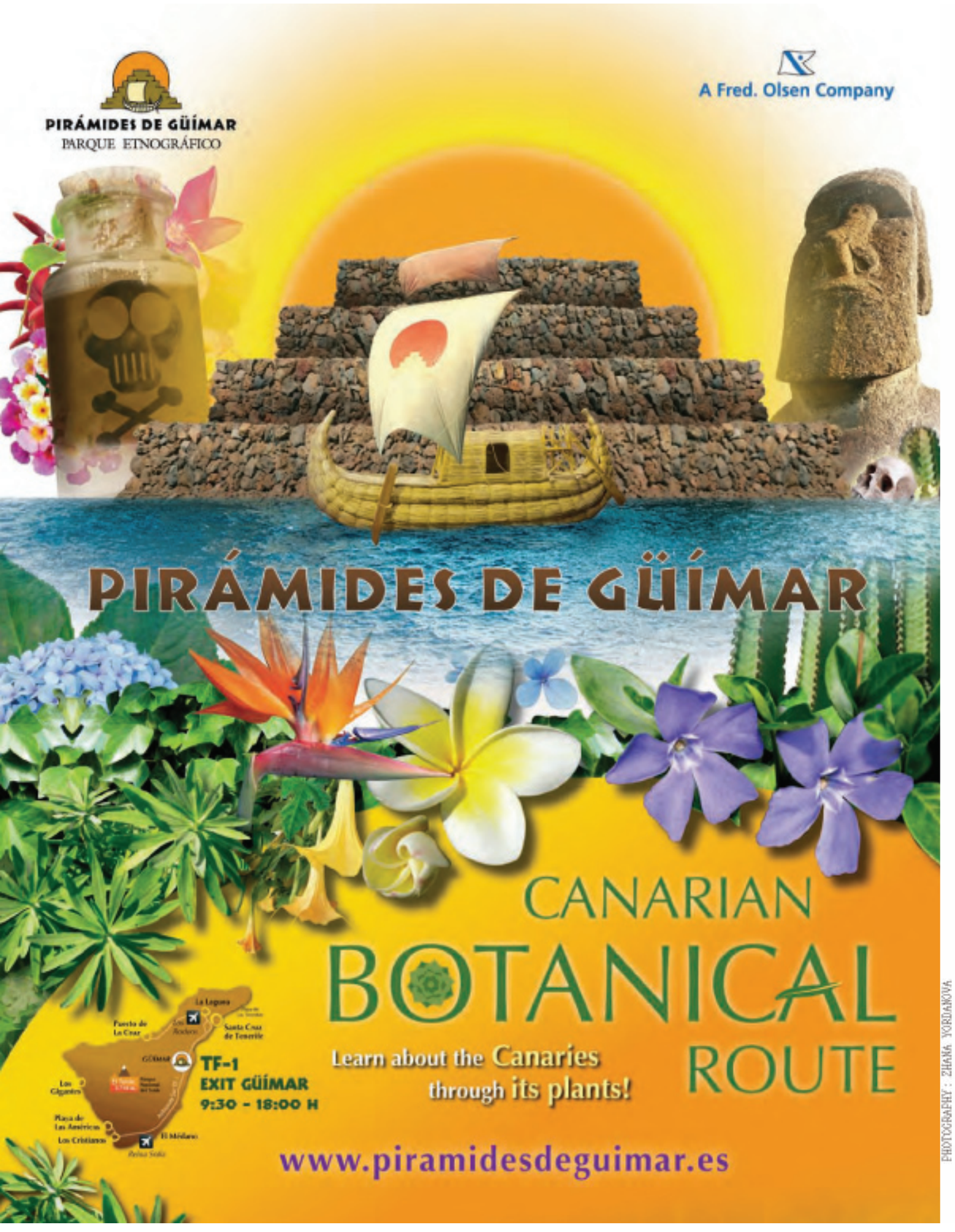
GRAN CANARIA

From a buzzing port capital to sun-soaked, white sand beaches, Gran Canaria is a vibrant, cultural melting pot. Born-and-bred Gran Canarian Victor Ordoñez leads indie rock band The Good Company (*thegoodcompany.es*), who are currently promoting their second album *Dearland*. He gives us an insight into the island's music and nightlife scene.

HIS TIPS:

"My favourite spot on the island is Las Palmas around Las Canteras beach. The neighbourhood has evolved into a hot spot with youngsters, and has lots of music-related activities, like the *Playa Viva Route* concerts, which are held year-round along the boardwalk. The concerts begin at 5pm and finish at midnight, featuring up-and-coming bands playing their own material as well as covers. You'll hear jazz, blues, rock – all styles are welcome here. I also recommend visiting the old quarter of Vegueta for its Thursday tapas nights: around 22 restaurants in the area offer a tapas dish and a small beer or glass of wine for just €2. And you can't miss a local *fiesta*: try *La Traída del Gofio y Agua* in Agüimes (September), where young locals have *gofio* (milled cornflour) and water battles in the street; or *La Rama* in Agaete (August), where everyone sings and dances through the streets carrying palm branches

Gran Canaria's stunning scenery extends beyond the beach



to ask the gods for rain. During the *fiestas*, all the bars and restaurants have stalls in the streets, and the atmosphere is just great.

Music-wise, a lot of our local bands were influenced by the sounds of The Rolling Stones, The Kinks, The Beatles and The Shadows. Under Franco's regime in the 1960s, when so much music was banned, British ships docking at Las Palmas played those records that we couldn't otherwise hear. Our own natural sound is more tropical, as you'd expect from a Canary Island. There's also a big jazz scene here with a great tradition of improvised jamming. Every July, jazz concerts are held at various venues across the north and south of the island as a part of the Canarias Jazz and Más festival (*canariasjazz.com*). For great live acts, head to the Wednesday jazz jam sessions at Cafe El Gallinero (*130 Fernando Guanarteme*) in Las Palmas.

"During *fiestas*, all the restaurants and bars have stalls in the street. It's a great atmosphere"

PHOTOGRAPHY: ZHANA VORDANOVA

Catch live acts at the island's Conexión Canarias concerts (above and left)

The weekend concerts at the Mojo Club (*Plaza de la Música*) are brilliant for indie lovers. Lots of Spanish bands and local bands perform here, and the concerts are streamed live on the internet. One of the freshest initiatives on the island is La Parcela Music, which stages year-round concerts called Conexión Canarias at various venues in the city. In terms of nightclubs, there are some excellent DJs here like Manel Ruiz the Specialist (*myspace.com/elespecialistamanelruiz*) but I personally go to the sessions that

DJ Alex Medina performs. He goes from old school funk and disco to nu-disco and fat bass grooves, and is getting the attention of the growing hipster crowds. Wherever he appears, there's always a great vibe. The Mumbai Sunset (*7 Calle Sagunto, Las Palmas*) is his resident spot, and he's also known for putting together summer parties called 'El Guateque' on a beautiful terrace on the Terraza Mirador del Atlante cliff."

Gran Canaria's *fiestas* are worth dressing up for (above); delicious fresh fish awaits in gourmet Tenerife (above, right)

TENERIFE

The land of mighty Mount Teide, bananas and vines is quietly earning itself a reputation as a gourmet food destination. We catch up with Michael Bolognesi, a local restaurateur, passionate landscape photographer (*michaelbolognesi.com*), and owner of the renowned restaurant Coeur de Filet (*coeurdefilet.com*) in Costa Adeje.

HIS TIPS:

"Tenerife's gaining a reputation for excellent gastronomy due to the simple fact that today's customers are much more demanding and educated when it comes to good food and wine. They have forced the industry to get its act together, and the competition is fierce. The island also has some great local produce, from award-winning cheeses to an excellent variety of fresh fish – all of which can be seen at the farmers' market in Adeje town at the weekends. Tenerife's wines are now on par with many of the top tipples from the Spanish mainland. Try one of the fruity and refreshing *afrutado* whites, which are perfect for the warm climate.

Pancho (*26 Avenida Maritima, Puerto de Santiago, +34 922 861 323*) in Playa de la Arena is a fantastic place for lunch. You can eat some delicious grilled seafood under the shade of Ficus trees right next to the beach. Restaurant 88 (*Edificio el Nido, Avenida las Gaviotas, +34 922 775 829, restaurant88tenerife.com*) in La Caleta is another place I recommend if you're in the mood

PHOTOGRAPHY : GETTY

ADRIAN HOTELES
the human touch

Tenerife´s best kept secret

Costa Adeje, Tenerife

Jardines de Nivaria is one of the most luxurious hotels in the South of Tenerife. Located on the beachfront in the exclusive area of Fañabe, this five star hotel has mantained a distinguished atmosphere without losing the warm and close contact it has with its guests.

Roca Nivaria Gran Hotel is the ideal holiday hotel for families, couples and those who are looking for quality in a privileged and friendly environment.

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for Asian fusion or sushi. If you're on the way up to Teide National Park, why not stop in the little village of Ifonche, just above Arona, and visit Hermano Pedro (*16 Carretera del Hoyo, +34 922 725 580*) for some traditional Canarian cooking? The fried rabbit is great.

When friends and family visit, Teide National Park is my first choice. The unique landscape is unparalleled. I would recommend a visit at night, as there are world-class stargazing conditions up there. The small village of Taganana on the northern rugged coastline – with the amazing Playa de Benijo beach – is another of my favourite spots. Families with kids have the fantastic Siam Park

"Visit Teide National Park at night for some world-class stargazing"

Clockwise from top: fried rabbit, the Canarian way; Tenerife has many award-winning cheeses; Teide National Park by night is out of this world for stargazers.

(*siampark.net*) waterpark as well as some great family-friendly beaches like Playa de Fañabé. There's also awesome night life, with great bars and clubs like El Faro Chill Art (*CC Torviscas Costa, Costa Adeje, faro.chillart.org*) and Tibu (*Americas Shopping Centre, Playa de Las Americas, tibutenerife.com*). The newly-opened Papagayo Beach Club in Playa de Las Americas (*facebook.com/PapagayoBeachClubTenerife*) is in a class of its own when it comes to cool night venues. Our island is so incredibly diverse and appeals to so many different people. Everyone from families with kids to avid mountain hikers will all find something to their taste."

PHOTOGRAPHY : GETTY , STOCKFOOD , ALAMY

NICHOLAS WARD MUÑOZ

Lanzarote's dramatic landscape and coastline are a winner for sports lovers

LANZAROTE

Home to Ironman (*ironmanlanzarote.com*), one of the world's toughest triathlon competitions, Lanzarote is gaining recognition as one of Europe's top sporting destinations. Nicholas (Nico) Ward Muñoz (*nicholaswardmunoz.com*), a professional triathlete and Ironman contender himself, grew up on the island, inspired by all its great sporting events.

HIS TIPS :

"The island's perfect for sports and being outdoors. First of all, the weather is great. Then there are so many good beaches, quiet roads and trails. There's also a strong sports culture for outdoor and water sports, so the island is well-equipped for these, and pedestrians and drivers are used to seeing and dealing with cyclists and runners.

The best spot for windsurfing and kitesurfing is Costa Teguise. For wave surfing, try Famara and La Santa. And for cycling, you can pretty much go all around the island (except Arrecife-Playa Honda, as you can only ride on the promenade here, which is usually busy with people). I love cycling all around

CREDIT : JAMES MITCHELL PHOTOGRAPHY , GETTY

the island, especially on the north side with all the climbing and quiet roads. The one used for the Ironman competition is particularly great: it climbs up through Teguise to Mirador del Rio – where there are amazing views over the island of La Graciosa. If you like running, you'll find long and quiet trails all around the island. My favourite follows the coast between Caleta de Caballo and Caleta de Famara. I also love swimming in the calm sea at Playa Grande in Puerto del Carmen in the early morning. The water's warm, crystal clear and full of fish – definitely an unknown treat!"

"Lanzarote's cycling routes in the north of the island offer amazing views"

Breathtaking views from Mirador del Rio in north Lanzarote; Fuerteventura's energy is perfect for wellbeing breaks (below)

FUERTEVENTURA

With its constant sun and sea breezes, surreal landscapes and the best beaches in Europe, Fuerteventura has a unique energy. Jamie Isaac is a leading pilates and wellbeing specialist who hosts retreats and workshops across the globe, and founder of Fuerteventura's Azul Yoga & Pilates (*azulfit.com*).

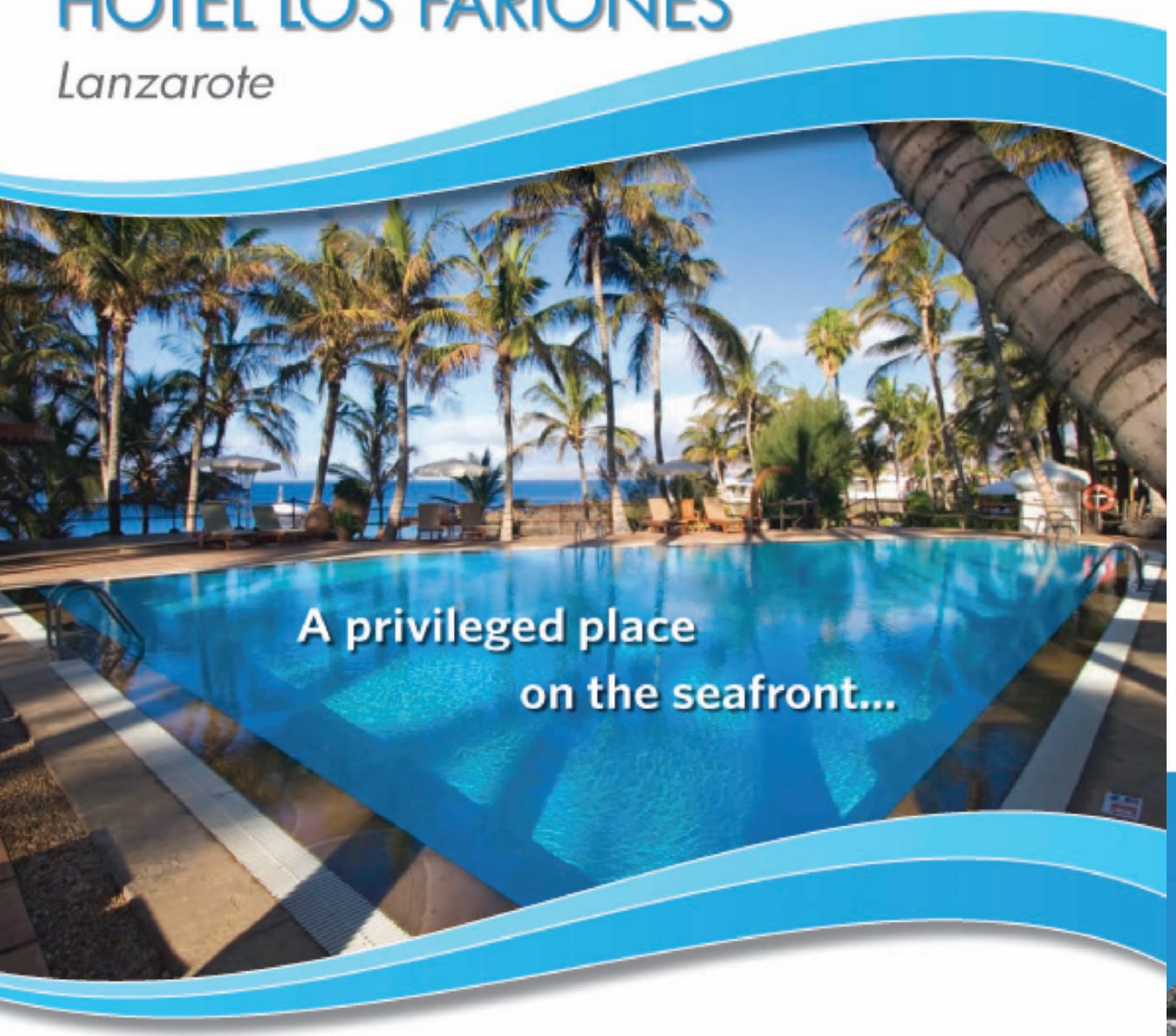
JAMIE ISAAC

HIS TIPS:

"The island has an incredible revitalising effect. There are so many active people, from surfers and kite surfers to cyclists and divers. It all motivates you to want to be outdoors. The energy of the island also makes it an ideal location for a health and wellness escape: it's soaked by the sun, pounded by the surf, and has

HOTEL LOS FARIONES

Lanzarote



Surrounded by fantastic beaches halfway between the old harbour and the Beach Avenue, the Fariones establishments are located in the most prestigious area of Puerto del Carmen, the holiday destination "par excellence". The well-being and satisfaction of our customers is our highest priority. Our quality consciousness coupled with our service and the efficiency of our staff, are responsible for our long-term success story. The Fariones Group establishments are aware of the need for contributing to a sustainable development that satisfies the environmental, social and cultural requirements of our island. Fariones Group assumes the social responsibility and the commitment to sustainable management, taking all measures and using our efforts to minimize the effect on the environment.

GRUPO FARIONES

www.farioneshotels.com

Clockwise: Take a walk on Fuerteventura's stunning sand dunes; the island's aloe vera has many healing benefits; an excursion to Lobos Island is a must

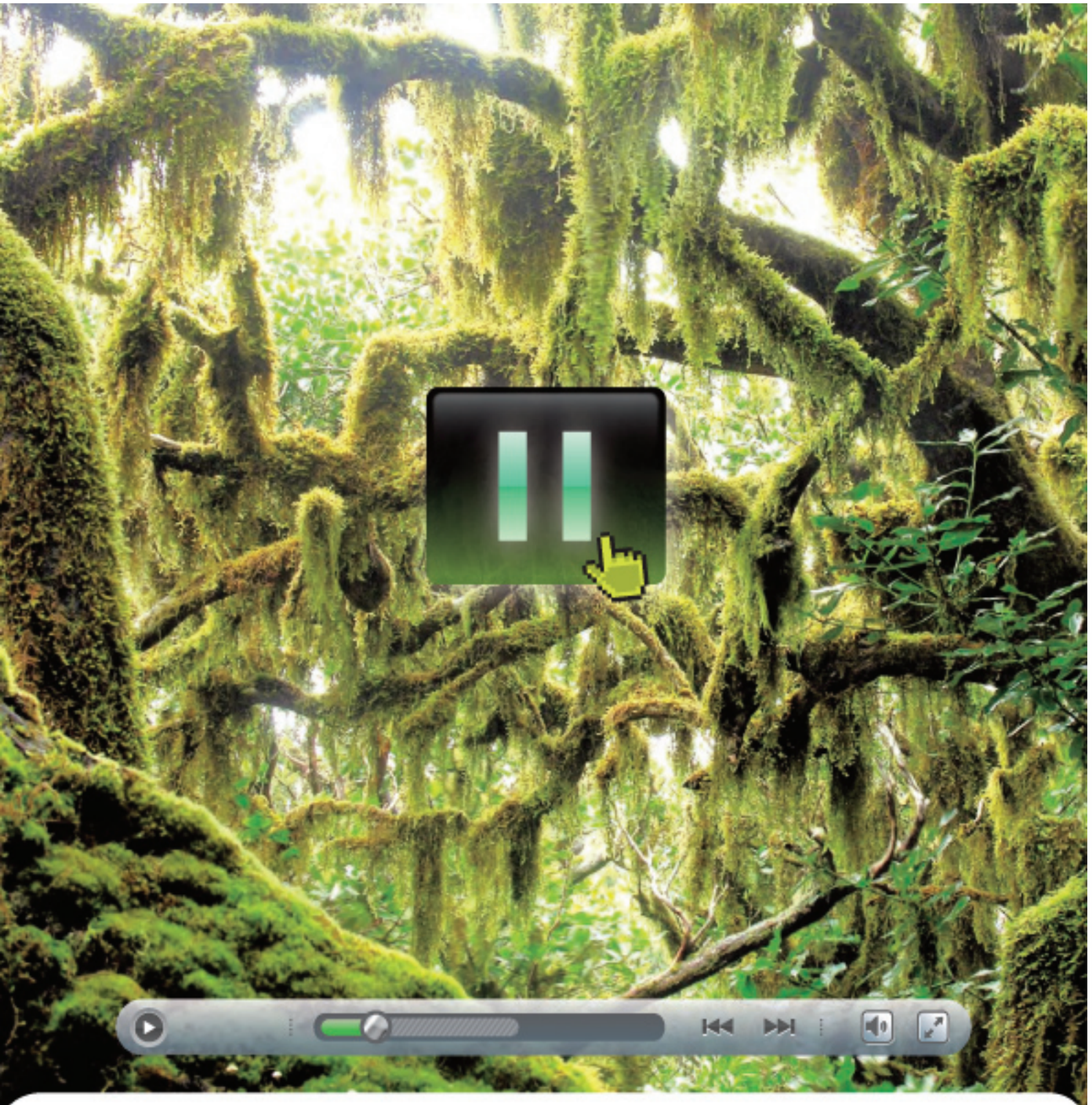
stunning volcanic scenery. All that energy has to go somewhere.

The north of the island has a lively wellbeing community, with excellent yoga teachers, pilates instructors, nutrition experts and complementary health therapists. I can't talk about wellbeing without mentioning the local aloe vera that's grown here. Eat it, drink it, rub it on – the list of things you can use it for is endless. It's no surprise that the local folk have been swearing by it for its healing properties for hundreds of years. In terms of treatments, you can find everything you need, from Body Stretch Therapy, Hopi Ear candling, Touch Therapy and cooling aloe massages. I'm currently working with a reiki and energy therapist developing our own technique called 'Integrated Healing'.

"How often do you get to set foot on an uninhabited nature reserve?"

For inspiring views, El Cotillo on the west coast has an incredible sunset, but the real secret is to head to the east coast sand dunes, just outside of Corralejo. Watching the sun dip behind the cloud-tipped volcanoes, while standing surrounded by white sand desert, is a mind-opening experience. Take an excursion to Lobos Island, to snorkel or walk. How often do you get to set foot on an uninhabited nature reserve? I'd recommend getting off the beaten track as much as you can. Drive along to the very east or west coasts and you'll find secluded white sands, turquoise seas, stunning cliffs and dramatic coasts."

CREDIT: GETTY



"La Gomera *where time stands still*"

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La Gomera
The Canary Islands

GORDO WENCK

CREDIT : GETTY

LA GOMERA

La Gomera may be tiny, but it certainly packs a punch: its UNESCO-protected ancient rainforest, dramatic ravines and unspoilt landscape make it a hiker's paradise. Local hiking guide, Gordo Wenck, has lived on the island since 1987 and has been a hiking guide on his adopted home for the past 20 years.

HIS TIPS :

"For beginners, I'd recommend the hike from Las Hayas to Jardín de las Creces. It's a lovely circular walk where you'll find a fantastic variety of the island's evergreen forests with tree heath, wax myrtle, laurel, mosses and lichen.

The hike from El Contadero through the rainforest to the mountain village of El Cedro is a bit more strenuous, but the spectacular views over the valleys down to Hermigua make the trek well worth it.

One of the most varied hikes begins in the northern village of Agulo and climbs up 600m to reach the visitor centre at Juego de Bolas. After that, move on to Las Rosas before descending, via Roque Cano, to the village of Vallehermoso."

GETTING THERE

For more about the Canary Islands, visit your local Thomas Cook or Going Places store, call +44 (0)844 412 5966 or visit *thomascook.com*

From woodland forests (above) to rocky moutain peaks (top L), La Gomera's unspoilt landscape is a hiker's dream come true