



SMALL ISLAND NEWS

Lights, camera, action

By Barbara Belt

This edition there's a potpourri of news from the three small islands.

La Palma

Biggest first, we'll start with 'La Isla Bonita', La Palma, where the island's attempts to attract filmmakers has been making local news.

Location filming generally means big bucks. Ron Howard's *In the Heart of the Sea* may not have been one of his biggest hits but it generated lots of interest, excitement, employment, and over six million very welcome euros for the island of La Gomera, as a location in 2015.

La Palma Council's tourism head, Alicia Vanoostende, and representatives of the La Palma Film Commission have been busy developing and presenting what they describe as "various exclusive promotional acts" at the Spanish Screenings industry event.

The La Palma contingent's mission was to up its profile as a marvellous natural location for filmmaking and the Spanish Screenings event provided an "ideal marketplace to make contacts, exchange experiences and extend opportunities with producers and other members of both the Spanish and international film industries".

Spanish Screenings takes place within the broader context of the annual Festival de Cine de Málaga (Málaga Film Festival) and Vanoostende and the island's Film Commission



Photo: Cabildo de La Palma



Photo: Cabildo de La Palma

– a public entity dependent on the Sociedad de Promoción y Desarrollo Económico de La Palma, (SOPELAL) – were there together with La Palma film director, Mercedes Afonso. La Palma's key participation in the event occurred thanks to an agreement between the island's Film Commission and – wait for it, more long names and initials – the Federación de Productores de España, (FAPAE).

The island's role as one of the event sponsors resulted in "a lot of very welcome attention from specialist journalists and producers from all over the world".

Vanoostende and contingent offered "a cocktail of possibilities" to festival goers, explaining first hand the variety of opportunities available for a wide range of audio visual projects on the island. Over 50 professionals from the world of film attended the special information workshop session on La Palma, so hopes are high that lucrative on-location filming will result from the Málaga initiative.

La Gomera

Over to the second biggest of the three small islands: La Gomera.

year's figures, the island's tourism department is keen to augment this increase, principally by promoting the island as an ideal holiday destination for walkers and nature lovers.

La Gomera's tourism head, María Isabel Méndez, emphasised the warm reception that La Gomera received in France,

ourselves as a new destination and a chance to promote ourselves in a market where the probability of visiting the island is high. With the island's promotion at French tourism fairs, our objective is to maintain a higher incidence of tourism throughout the low season, which is from Easter until December".



Photo: Cabildo de El Hierro

↑ Tourism head Alicia Vanoostende and group representatives at the film festival

← The La Palma group in action at the Málaga Film Festival

Whilst the La Palma contingent were busy enthusing about their island in Málaga, two groups representing La Gomera were similarly busy in France and the north of Spain.

↑ Director of the *Canarian Agency of Investigation, Innovation and Information Society (ACIISI)*, Manuel Miranda

↓ Tourism head *María Isabel Méndez is happy with the rise in French tourists visiting La Gomera*

At both fairs, tour operators and potential tourists were informed about travel possibilities between France and La Gomera and the island's attractions. There was much interest in the information about the 600 kilometres of hiking paths, which are well conserved and marked.

The second La Gomera contingent was at Sevatur, a tourism fair held in the Basque Country's San Sebastián, where the island's gastronomy and natural beauty were offered as the two main attractions for potential Spanish tourists.

This difference in focus is interesting, implying that both the French and Spanish are fond of nature but whilst the French prefer to walk through it, the Spanish preference is to enjoy it whilst doing a spot of feasting.



Photo: Cabildo de La Gomera

Paris and Nantes were the scenes of the two latest French tourism fairs to feature "the natural riches of the island". With French tourism up eight per cent so far this year on last

together with the considerable benefits gained by being present at the tourism fairs: "These two meetings with professionals and tourists have been another step in consolidating

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