

LANZAROTE - THE NEXT GAY PARADISE?

By Lady Sasha de Suim



PHYSICALLY, Lanzarote is every queen's ideal – it's long, thin and incredibly hard! No wonder 20 gay journalists, including moi, descended on Arrecife airport to size up the island's assets. As usual, white wine and Tattinger kept Madam bearably lubricated till touchdown. Immediately, I started to sweat and shake, my usual symptoms prompted by sexual anticipation and sub-tropical heat. I couldn't wait to hit the gorgeous, black, volcanic sand – being frisked by female Nazis at Heathrow after flaunting my sex-change papers was enough hassle for one day!

Mercifully, Lanzarote didn't me let me down. A still-hot, recently formed volcanic island, it's best described as Iceland relocated to North African latitudes. Customs were a breeze – a brief, barely-there glance at my passport – and baggage pick-up came faster than a tart demanding cash. How good could it get? Even the taxis zipped up every thirty seconds, with Madam finally ushered into her seat by a hunky – and highly courteous – Spanish driver.

Don't get fidgety. The filth, excess, party places and attractions are coming. But like sex, it's best to pace them in a satisfying order. Let's start with orientation.

Lanzarote scrupulously protects its unique, local character and habitat. That's the legacy of acclaimed local artist Caesar Manrique, whose works range from paintings and sculptures to architectural installations fusing art and the island's striking, natural features. Forget grass and any trees except palms – this is a landscape so lunar NASA astronauts trained here. So did we feel like prehistoric, panting nature boys au naturel? You bet – how could twenty pairs of gay boys feel anything else? Frankly, the clothes started peeling off the moment we hit the runway!

Our hotel, the Morromar, boasted a perfect, 24 – hour help desk, swimming pools, a restaurant, gym, shop, coffee bar and close beach access. And praise be to hotel receptionist Kristin Carlson, who found this stressed-out pre-op an English power-point adaptor! Well, a girl's gotta charge her vibrators somehow...

Hurling my wads of tightly-rolled pantyhose all over my room, a two-bed affair with poolside balcony, TV, phone and catering facilities, I bared my tits to the late afternoon sun and relaxed before hitting the town. After thirty minutes toasting, it was time for a quick, pre-lash troll round the pool to see what I could pull. I didn't have to wait long. "Are you one of us?" smirked a cute, early-30s gay boy in a German Bunderswear T-shirt. "Could there be any possible doubt", I replied, tossing my black, Marc Bolan curls and fondling my tranny tits sheathed in black chiffon.

Cue an invite to vodka and tonics with three other hacks before hitting the main drag – Puerto del Carmen – for further self-abuse and food. Forget mini-cabs and prima donna drivers in black cabs – the local cabbies are fast, efficient, and strictly metered.

lanzarote

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Typically, taxi fares hover around three Euros, depending on distance travelled; in other words, they're ridiculously cheap. So on to Los Avenida del Playas, where a mouth-wateringly cooked entrecote steak and trimmings, coffee and dessert – plus drinks – barely pushed the 10 Euros mark. Okay, I was eating 'Child Portions', but a slag on the razz has to watch her waistline! Battling through straight, ticket touts and slappers so blatant they made Royston Vaisey look subtle, we forced our to the first stop on our gay, whistle-stop tour, Lady Muck's.

Tight, intimate and hot – like a threesome in a rubber body bag – Lady Muck's is a drag bar that's genecliced the heart of Blackpool with Mediterranean morals. Who needs restraint? This is classic, 1970s drag given a fierce, industrial scrub for the Naughties and beyond, no-nonsense black comedy that skins heckler's tongues alive! How could you fail to fall for the awesome Lilly Lush, a deadpan, seven-foot clone of a certain Madame Savage? And Lady Muck herself is straight out of 'South Pacific', a short, feisty bombshell, three hundred and one pounds of fun, with the filthiest, funniest mouth since Bernard Manning rimmed Danny La Rue! (In my dreams, of course – litigation lawyers please take note).

Thoroughly bladdered on my signature tipple – whisky and soda – I followed the boys to next door's 'Free Bar', pumping away with break beats – and butts – to die for. The stripper – the aptly named Double Impact – dropped all our jaws. It's not every day you watch a 6' 4", perfectly proportioned, blonde bombshell peel down from LAPD drag to his enormously well-endowed birthday suit!

Amazingly, the next day wasn't an anti-climax. Boarding a coach, we downed a champagne breakfast at the Music Hall Tavern, the lushly-appointed, red and gold showcase for the outrageous Titti Trollope, then drove en masse to Lanzarote's Timanfaya National Park. I was staggered. Enormous, broken fields of split lava extend for miles against a background of brooding dormant volcanoes. And the sand – fittingly, for an imminent gay Mecca – comes in rainbow shades, from scarlet to yellow and green, ochre and black, the result of lava-mixed minerals cooling and crystallising at different speeds and temperatures. Of course, I adored 'La Diabola', the Park's restaurant with steaks cooked on an open, volcanic vent. So how hot is the ground? Sizzling. Bales of straw thrown in vents burned in seconds, poured water exploded back up as superheated steam, and a sprinkle of local ashes was too hot to hold. Add sheer drops worthy of the Alps and you're talking total thrills, as we snaked through the island passing a bizarre, Austin Powers-style military installation en route to our next destination – Haria. Believe me, estate agents would curse Lanzarote – there's no original features to blag buyers. Everything's been resurfaced

countless times by volcanic eruptions. But the last eruption was in 1824, so current properties – and the weather – seem idyllic. Still, I've always adored going down, and exploring a subterranean volcanic tube garnished with a fairy-tale lake containing a unique species of blind, albino crab proved irresistible. Even the oddly inappropriate piped mood music couldn't dip the bewitching sense of peace the site possesses. I also (against advice) slugged back the possibly poisonous volcanic water. Like the entire island's supply, it tasted vaguely alkaline, so coffee tastes like it's been made with soda water. No bad thing if you love whisky (it saves on mixers), but disconcerting otherwise, like Haria's fascinating Art Deco theatre, which is roughly hacked from lava.

Could it get better? Oh yes. Saturday's catamaran trip pulled this shell-shocked tranny into very deep (if crystal-clear) water. Surprisingly, I loved it – the trampoline nets suspended over the ocean were perfect for holding champagne flutes as I lay demurely in white cotton with a black parasol deflecting the sun. The boys, of course, stripped down to their skimpies, but if I want premature wrinkles, I'll ring geriatric escorts! Still, sun or not, I needed to jet-ski, and even fully dressed, was first in line for a spin with our hunky driver, Benny! Of course, I've done power-boats before – a high-performance Honda in Southampton Water – but nothing beats the sheer rush of these marine motor-bikes hitting waves head-on in choppy water! Screw powdering my nose – this was the porn star's packet! Five very damp minutes later, I climbed back on board, shaken but most definitely stirred!

Sadly, my body – if not my mind – needed rest, but a two hours' siesta promptly resurrected my transgendered need for sex! Booked for a 7.30pm dinner at the Music Hall Tavern, we burnt tarmac in a posse of taxis, then – after the full-on, vintage drag glitz of Titi Trollope's show – hit the laid-back but sultry Black and White bar, complete with backroom and mirrors! At this point, we'll draw a discrete veil over proceedings, but the Sunday flight to Gatwick had a high proportion of hangovers and sore genitals! So can Lanzarote cut the gay mustard? Certainly. The scene's booming as we speak, with sharp pink pounds investing in the bones of a future, faggot infrastructure. For discerning queens who want more than mere bars, the climate, staggering scenery and serenity, plus a small, but high-quality theatre and arts scene, make Lanzarote a beautiful alternative to the trashy, Jade Goody vibe of Ibiza! For me, it's no contest!

> For further information on Lanzarote go to www.lanzarotegayguide.com

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