

# LA GOMERA ENJOY IT WITHOUT LEAVING A TRACE

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## LA GOMERA

## NATURALLY MAGICAL AND UNIQUE

The island of La Gomera is part of the Canary Islands and, although geographically it is located next to the African continent, politically it is within the European Union.

With barely 20,000 inhabitants, the island offers 370 square kilometers of charm, history and nature. Its pristine beaches, numerous trails and picturesque landscapes make it a place where the best dreams come true.

The climate on the island is an absolute gift: warm and stable. The trade winds cool and soften the island's temperatures and thanks to them the perfect humidity is maintained for the millenary forests of the Garajonay National Park. An ideal climate to disconnect, forget your routine and find new energy in its volcanic sand beaches.

Its terrain, history and landscapes will make you feel like you are in a special place. A place with its own identity, that of its people. The inhabitants of La Gomera are the inheritance of a unique mixture, from the first aboriginal settlers to the current society, with hundreds of years of memories and legends. Proof of this is the preservation of silbo gomero, a whistled language used to communicate over long distances on an island as rugged as La Gomera. Because of its uniqueness, the silbo was named Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2009.



But what really sets La Gomera apart is its incredible biodiversity and natural values. The entire island is a **Biosphere Reserve**, which is a recognition of the balance between the development of the island and the conservation of its exuberant natural environment.

The **Natura 2000 Network** of La Gomera and the **Network of Protected Natural Spaces** is very extensive and has more than 18,000 hectares where unique species and ecosystems are protected.

In the center of the island is the natural jewel of the island, Garajonay National Park, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1986. A paradise where lush laurisilva forests dating from the Tertiary period mix together, forming plant combinations as diverse as they are unique. The park, like the rest of La Gomera, can be explored on foot through an amazing network of trails that connects every corner of the island.






But nature in La Gomera can also be found beyond the trails, because the waters surrounding the island are teeming of life. Large cetaceans, dolphins, whales or pilot whales can be sighted off of our coasts on a regular basis, with up to 21 different species having been documented. The transparent waters and the temperature of the ocean generate a perfect mix to enjoy the marine mammals. From the port of Vueltas in Valle Gran Rey and, on some days, from Playa de Santiago, daily excursions can be made to see dolphins or whales. The island of La Gomera and its surrounding waters have been recognized as the first place in Europe to be named a **Whale Heritage Site**, joining places like California, South Africa or Australia.

Also on the coast you can find an authentic natural monument. **Los Órganos** is an impressive cliff of volcanic origin with the shape of gigantic pipes, as if it were a huge stone organ, that go deep into the ocean creating an amazing underwater landscape.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO READ THIS MANUAL OF GOOD PRACTICES?

The beauty and natural features of the island can be threatened by the heavy use of its limited resources. The fragility of these features means that we must make good use of them, enjoying them to the fullest, but without leaving a trace.

We created this manual of good practices to provide information about the good use of the territory and its values. Often, due to lack of knowledge, bad practices are carried out. This guide of good practices aims to offer the maximum information so that the time we spend on the island leaves only positive impressions.



WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW  
TO ENJOY LA GOMERA 100%  
AND TO ENSURE THAT YOUR VISIT  
CONTRIBUTES TO THE ISLAND'S  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

BE SAFE, YOUR LIFE IS IMPORTANT TO US

## SEVERE WEATHER ALERTS

The island of La Gomera has a warm and pleasant climate most of the year. But it is true that the island functions as a mini-continent. It has a southern zone, a northern zone and an inland zone. In a few kilometers, the temperature and environmental conditions can vary by more than 10 degrees Celsius.

Find information about the area where you are going to stay, or the area where you are going to do your activities, such as hiking, so that you can be prepared and make the most of your experience.

In addition, when doing outdoor activities such as hiking, it is very important to know if there are severe weather alerts. Mainly heat waves, gusting wind, or heavy rain can give you an unnecessary scare if you don't take them into account.

We recommend that you always check the information from the Agencia Estatal de Meteorología, [www.aemet.es](http://www.aemet.es). If there is a weather alert, make plans that does not involve danger.



## TRAILS

La Gomera has wonderful hiking trails that take you through truly spectacular scenery. But you should take the necessary precautions to avoid any problems and enjoy your excursions safely.

Hiking is not considered a risky or dangerous activity. Therefore, if you make sure to hike in the correct conditions, if there is an emergency you will not be liable for any search, rescue or salvage fees. However, any activity, dangerous or not, if carried out ignoring the signs or prohibitions, or without the appropriate clothing, could generate the obligation to pay such a fee.









Always be extremely careful when you go for a hike.

Be informed of the route, wear appropriate footwear and clothing and do not leave the trails.

Protect yourself from the sun, and be aware of peak sun hours to avoid sunstroke.



## BEACHES

The island has beaches and coves of all kinds and for all tastes. Black sand beaches that are quiet and safe like La Punta in San Sebastian, the beaches of La Puntilla and Vueltas in Valle Gran Rey, or the beach of Playa Santiago. These beaches are usually quiet, but we must not forget that we are in the Atlantic Ocean, and there are days when the waves or sea currents are very strong. For this reason we are giving you some recommendations:



Look at the sea, look at the flags on the beaches that have them . Be cautious above all since we are in the Atlantic Ocean.

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Pay attention to what the locals are doing, because, although the sea may be calm, there may also be swell and many currents that can endanger your life.

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The northern beaches (Vallehermoso, Hermigua and Agulo) are dangerous. They are very rocky on the shore, and have extremely strong currents, ([www.infoplayascanarias.es/catalogo](http://www.infoplayascanarias.es/catalogo)).

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On the coast there are places of spectacular beauty, but you should pay special attention to the signs, because they can be very dangerous.

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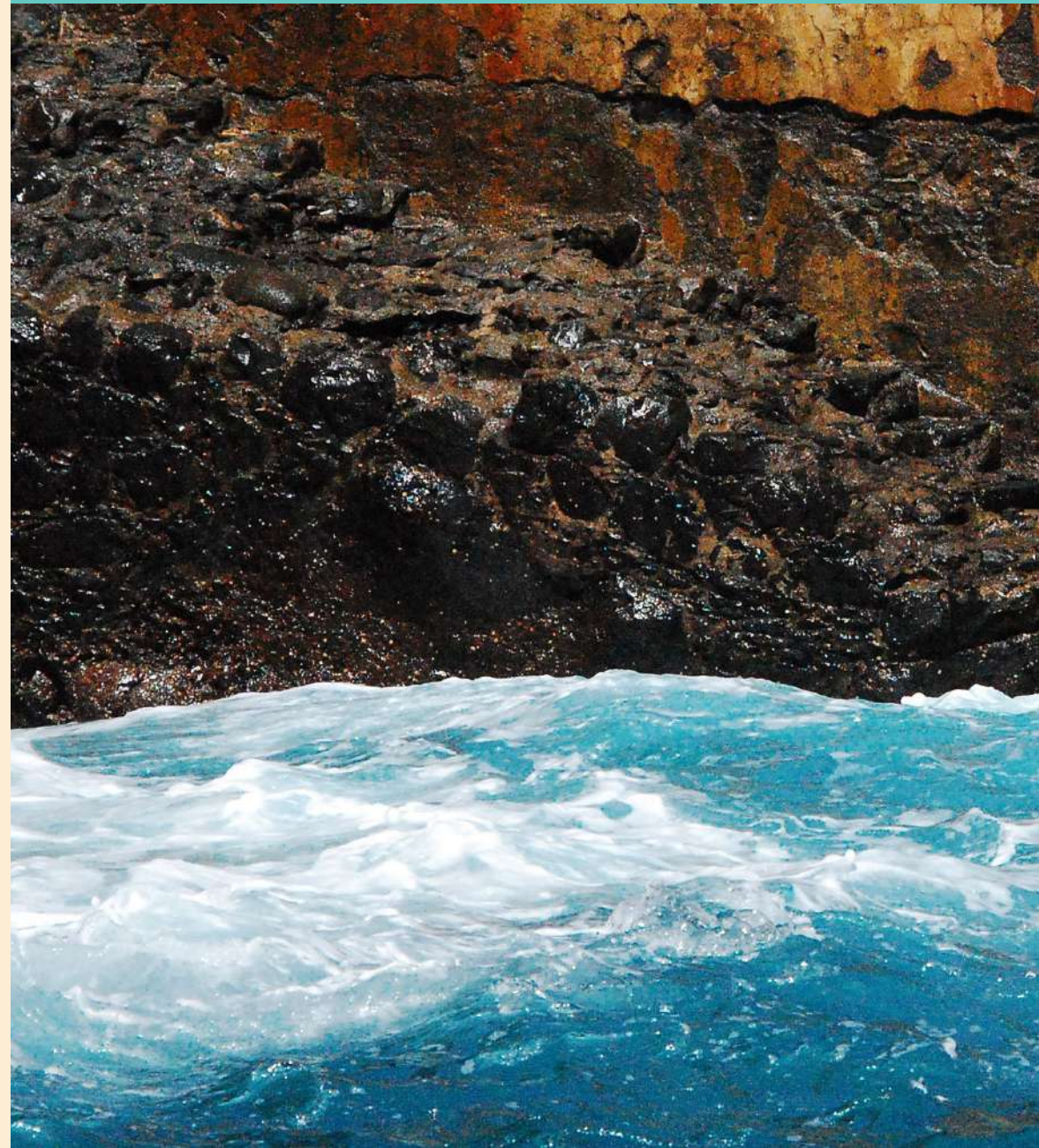
At certain times jellyfish appear in the water. You should be cautious because if you are allergic they can be dangerous. If you are not allergic, you will feel a stinging for a few minutes that will gradually diminish.

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On the coast you should avoid being at the foot of cliffs, since erosion and temperature changes can cause rocks to fall.

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Some of the beaches you can visit are located within protected natural areas and are the habitat of unique species that must be preserved. Do not damage the vegetation you find or alter the environmental conditions of these places.





## FIRE HAZARDS

Fires have become the main threat to the safety of our people and to the conservation of the natural wonders of the island.

In the great forest fire of 2012, 10% of the island and 20% of Garajonay National Park were burned. Houses, vehicles, public property and millions of plants and animals were lost... The fire affected dozens of population centers, and thousands of people had to abandon their homes. The lives of many people were in danger.



If you like to barbecue, keep in mind these rules and recommendations:

You must take into account that in the season of maximum danger (generally from June 1 to October 31), it is illegal to light fires outdoors. Neither in public places, nor in gardens or farms. Of course, smoking and throwing cigarette butts or matches on the ground is also forbidden.

Therefore, be very careful with barbecues. Only light fires in authorized areas and at authorized times.

Make sure that the area is clean of brush, pine needles, etc.

Make sure that the fire is well extinguished before leaving. Never use a barbecue if it is windy.

When traveling in the mountains and rural areas, please follow these recommendations:

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Drive on established trails and roads.

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Remember that the contact of the exhaust pipe with dry bushes could cause a fire.

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Park the vehicle in designated parking areas or, at least, in areas cleared of vegetation.

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In times of danger, it is advisable to be familiar with the terrain, connecting routes and alternative routes when entering the forest. Always try to walk in areas with visibility.

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If you go hiking, especially in the company children, try not to leave the marked routes. Hire the services of a local guide.

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Never leave garbage behind. Take it back to your lodging.

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If you detect any occurrence or activity that is generating a fire risk, report it immediately to the authorities or call **112** and report what is happening.

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Always have a cell phone at hand.

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Consume local products. Agriculture and livestock farming prevent fires. We must stop the abandonment of our rural areas.

## DRIVE SAFELY

La Gomera has very safe, high-quality roads. As a result of our mountainous terrain, they have many curves where you will discover a fascinating landscape as you are driving. For this purpose, we have a wide network of viewpoints at the roadside, where you can stop to enjoy spectacular views.

Enjoy the scenery at these viewpoints, but do not interrupt traffic to take photos or videos as this may cause accidents.

As a general recommendation, help enable traffic flow and avoid creating risky situations on the road.





## RESPECT FOR THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

La Gomera is a unique and very fragile natural setting. We have recommendations that you must take into account when discovering our island and its privileged nature.

We all must always leave nature as we find it. That means you should not collect material such as stones, plants, animals, etc.

Enjoy them in their natural environment!

Invasive non-native species are one of the main causes of biodiversity loss. These species modify the ecosystems where they are introduced, changing them, displacing native species or hybridizing with them. Therefore, NEVER release or abandon animals in the natural environment, or introduce plant species if you are not sure they are native to the island. You could endanger our biodiversity and our indigenous species.



There are actions that you must avoid when dealing with the natural environment, taking into account that most of them are prohibited and punishable by law.

You cannot occupy land within a protected natural area with campers or trailers.

You can only go rock climbing in places where it is expressly permitted.

Leaving pits or fruit peels is harmful to the local flora and ecosystem.

Never ABANDON or feed the animals that you find.

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It is important not to hike outside the marked trails and designated areas. This causes losses of some plant species and modifies the biological cycles of the fauna, leading to a rapid deterioration of the ecosystem.

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You might be surprised to hear that it is also very harmful to make piles of stones in nature. Stones in the soil are essential. Did you know that stones retain soil humidity, favor seed germination and plant rooting? Moreover, we should never modify the landscape of these unique areas.

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When travelling by bicycle and motor vehicle, please never leave the authorized trails, because it causes serious alterations to the flora, fauna and ecosystems, as well as affecting the landscape. There are specific routes for bicycles.

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Use the Recreational Areas and trails enabled for public use.

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Remember that there are NO PUBLIC areas authorized for camping.

Be responsible for your own waste. As far as possible, it is recommended to relieve yourself in places provided for this purpose, although, if it is unavoidable, remember not to leave wipes or any other element of intimate hygiene in the natural environment. Take them in a bag with the rest of the waste you have generated during the route and dispose of them in the nearest container or when you get home. Be proactive and always carry a bag to keep them in until you can dispose of them in an authorized container.

Whenever you can, recycle, reuse and recover.

Water is scarce. Always make good use of it.

Flying drones in prohibited areas causes direct harm to wildlife, especially birds.

It is very important to respect the proper placenames of our island. We must encourage the use of the real names so as not to lose the identity of these places.

## RESPECT FOR CULTURAL AND RURAL ENVIRONMENTS

Our island's unique, living culture has been passed down from generation to generation, and we still preserve it today: silbo gomero, pottery made without a potter's wheel, artisanal palm honey, or the construction of stone walls, are just a few examples. We recommend you take into account the following in order to enjoy and respect our heritage.

Take an interest in the history of our island. Visit our museums. You are sure to learn new and fascinating things.

The people of La Gomera are very hospitable, but you must respect private property. The land and the fruits of the trees also have owners.

Support legally registered companies and do not hire companies that work outside the law.

The island has well-defined regulations, not all behaviors are legal.

If you see any damage to nature or heritage (waste dumping, stone piles...), you can collaborate with us by reporting it to the authorities.





## PRESERVE THE ENVIRONMENT WHEREVER YOU ARE

You can help preserve the environment of any place you visit. Here are some tips that you can put into practice while you enjoy our island.




## BUY LOCAL PRODUCTS

1

By consuming local products you contribute to our economy and indirectly maintain our landscape. You will support those who offer those products, professionals who have opted for quality, to modernize and to offer an original product that comes from a unique land.



A still life arrangement of local products. In the foreground, a tall, elegant glass filled with white wine stands on a wooden cutting board. Next to it is a large wedge of cheese with a thick, brown rind. Several slices of bread are scattered around the cheese. To the right, a dark wooden bowl is filled with golden-brown, round pastries. In the background, a plate of gyoza (fried dumplings) is visible. Several glass jars containing various jams and preserves are also present. The scene is set on a wooden surface with a red and white striped cloth underneath. A green text box is overlaid in the upper right corner.

When eating in a restaurant, ask for the special local products of the island: our wines, cheeses, gofio, palm honey, almogrote, jams, fruits, sweets and cookies from the island, etc. You will discover quality, exclusivity and originality. ([www.alimentosdelagomera.com](http://www.alimentosdelagomera.com)).



The traditional artisanal crafts of La Gomera are another example of how those who have inhabited this island have been able to adapt to the natural surroundings, making the most of the resources. Therefore, our traditional crafts have distinctive features: earthenware, mats and basketry, textiles, wood, ristra... Buy handmade products, you get much more than a product: history, culture, heritage, know-how... Treat yourself to a local artisanal product!

([www.llevatelagomera.com/artesania/](http://www.llevatelagomera.com/artesania/)).

# 2

## MAKE GOOD USE OF WASTE

The growing production of waste resulting from human activity and the prevailing model of production and consumption is a serious social and environmental problem that has become an issue of utmost importance. Intervention, information and management policies are being directed towards this problem. On a small island, with a limited amount of land, we must make good use of waste. Here are some tips on how to promote this good use:

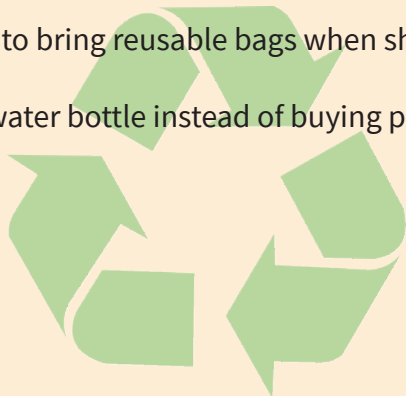
Remember to recycle your waste. In all the municipalities of the island there are recycling containers. The blue one is for paper and cardboard; the green one for glass and the yellow one for plastics and containers.

Respect the collection schedules to avoid waste remaining in the containers or on the public road for too long. If there is no schedule, you should always throw your garbage in the afternoon or evening: think that if you throw it in the morning, it will be in the container all day long, with the bad smells that this entails.

Never throw used oil down the sink. Store it in a bottle, and the owners of the accommodation will dispose of it properly.

Remember to bring reusable bags when shopping.

Use a refillable water bottle instead of buying plastic bottles.



# 3

## USE WATER RESPONSIBLY



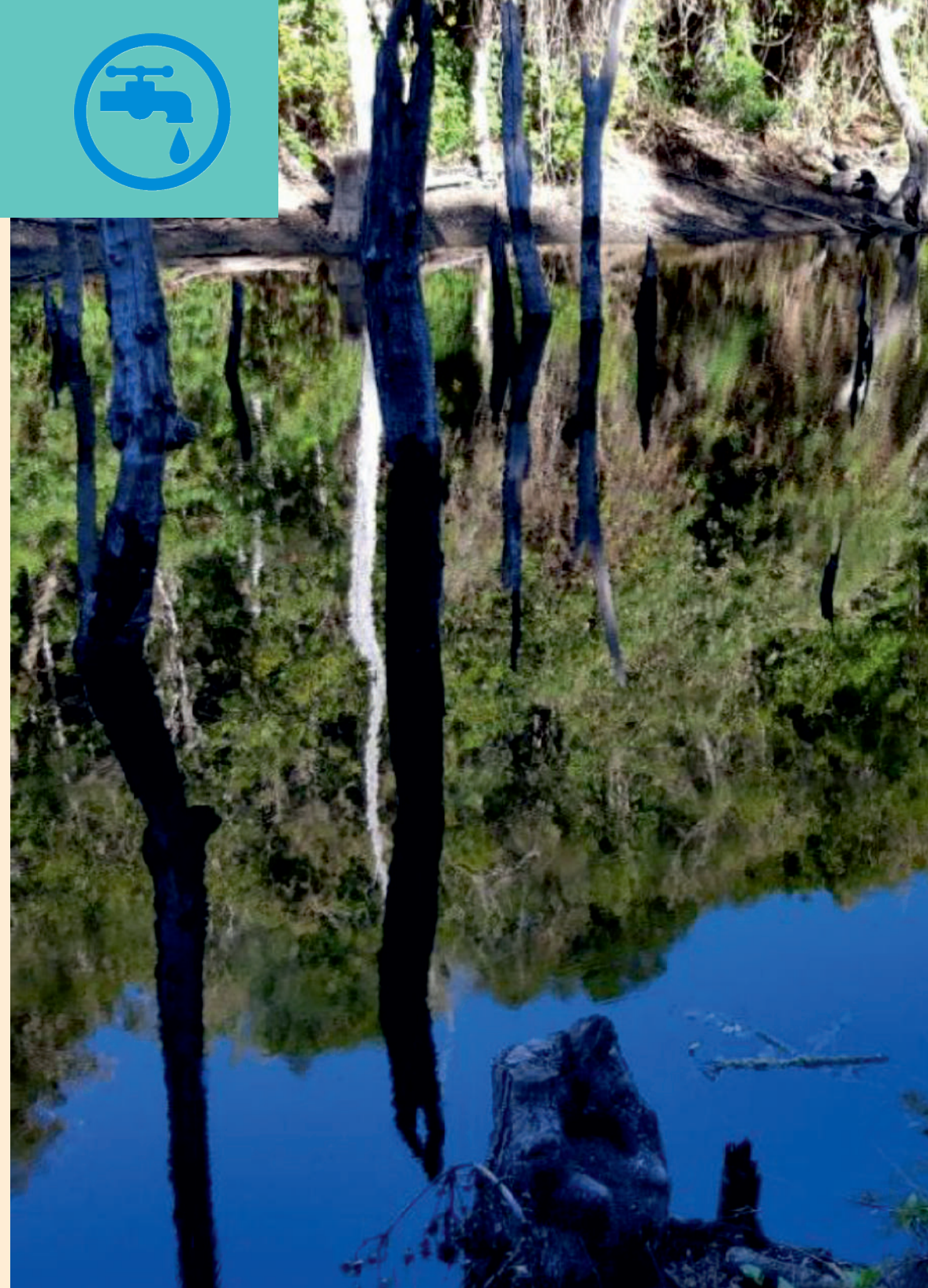
Although three quarters of the planet is covered with water, only a small fraction of it is fit for human consumption. It is currently estimated that the average daily water consumption per person is about 200 liters, including significant distribution losses. Water in La Gomera comes from dams (for agriculture), springs and wells, from where it is transported through large pipelines and then elevated to reservoirs from where it is distributed to all homes through a network of pipes. This process of producing and transporting drinking water is complex and costly. In addition, all the water we consume ultimately comes from rainwater, which means that in times of drought there is a risk of water shortages.

Although we are an island, water is a very precious commodity. We must save and conserve it. Help us with these simple tips:

On beaches where there are showers, use them only as long as necessary, and only to wash off the sand and never to shower with soap.

Take a shower instead of a bath and turn off the tap while soaping up. You will save an average of 150 liters each time.

In hotels, take advantage of the towel and use it several times before asking for a change.



# 4

## DON'T WASTE ELECTRICITY

Every time we use electricity produced by burning oil, coal or gas (fossil fuels) we emit greenhouse gases (mainly carbon dioxide, CO<sub>2</sub>). In this way we contribute to global warming, which poses a serious threat to life on the planet. For all these reasons, it is necessary to replace fossil fuels with renewable energies (use of the sun, wind, watercourses...) and to use electricity intelligently and rationally.

We can help to minimize costs with the following practices:

Whenever possible, take advantage of solar lighting, which is natural, free and non-polluting.

Turn off the lights when you leave a room.

Make maximum use of public transportation whenever possible.



# LA GOMERA ENJOY IT WITHOUT LEAVING A TRACE

EDIT: **Área de Turismo del Cabildo de La Gomera**

Sustainable Tourism Destination Plan: La Gomera, Circular Island.  
Awareness campaign on sustainable tourism.

