

## Calendar



## ▲ 27 MAY

## GIRO D'ITALIA, MILAN

This international cycling event ends in Milan, when spectators will line the streets to cheer on the pedalling pros. The second most famous cycling race after the Tour de France, the Giro is 103 years old this year, so why not raise a glass of prosecco to celebrate? [gazzetta.it](http://gazzetta.it)



## ▲ 1-9 JUNE

## FRINGE FESTIVAL PRAHA, PRAGUE

Think of a smaller, cuter Edinburgh Festival and you get the measure of the Fringe Festival Praha. With shows only about 45 to 60 minutes, you can pack in several in an evening. [praguefringe.com](http://praguefringe.com)

## 20-24 JUNE

## HOGUERAS DE SAN JUAN FESTIVAL (THE BONFIRES OF ST JOHN), ALICANTE

A Spanish tradition since 1928, the Bonfires of St John signify the beginning of summer and pay tribute to the beauty of fire. Watch hundreds of intricate papier-mâché statues set alight, with fireworks and dancing for afters. [alicanteturismo.com](http://alicanteturismo.com)



## Expatriate Games

## GRAN CANARIA

British journalist Matthew Hirtles went to Gran Canaria on holiday eight years ago – and stayed on to create a home, marry a local girl, have children and become an insider. His new book, *Going Local In Gran Canaria* (£11.99, out now), is a humorous look at island life, so who better to give *JetAway* readers the lowdown?

**So when did Gran Can start attracting tourists?** It was Christmas 1957 when the first package tourists arrived. A fully booked Scandinavian flight, departing from Stockholm, landed at Las Palmas Airport, establishing it as a charter-flight destination.

**And, er, where exactly is it?** Nearly 100km off the African coast and just over 1,000km from Cadiz, the nearest Spanish port.

**Doesn't Gran makes it sound like your Nanna's holiday home?** It's Gran as in "grand", not "granny". While it's true that the island attracts mature tourists, and is a popular place to retire, the majority of the population are aged between 15 and 45, making it the youngest region of Spain. So it suits a wide spectrum of visitors.

**Will I need tons of suncream?** There are 82 beaches on Gran Canaria. Work your way through them.

**Such as Playa del Inglés?** You've done your homework. As much a resort as a beach, it's part of San Bartolomé de Tirajana, the most visited region in all of Spain.

**How about Maspalamos?** Ah, the jewel in the crown of Gran Canaria's beaches. Its distinctive dunes were created way back in 1755 when a tidal wave hailing from Lisbon became a tsunami. Now 2,710-metres long, its golden-brown shoreline is topped up with imported sand from the Sahara.

**Any more unmissable ones?** Away from the resorts in the south, Las Canteras in the capital, Las Palmas, is one of the world's great urban beaches. Agatha Christie was one of the first tourists to visit here.

**Where should I head to if I'm travelling with kids?** The artificial southwest beaches of Amadores (pictured above), Anfi del Mar and Mogán are particularly family-friendly, as they're wave-free, unlike the rest of the island.

**Speaking of which... anything else to do?** Why not learn to surf? Gran Canaria is Europe's answer to Hawaii.

**What about beyond the bucket and spade?** The island's surprisingly verdant interior offers excellent hiking terrain with lots of well-signposted paths.

**As in the Camino de Santiago?** Yes indeed. Last year, the local tourist board renovated a centuries-old walking route between two of the island's holiest churches – located at Tunte in the centre and Gáldar in the northwest – adding a further day hike from Maspalomas to transform it into a full coast-to-coast walk. It's a great way to see the island.

*Flights from £53.99, holidays from £329*