



Craig investigated the volcanoes and geysers of Lanzarote.

Craig visited **Lanzarote**, an island of year-round sunshine, volcanoes and geysers. At first sight, it isn't the prettiest of landscapes, more lunar than lush. The fourth largest island in the Canaries, **Lanzarote** is only 60 miles from the Sahara Desert. So it's no wonder that it offers sunbathers constant temperatures of at least 70 degrees, with very little chance of rain.

Craig was staying in the south west of the island, at Playa Blanca, a small resort with a relaxed atmosphere and pretty beaches. Craig was staying at the newly opened Princesa Yaiza hotel. With 330 rooms, three bars and five restaurants, isolation and intimacy are not readily available.

Lunar landscape

For something on a truly epic scale head for the Timanfaya National Park. 40 minutes drive north of the hotel, you can explore the park by bus or camel, but on an organised trek you can really get your feet into the heart of this weird volcanic landscape. You don't have to be a volcano expert to experience it. In the 1700's the landscape was green, lush and one of the most fertile parts of the island. Then, in a period of only six years, from 1730 to 1736, a crack appeared in the volcano and threw up all the lava.

After scaling a volcano, a fitting place to eat is the Vulcan grill - on top of the only live part of the volcano - which adds a little extra sizzle to normal barbecuing. At Playa Blanca there are plenty of good beach-side restaurants. Unlike most Spanish resorts, they don't stay open much past midnight. This may be why mornings on the beach are busy, although not too overcrowded. You can find more isolated beaches around the headland, which is good for families.

You can go underwater in a submarine -to about 25 metres - and can get really close to the sea life. Craig was surprised as to how much there was out there. Being on an island, there are a lot of water sports available, but if it's boats that you are into, then Puerto Calero is the place to come. Craig went on a boat trip around part of the island, from where you can see the contrast of the white houses against the dark volcanic rock. You also see Puerto del Carmen, the most built up and developed tourist part of the island. What you won't see though, are any high-rise hotels or nasty neon, which is all down to one man.

César Manrique

César Manrique is a local hero but a developer's nightmare. He saw the potential dangers of mass tourism on the island so, as an artist with interest amongst the politicians, he thought that he could do something about it. No building can be more than six storeys high and all houses should be painted white with blue woodwork if they have a sea view, brown or green if not. It is only when you enter César Manrique's

home that you realise just how creative he really was. He built his home in lava, in an attempt to show the give-and-take between nature and man, just as he did with his art.

Manrique's work is dotted throughout the island. The Caves of Jameos del Agua were formed by a volcanic eruption, but turned into art by Manrique. A lesser-visited creation is his Cactus Garden in Guatiza, on the east side of the island. Once an ugly deserted quarry, with just a windmill and some rock formations, he has used nature to transform it into a beautiful garden for everyone to enjoy. The garden holds over 1,400 different types of cacti, which are a reminder of the island's all year-round sunshine.

Verdict: Craig had been to Lanzarote before but hadn't properly explored Manrique or the quieter side of the island - a mistake he admits to. You can have your standard package holiday here - early to pool and late to bed. Or you can follow the advice of the local master himself, and throw yourself into the wild, often weird, but wonderful side of the island.