

Stormy weather

# La Palma counts cost

**L**a Palma's tourist industry is counting the cost of the chaos caused by the storms which closed the island's airport for nearly four days and forced tour operators to divert holidaymakers elsewhere.

The closure of the port also meant that hundreds of people who had intended to spend a few days on La

Palma for the carnival had to make alternative plans. Early estimates put the carnival losses alone at around half a million euros but the local sector is more worried at the possible repercussions if tour operators decide the many weather-related incidents of late are making La Palma a risky investment. Flights from England, Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium had to be

diverted at the height of the bad weather this week.

Other islands were also affected by the extremely stormy weather, with a Ryanair flight from Bournemouth to Lanzarote forced to land on Fuerteventura. Some passengers did complain that they were left to make their own onward travel arrangements, catching ferries to Lanzarote, however other reports stated

that the company later said the passengers had been provided with passenger rights regulation information, which outlines their entitlement to hotel expenses and that the money would be refunded if receipts were shown. Stephen McNamara, Ryanair head of communications, told the BBC, "Passengers were provided with EU261 (a European passenger rights regulation) information which outlines their entitlement to provide receipted hotel expenses to Ryanair, for refund. Ryanair arranged that the ferry company would carry affected Ryanair passengers to Lanzarote free of charge when ferries recommenced the following morning." He added that Ryanair could never put passenger convenience before safety.

Tourism statistics

# Good news for tourism

**F**or the first time in the last 18 months the number of tourists to Spain increased in the year on year figures in January.

The country received 2.54 million tourists in the first month of this year, an increase of 1.1 per cent over January

2009. The Canaries was the most popular destination with 795,815 tourists coming to the islands, 1.6 per cent more overall than January the previous year. However the success was unequal with only Tenerife and La Palma registering an increase in visitors at 2.5 per cent and 1.5 per cent respectively. There were

16.54 per cent more visitors from the Spanish peninsula to Tenerife, 0.45 per cent more Brits and 2.2 per cent more Germans.

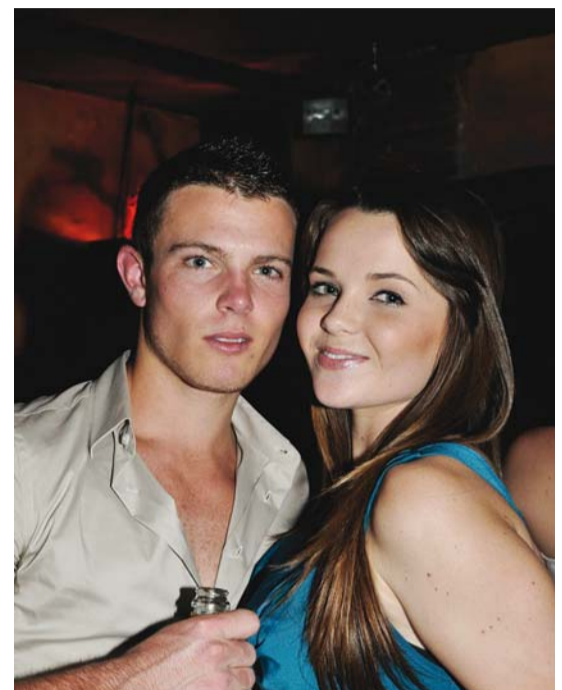
However across Spain, the German market decreased by 6.3 per cent compared with last year as 417,000 tourists arrived at Spanish ports and the British market reduced

even further with 8.1 per cent clients less at 528,306 overall. It must also be borne in mind that the comparisons are against 2009, when we lost more tourists than ever before with a drop of 10 per cent across the country, a total of 2.6 million visitors. Local tourism chiefs are cautiously optimistic.

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Traffic control

### More law

• The Canarian traffic department of the Civil Guard has just been strengthened.

Drivers, be on your best behaviour and toe the white lines with care, as 85 new officers equipped with 55 new cars and motorbikes have just been recruited to reinforce the safety on our roads.

Canaries

Happier

### Canarians "spend longer on sex"

• Canarians devote more time to sex than their counterparts in the rest of Spain, according to a study by a leading pharmaceutical firm.

At almost three hours per week, the time allocation is well above the national average of 2.3 hours and only Cantabria in the north of the country matches the Canarian findings. The survey by Pfizer was based on a sample population of 3,000 individuals aged 25 to 70 drawn from all over the country. It revealed also that people from here are happier, and give higher priority to, their sex lives than others in Spain, although 88 per cent felt that there was room for improvement.

Lanzarote

Weather

### Warmest year for decade

• Lanzarote had its warmest and driest year for a decade in 2009.

Weather data studied by the island's Cabildo show that the average year-round temperature was 21.9°C, slightly up on the previous high, which was recorded in 2008. July was the warmest month at 27°C, just ahead of August. In only four months (January to April) did the average dip below 20°C.

Despite the heavy rain that fell in December, in which half the total figure for the year was recorded, the island's rainfall was the lowest also for ten years, with no rain at all falling in May, June, July, August and November.

Lanzarote

Fake notes

### Briton arrested

• A spending spree with fake banknotes has landed a Briton in trouble on Lanzarote.

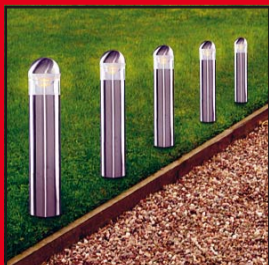
The 20-year-old was arrested after his hotel in Puerto del Carmen contacted police with its suspicions that the money he was using to pay for drinks and other services had shown up false on their detectors. A local taxi also reported receiving a €50 note from the same client. The Civil Guard in the resort found a further €750 in fake notes in the safe of his hotel room, along with £1,100 in genuine banknotes.

Police say he used the notes to buy inexpensive items in order to receive the change in legal tender.



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