

## Spotting Guide - Lanzarote Airport



### Introduction

The “Guacimeta”, **Arrecife** International Airport of **Lanzarote** (ICAO code **GCRR**, IATA code **ACE**) is an airport that is witnessing continual growth, reflecting the expansion of the tourist and economic markets which in recent years have characterised the island. The excellent weather conditions which characterise the island permit airport operations to continue throughout the year from seven in the morning until midnight. The airport possesses a runway 2.400 metres long, 45 metres wide, and on a 03-21 orientation, which coinciding with the predominant wind direction, greatly assists the operations, as there is usually a mean 20 – 25 knot wind, with gusts up to 35 knots. Positioned parallel to a long sandy beach, Lanzarote airport attracts numerous spotters who arrive from all over the world to photograph, undisturbed, the various types of aircraft which visit the airport.



**Sample photographs**



*Photo 1: FINAL APPROACH TO R/W 03, MORNING, FROM THE BEACH, (PHOTOGRAPHY POINT NO.1)*



*Photo 2: FINAL APPROACH TO R/W 03, DAWN, FROM THE TERRACE OF ROOM 3028, HOTEL BEATRIZ PLAYA*



*Photo 3: FINAL APPROACH TO R/W 03, MORNING, FROM THE BEACH (PHOTOGRAPHY POINT NO.1)*



*Photo 4: TAXIING FOR R/W 03, MORNING, FROM THE BEACH (PHOTOGRAPHY POINT NO. 1)*



*Photo 5: LANDING ON R/W 03, MORNING, FROM THE BEACH (PHOTOGRAPHY POINT NO. 2)*



*Photo 6: LANDING ON R/W 03, MORNING, FROM THE BEACH (PHOTOGRAPHY POINT NO. 2)*



*Photo 7: LANDING ON R/W 03, AFTERNOON, FROM THE SPOTTERS HILL (PHOTOGRAPHY POINT NO. 3)*



*Photo 8: TAXIING FOR R/W 03, AFTERNOON, FROM THE HILL (PHOTOGRAPHY POINT NO. 3)*



*Photo 9: TAKE OFF FROM R/W 03, AFTERNOON, FROM THE HILL (PHOTOGRAPHY POINT NO. 3)*



*Photo 10: TAKE OFF FROM R/W 21, MORNING, FROM THE BEACH (PHOTOGRAPHY POINT NO. 1)*



*Photo 11: LANDING ON R/W 03, MORNING, FROM THE BEACH (PHOTOGRAPHY POINT NO. 1)*



*Photo 12: LANDING ON R/W 03, MORNING, FROM THE BEACH (PHOTOGRAPHY POINT NO. 1)*

## The traffic

Lanzarote Airport attracts mainly seasonal traffic. In the main, between April and October, all the major European charter companies operate through the airport. The peak movement days are those between Friday and Monday, the remainder of the week being the quietest, and permit the visitor to beach activities and visiting the rest of the island. There are numerous and interesting inter-island flights operated by Binter Canarias and Islas, who daily connect Lanzarote with the other islands of the Canary archipelago. Other regular flights are conducted by the Spanish national airline, Iberia, which links the island with the mainland capital, Madrid, on a daily basis. Traffic using the airport arrives from 70% of the countries of the European Union. Britain and Germany alone represent 75% of the international flights, equally distributed between charter and scheduled operations. Other international arrivals come from: Portugal, Ireland, France, Luxemburg, Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, the Czech Republic, Sweden, and Finland. The national flights represent just 25% of the traffic, and are concentrated mainly around three destinations: Gran Canaria, Madrid-Barajas and Tenerife North.

## Procedures

As the wind is almost always blowing, the airport operations are extremely standardised, and see the utilisation, in 90% of the cases, of runway 03. The position of the runway, alongside the beach at Matagorda, makes the airport unique in its genre. Thanks to the presence of a footpath which runs practically parallel to the entire length of the runway, it is possible to constantly follow airport operations without disturbance. Arrivals mainly utilise runway 03, which is characterised by the approach lighting sited in the water. Take offs are almost always from the same runway. In this case the aircraft are always visible while they follow parallel taxiway and line up on the 03 threshold.



Satellite photo showing, lower left, the Hotel Beatriz Playa. On foot, in a couple of minutes, Photography Points 1 and 2 can be reached for morning shots, while from Point 3 photography is possible all afternoon, and into the evening.

## Photographic points

The best photographic point (from the early morning light until around one in the afternoon) is from the **beach (PHOTOGRAPHIC POINT NO 1)**. Photography can be achieved from a ‘comfortable’ seat on the large mounds which are positioned along the footpath which parallels the runway. From



this position, moving if required by only a few metres, it is possible to obtain classic landing shots, or taxiing aircraft, or when they line up for take-off, thanks to numerous holes present in the fence, created by photographers, who keep them ‘operational’. The authorities are aware of their presence, but turn a blind eye. A good 80-200mm zoom is sufficient to achieve any type of shot. During my stay in Lanzarote I almost always photographed from this point. The background is marvellous: the volcanoes of Lanzarote are often topped by clouds with unusual shapes, while

the white houses stand out clearly on the various slopes, coloured brown and ochre, all free of vegetation.

Continuing along the footpath that borders the runway, for another two hundred and fifty metres, you arrive at Point 2 (after the **trellis with the anemometer**), alongside which the aircraft set their wheels down on the runway (**PHOTOGRAPHIC POINT NO 2**). Again, from this position, photography can be achieved through the gap between the fence and the barbed wire on top of it, utilising the mounds which are found all along the path. In this case a small lens is required, varying, according to the type of aircraft, between 50 and 35 mm.

If an entire morning’s photography is not enough, in the afternoon it is possible to reach, directly from the beach or via a road which leaves from the Hotel Beatriz, the ‘**Spotters Hill**’ (**PHOTOGRAPHY POINT NO 3**). From here, while sunbathing, it is possible to photograph airport traffic until evening, with light that becomes increasingly incisive until it takes on the classic pink evening glow of sunset. Given the position, elevated some 10 metres or so higher than the runway, it is also possible to achieve good results with the ocean as the background.

Utilising the usual mounds, it is possible to avoid the fence and photograph the aircraft while the taxi out for take-off. In this case the background will be the capital city, Arrecife. Being very close to the action, it is advisable in this position to utilise a short zoom, such as a 28-70 mm for taxi and take-off, while a 135 mm lens will be sufficient for the landings. I am not aware of the existence of any Photographic points useful for runway 21. Apart from the fact that this runway is rarely utilised it is next to a very busy four-lane highway running towards Arrecife



and the airport terminal building.

Another photography point, this time not numbered, is available for those lucky customers of the Hotel Beatriz Playa & Spa. From some rooms on the top floor it is possible to photograph traffic on final for 03, achieving almost level shots as the aircraft pass by at the same height as the room.



### Where to stay

There are a number of possibilities to stay in the area of the airport, all in **Matagorda**. The solution, the best in my opinion, is the four star **Hotel Beatriz Playa**, which I've stayed at in recent years. Positioned practically 50 metres from the Matagorda beach, the rooms in the eastern wing have a marvellous view of the final approach to runway 03. A gentle walk of ten minutes will take you to the end of the runway, which coincides with Photographic Point number 1. An extensive building, the hotel offers

402 rooms, luxurious internal and external gardens, two outside swimming pools, two bars, an ice-cream parlour, pizzeria, buffet restaurant, games room, numerous shops, minigolf and a fitness centre with a covered pool. Full or half board is available, with excellent breakfast, lunch and buffet dinner choices. On request, rooms can be booked on the top third floor with a view towards the airport which gives a panorama of much of the approach to runway 03. The rooms are clean and spacious, all air conditioned, with minibar, satellite TV, and telephone. The terraces are wide and comfortable, and become an excellent base for the spotter during the afternoon and into the evening, with light that improves as the day wears on.



*Hotel Beatriz Playa & Spa\*\*\*\**

*Urb. Matagorda*

*35510 Puerto del Carmen*

*Lanzarote - Islas Canarias*

*Telf: 928 51 21 66*





## **Where to eat**

Eating well at a reasonable price is not a problem in Lanzarote. There are numerous restaurants of every variety, and suiting every wallet. Certainly, alongside the typical taverna it is easy to find Chinese restaurants, mainly in the area of Puerto del Carmen. Even here, the pizza is readily available, but certainly not made in the Italian style. Personally, I did not visit many restaurants, and so I can't really recommend anywhere particular. The food in the Beatriz Playa, however, I would personally rate as excellent. Always available, alongside international dishes, are a variety of local specialities, with a wide choice of fish and meat. A good paella is not to be missed. I recommend the papas arrugadas (small potatoes boiled in salt water with their skins) accompanied by the Canary Islands mojo sauce. Also on offer is the gofio, local toasted maize flour, a red mullet soup, and followed by roast pork. The sancocho exquisite, a typical dish comprising boiled fish with potatoes. The Hotel frequently lays on evening meals on a particular theme: Canary Island evening, or Italian, Mexican, etc. Overall, you'll always find something worth eating!



## What to see

Declared by UNESCO to be a “Global Biosphere Reserve”, Lanzarote is an undoubted paradise for any seeking beaches, sun, and an unspoilt countryside. British and German tourists have been visiting for some time, and now even the Italians are beginning to follow. Even the Spanish choose the island as a holiday destination. The climate is particularly suited to all-year-round holidays; it is similar to an eternal spring, and the temperature never falls below 18-20 degrees, not even in winter. In summer it can exceed 30 degrees, but is never humid. It is obligatory to dedicate a few complete days to visiting some of the highlights of the island, and there are numerous unique scenic photo opportunities. Definitely worth a visit is the **city of Arrecife** with the **iglesia de San Ginés**, the **Castillo de San Gabriel**, and that at **San José**. Also not to be missed is the **Fondazione César**



**Manrique**, well worth a look, especially on a Sunday, when there is a local market held at the old capital **Teguise**. Meanwhile, **El Mirador del Rio** is a 479 metre peak on a rocky promontory which penetrates the sea like a knife, with views over the ocean and the neighbouring islands: an impressive place which is unforgettable. **Los Jameos del Agua**, however is the largest known lava tube in the world. More than six metres long, and 15 metres high, it pushes through the roof of an exploded volcanic bubble. Another marvel to explore is **La Cueva de los Verdes**, a grotto with two overlying galleries formed thanks to lava tubes. The shapes and colours of the lava,

labyrinths, and subterranean lagoons underline the reality that man is small and nature immense. Lovers of grasses will enjoy a visit to the **Cactus Garden**. Excellent Malvasia-based wines can be sampled by visiting some of the numerous vineyards in the zone known as **La Geria**. Here the cultivation of vines, which are grown inside depressions protected by low rock walls, make the countryside unique in the world. Other natural phenomena are the **Saline di Janubio**, and **Los Hervideros**, areas of the coast characterised by the jagged rock faces, spectacular evidence of the force of nature, formed thanks to the cooling and solidification of the lava. There is, also, the **El Golfo**, a volcanic crater eroded by the sea into the shape of a Roman amphitheatre, and characterised by an emerald green colour. Finally, but perhaps in first place in the ranking of natural wonders in Lanzarote, is the **National Park of Timanfaya**. This is a 54 square kilometre protected area comprising an inorganic and mineral world, a desolate landscape, almost lunar, covered with lava and volcanic deposits. Standing over all the area are numerous and imposing inactive volcanic cones, characterised by a variety of dark colours, ochre, reddish pink, brown and gold. A trip along the Ruta de los Vulcanos and a short ride on the back of a dromedary will be memories to savour for the rest of your life.





## Souvenirs

A wide range of locally-produced products can be purchased in Lanzarote. In the shops, or in the popular town square markets, vases, ceramics, and terracotta objects can be found. Those interested can find the famous stringed instrument, such as the Lanzarote “timple”, the peculiar sound of which accompanies Canary Island folk songs. There exists, moreover, a tradition linked to the manufacture of fabrics. The soil of Lanzarote is rich in olivina, a semi-precious green coloured



stone of varying intensity, used locally to produce excellent jewellery. Also on sale everywhere is the famous Canary Island mojo, a coloured sauce which can be red or green, according to whether it features paprika or coriander. The wing-growing area of La Geria produces an excellent Malvasia, and is the local Lanzarote D.O.C.

There are innumerable cosmetics based around aloe vera, a plant that is intensely cultivated on the island, thanks to the climate.

Every taste, therefore, can be easily satisfied!

**DIEGO BIGOLIN**

**November 2009**

Translated by Frank McMeiken

[www.diegobigolin.it](http://www.diegobigolin.it)