



SUNSEEKER CHARTERS

THE CANARY ISLANDS

As a location for a Bond movie the Canary Islands have it all – dramatic cliffs, sandy beaches, crystal blue waters and an alluring range of sea life. Simon Brooke discovers the appeal of exploring the islands on a luxury motoryacht

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Although 007's adventures in 'Quantum of Solace' don't take him to the Canaries, Bond fans can still enjoy the natural beauty, glorious weather and cultural variety of these very special islands. The best way in which to do this is by boat and, as if to underline their affinity with the world's most celebrated secret agent, Sunseeker Charters has a Portofino 46 called 'Diamonds Are Forever' and a 35 called 'Casino Royale'.

"The Canary Islands are always very popular with people chartering boats for that special exclusive holiday, we find," says David Ward, Director Sunseeker Charters. "Not only do you have lovely weather almost all the year round but there is such a variety of coastline from cliffs to sandy beaches and the sea life is also incredibly varied. We have people who just want to spend a few days going from a beach to a harbour for lunch, as well as those who come for more active holidays that might include diving or jet skiing. Either way, I'm sure the chance to relax on a boat with a James Bond association adds to the appeal."

As anyone who has ever visited them knows, the Canary Islands don't in fact get their name from the lovable little yellow birds; instead the word comes from 'canine' because when the Romans first discovered the islands, it's said they encountered packs of large, wild dogs roaming the dramatic volcanic landscape. Today's visitors can be sure of a more friendly welcome but the Canary Islands still offer some striking scenery, wonderful views and exotic wildlife. Four of Spain's seven major national parks are to be found in the Canaries.

The seven islands that make up the Canaries are part of Spain, although they enjoy a great deal of autonomy and they're well over a 1,000km south of the Spanish mainland, with the island of Fuerteventura less than 100km from Morocco. Because of this location, which benefits from the mild waters of the Gulf Stream and the gentle Trade Winds, there is plenty of sunshine all year round and temperatures rarely fall below 18°C, even in winter.

The archipelago consists of five main islands: La Palma, Tenerife, Gran Canaria, Fuerteventura and Lanzarote, plus the two smaller, less well-known islands of El Hierro and La Gomera. All the islands are, in fact, giant semi-submerged volcanoes. The Teide volcano on Tenerife is the third largest in the world and all are occasionally active.



Each of the Canary Islands has its own distinct identity and appeals to a different type of holidaymaker. Gran Canaria and Tenerife, which are towards the centre of the archipelago, have the greatest buzz about them with bustling restaurants, great shopping and lively nightlife – but peace and quiet plus beautiful natural habitats are just a short drive inland. If you'd prefer to do without a car then go trekking or hire a bike to experience the more remote parts of these islands. At the right season you can pick fresh mangos, papayas and dates to take back to your boat.

Fuerteventura is another favourite for those looking to eat, drink, shop and dance but who also appreciate the chance to escape from it all. Mount Tindaya was believed by the ancients to have magical powers and visiting the remains of their early settlements you get a sense of deep spiritual calm. La Palma, the largest of the islands, has some of the most beautiful, unspoilt landscape with laurel trees and natural springs as well as brightly painted colonial houses.

Although some of these woodlands and long, empty beaches might feed your fantasy of being pioneers, the first people to set foot on an island paradise, the Canaries have a long and proud nautical history. The Spanish conquistadors made them a stopping-off point on their way to the New World and, as a result, the islands became increasingly wealthy during the 15th century. The magnificent palaces and churches built at this time in the cities of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and Santa Cruz de Tenerife are well worth seeing.

The colonial buildings that line the squares and cobbled streets have changed little over the centuries and still feature their wooden balconies and shady courtyards. British visitors to the islands follow an honourable tradition: Lord Nelson lost his right arm in a skirmish near the Canary Islands and it was the British, in their role as traders, who established banana plantations here – still an important element in the local economy.

Scuba diving and underwater photography are increasingly popular and the islands boast a unique blend of Mediterranean and North Atlantic sea life including sharks, moray eels and scorpion fish as well as jellyfish, sea anemone and spectacular coral. Fish such as blue marlin offer opportunities for big game fishing.

Around the islands, boats and yachts often find themselves accompanied by whales and dolphins – an unforgettable experience. Off the boat, the constant breeze and small sandy coves are perfect for windsurfing or kite flying as well as body boarding, water-skiing and jet skiing. These beaches, with their endless expanses of dunes, are contrasted by other bays of striking black volcanic sand, gigantic cliffs and grottos.

And, of course, after a day of exploring you can always return to your yacht, tired but tanned and happy, to enjoy a well earned Martini – shaken, that is, not stirred.

For more information call +44 (0)1202 682890
or visit www.sunseekercharters.net



"Diamonds Are Forever"

Like all super sleek Portofino 46s, this boat is ideal for cruising around the Canaries and has everything you would expect in a performance motor yacht.

Along with its impressive power and speed Diamonds Are Forever offers a wide cruising range, easy handling and excellent outdoor facilities.

The Portofino 46 offers a hydraulic swimming platform for easy access to the sea. Alternatively, moor the boat and use the attached tender to reach secluded enclaves otherwise out of reach.

With her contemporary design, spacious accommodation for four people and top speeds of 34 knots, this Portofino 46 offers the kind of style and performance that will set your pulse racing



"Casino Royale"

This Portofino 35 delivers a superb performance with a top speed of 39 knots. Her speed, agility and ease of handling on the water prove the smallest craft in the Sunseeker Charters fleet is still a modern sports cruiser.

On the lower deck the spacious saloon and beautifully furnished accommodation for two make the Portofino 35 an ideal choice for a relaxing week's cruising.