



TOUR INFORMATION FOR THE CANARY ISLANDS

These notes are designed to help you prepare fully for the tour. Please read carefully.

ENTERING SPAIN: United Kingdom citizens will need a valid passport to enter Spain. A visa is not required. Citizens of other nations should contact their nearest Spanish Embassy or Consulate for entry requirements.

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport and air ticket with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get replacements if your originals are lost or stolen. Obviously, you should keep the photocopies in a separate bag to the originals.

TIME DIFFERENCE: The Canary Islands are on the same time zone as the UK.

CURRENCY: Spanish currency is the Euro. As the tour price includes all travel, hotel and main meal costs, you need only bring enough money to cover items of a personal nature, including extra drinks at dinner, except water (which is provided).

CLIMATE: It is generally warm to hot and dry throughout the summer. However, the climate varies from island to island and even from one part of an island to another. For example, the northern part of Tenerife in the laurel forest tends to be cooler (15°C) and damper than the south (usually mid to upper 20s C). Fuerteventura and Lanzarote are a lot drier overall than the western islands and usually very warm (mid to upper 20s).

PACE OF TOUR: The pace of the tour is relatively relaxed. The individual days may be quite long in hours but there is no major physical effort needed during the tour. The leader will try to get the group as near to the birds as possible and so only a little light walking is needed. It is possible that on Fuerteventura and Lanzarote some slightly longer walks may be undertaken but even these are only 15-30 minutes in duration. We do travel up to 2,200 metres whilst on Tenerife as we pass over the caldera, so anyone who has problems with altitude should advise us beforehand. The Tenerife Blue Chaffinch is found below this in the Canary Pine belt (1,400-1,900 metres).

HEALTH: Visitors to the Canary Islands are not required to have any international certificates of vaccination. Water in the hotels is safe to drink though heavily treated chemically and bottled water will be supplied during the day and at dinner. Beer and soft drinks are widely available. There will be five ferry trips and although the seas are fairly calm, and the vessels large, you should bring suitable medication if you are prone to sea-sickness. Generally, insects shouldn't be a problem but it might be wise to bring a repellent in case we encounter a few mosquitoes.

The sun is strong, especially at higher altitude, and the sun and wind on ferry crossings are significant. It is easy to become sun- or wind- burnt so bring a few long-sleeve shirts and a broad-rimmed hat with strap (to avoid losing it in the wind). On particularly hot days be sure to increase your intake of fluids. Tap water is generally safe to drink and bottled water will be available throughout the day, as required.

It may be difficult to obtain any special medication during the tour, so bring all you are likely to need. In the unlikely event of you requiring medical attention of any kind while you are away, it is wise to carry a European Health Insurance Certificate card (EHIC) with you <http://www.nhs-e111-ehic.org.uk>

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For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website www.masta-travel-health.com

DRESS: Dress will be informal throughout the tour.

FIELD CLOTHING: Mainly warm and sunny weather is usual at this time of year so light clothing (including long-sleeved garments and a suitable hat for protection from the sun) are the main requirements. However sometimes cool onshore winds can make a fleece or light jacket useful. A good sun hat is essential. Light footwear will be adequate most of the time, but occasional longer walks require comfortable walking shoes or boots.

MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT: Please bring the following:

Binoculars	Alarm clock
Field Guides	Torch and extra batteries
Small rucksack or shoulder bag	Notebook and pencil

Optional Items: Telescope and tripod, camera and film, spare binoculars (in case of loss or damage), spare spectacles, pocket knife.

LEADER'S EQUIPMENT: The leader will provide the following:

Telescope and tripod	Basic first-aid kit
Reference books	

LUGGAGE: The checked-luggage weight limit on most flights is 20kg (44lbs). If possible, please bring your luggage in soft-sided bags or cases (rather than large hard 'Samsonite'-type suitcases). **Please do not bring any bag that is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself.** Please bring two smaller lighter bags rather than one very heavy one. As a general rule, in addition to using your Sunbird luggage labels, it is a good idea to fix identification to the inside of each piece of luggage.

When we travel by ferry all our large suitcases will remain in our vehicle which is parked securely below deck.

ACCOMMODATION: We stay at a number of hotels, all of which have en-suite facilities.

DRINKS: Bottled water, a soft drink or a beer (or wine if appropriate) are provided at meals, as is coffee or tea. In addition we keep a supply of bottled water on the tour vehicles. Bottled or filtered water may also be provided in some rooms where we stay.

FOOD: Sunbird tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Many restaurants offer set menus and are unable to accommodate all special requests within a group. Thus, participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs can, regrettably, not be accommodated. Our tours are carefully scheduled to ensure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time, sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to take supplemental food with them.

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PHOTOGRAPHY: Camera equipment should be packed in moisture and dust-proof bags as a precaution. If you wish to 'digiscope' please ensure that you bring your own telescope. Memory cards for digital cameras may not be widely available in the areas we will visit.

There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals, insects, and scenery and the leaders will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel insurance is essential and we insist that you take out suitable cover as soon as your tour is booked. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are also adequately insured on your home contents policy, as most travel insurance policies do not cover very expensive individual items. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage. Please also ensure that your policy covers you in the event of a medical emergency, cancellation of a trip or severe delays. Medical costs abroad can often be extremely expensive. Please note that Sunbird is not liable for any medical or repatriation costs resulting from injury or illness during a tour or for covering any costs resulting from a flight delay such as extra hotel accommodation.

If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Helen Fisher, Bullerwell Independent Insurance Brokers, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234-866964. Please contact Helen for a quote and she will send the schedule directly to you.

TRANSPORT: The transport for the tour will be in minibus driven by the leader. We will also take a few trips by inter-island ferry. These are large vessels with a variety of onboard facilities.

SMOKING: Smoking is not allowed in the vehicles or when the group is gathered for meals, checklists etc. If you are sharing a room with a non-smoker, please do not smoke in the room. If you smoke in the field, we ask that you do so well away and downwind from the group if possible.

TIPPING: Most tips are included in the tour price. These include tips to hotel porters for carrying our bags to and from the rooms and tips to waiters and waitresses when we have group meals together in restaurants. You only need to pay tips for personal services such as room service or drinks from the bar.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Mullarney, Killian, Lars Svensson, Dan Zetterstrom & Peter J Grant. Collins Bird Guide. 1999. HarperCollins. (ISBN 0 00 219728 6). The latest, most up-to-date and portable field guide to the birds of Europe. This book is the standard field guide for the region. **Highly recommended.**

Jonsson, Lars. Birds of Europe with North Africa and the Middle East. 1992. Helm, London. All five volumes of the original series in one book. Completely revised with many new and superb illustrations. Available in paperback.

Moreno, José Manuel, 1988. Guia de Las Aves de las Islas Canarias. Canaries Inst. Good field guide with colour plates and distribution maps, but text is only in Spanish. Natural History references

Ashmole, M. & P. 1989. Natural History Excursions in Tenerife. Kidstone Press. An excellent paperback guide with a wealth of information about birds, mammals, insects and plants. Well worth obtaining.

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OBTAINING BOOKS: Most of the field guides and the major ornithological references in print are available by mail order from booksellers specialising in natural history titles.

Natural History Book Service Ltd
Tel: 01803 865913
www.nhbs.co.uk

Subbuteo Books
Tel: 0870 010 9700
www.wildlifebooks.com

WildSounds
Tel: 01263 741100
www.wildsounds.co.uk

One Stop Nature Shop
Tel: 01485 211223
www.onestopnature.co.uk

MAPS: Maps of the region may be available from:

The Map Shop
Tel: 01684 593146
www.themapshop.co.uk

Stanfords
Tel: 020 7836 1321
www.stanfords.co.uk

FINAL INFORMATION: Final information with instructions for meeting the group, hotel addresses, etc. and your air tickets will be sent to you about three weeks before the tour starts. Other news will be communicated as necessary. If you have any questions about any aspect of the tour, please contact us.