

# THE GREAT GRAN CANARIA TOP 10

So many people in London turn their noses up when you say you've been on holiday to Gran Canaria but, having just returned from a week's break there, QX's **MICHAEL SMITH** really couldn't fault the place. Where else can you go to escape Britain's winter that's not long-haul and won't break the bank? Just four hours flying time from London and you can step off the plane to blue skies and bright sunshine. However, there's more to Gran Canaria than just sand dunes and sex! While you're there, here are 10 hot tips...



## 1. THE YUMBO CENTER

OK, so it looks like an ugly multi-storey car-park but it is filled with over 70 gay bars, clubs, restaurants, gay shops and a sauna. And, even though once you're in there it's still not very pretty to look at, there's a constant stream of gay men trolling round and around; and there's nothing that we gay men like more than to sit with friends with a large drink and watch boys go by. Of course, there are too many bars and clubs to mention but a couple we'd recommend are **Construction**, a bar with a large terrace bar and a sexy, friendly crowd, the **Box**, a music bar run by a couple of sexy ex-London guys and, for those feeling a little bit horny, the **Cellar Bar**, which has a theme of either underwear, jocks, boots only each night... You get the picture. For those who like cocktails and neon lights there's plenty of other comfy terrace bars, restaurants and shops.

## 2. MASPALOMAS BEACH AND DUNES

THE main gay beach is at Maspalomas, famous for its surreal dunes blown in from the Sahara. The beach runs for miles and is a little like Oxford Street with endless streams of people walking up and down, but head for the gay (and nudist) section at Beach Bar No. 7 (look for the flag) where you'll soon feel right at home surrounded by oiled-up, sun bathing queens.

## 3. FIND A SECLUDED BEACH

GRAN CANARIA has plenty of beautiful, secluded beaches off the tourist track which apparently only the locals know about. One to try: to escape the package deal Brits, is the little beach at **Güf Güf**. You will need a car that can drive through dried river beds and then be prepared to ditch the car and walk for a further mile over boulders through a deep valley, but the little paradise beach you reach is well worth the trek.



## 4. ANDÉN VERDE

HIRE a car and drive round Andén Verde (Green Platform), the mountain coastal roads that lie along the south east coast of the island. A roller coaster ride and views to thrill. Not for the faint hearted though... I nearly shat myself!

## 5. CALDERA DE BANDAMA

AN amazing volcanic crater 1km across and 200m deep with a single farm at its floor with chickens, goats and orange and palm trees. The hamlet of **Bandama** sits on the rim of the crater and has a great little bar that serves great roast beef and red wine.

## 6. THE CITY OF LAS PALMAS

TAKE a visit to Gran Canaria's largest city (45 minutes from the south of the island) with historic buildings, great shops, markets, restaurants and a small city gay scene.

## 7. PLAYAS DE LAS CANTERAS

LIKE Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro, Playas de las Canteras backs onto the city of Las Palmas and is frequented by a cool city crowd and lined with hip bars and restaurants.

## 8. ROQUE BENTAIGA

OK, so it may be just a lump of rock jutting out just south east of the interior of the island, but this dramatic monolith, described as a "rugged forearm with a clenched fist" rises over 1,400m and is a beautiful sight at sunset.



## 9. TRY A GAY QUAD BIKE SAFARI

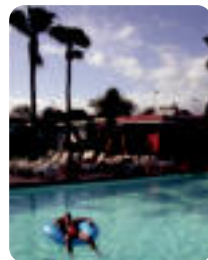
DEPENDING on just how butch you're feeling why not try a gay quad bike safari across mountain tracks, ending with a picnic at the beautiful lake at **Ayagaures**? Drive the quad bike or have your very own co-pilot. The choice is yours. It's so much fun. Tel: Maspalomas Aventura on (0034) 928765407 or ask at any of the bars in the Yumbo Center for details.

## 10. ARUCAS

THE quintessential 'Spanish' town nestled in the interior of the island with the most amazing neo-Gothic church of **San Juan Bautista**, kind of like a mini version of Gaudi's Sagrada Familia cathedral in Barcelona.



WE stayed at **Club Tucanes Playa**, one of two gay resorts in Playa del Ingles courtesy of Sensations Holidays. The resort features 32 cute little bungalows set in lush private gardens overflowing with hibiscus, banana plants and palm trees, centred round a large pool and hot-tub. The accommodation was great, with a comfy king size bed, a small kitchen, sitting room, private terrace, CD player and satellite TV – with a porn channel... What more do you want? And as a nice touch, when you arrive there's chilled bottles of mineral water and Cava together with complimentary beach towels waiting in your bungalow. For flights, accommodation and tour information call Sensations Holidays on 020 8902 7177 and mention QX for the latest deals.





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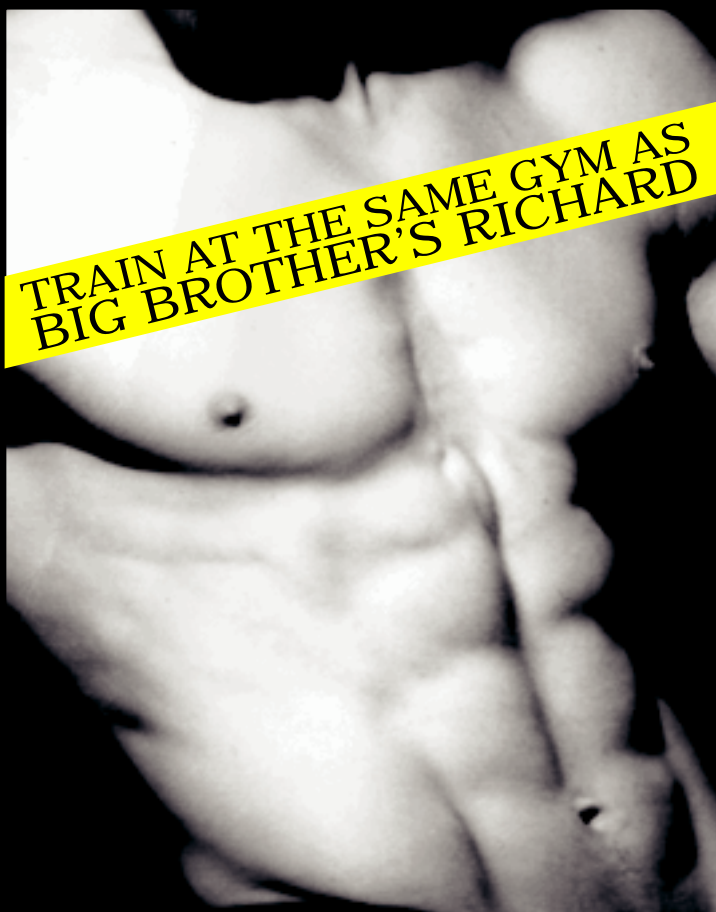
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