

TENERIFE TRAVEL ADVISOR
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PREMIUM TRAVEL COMPANION

TENERIFE

CANARY ISLANDS

Spanish Language Guide for Tenerife

This is not a language lesson. You don't need to speak Spanish - just a handful of useful phrases that will make the locals smile and help you discover the real Tenerife. For premium travellers who seek the authentic experience.

Why is it worth knowing a **few** Spanish words?

In Tenerife, most locals are happy to speak English or even German - but when you make the effort to speak Spanish, something shifts. The waiter's eyes light up. The shopkeeper smiles. A conversation with a taxi driver takes on a warmth you simply can't buy.

It's not about perfect pronunciation - it's about intention: showing that **you respect the local culture**. A simple **"Buenos días"** at a café in the morning is worth more than any tip. The Spanish deeply appreciate anyone who tries to speak their language - even imperfectly. This isn't a matter of etiquette; it's a matter of human connection.

What you gain: a warmer welcome in restaurants and shops, more genuine recommendations from locals, unforgettable personal moments - and above all, the feeling that you're having a real cultural experience, not simply playing the role of a tourist.

Golden Rule: You don't need to be perfect. You just need to try. Even a mispronounced word will bring a smile to a local's face - and that's the whole point.

Greetings & Courtesy

These are the first words worth learning. In Tenerife, greetings and courtesy are not a formality - they are the cornerstone of everyday life. Use them at the beginning and end of every interaction.



Hola · Hello

Pronunciation: o-lah

A universal greeting, suitable at any time, for anyone. The most common and safest choice.

Example: You walk into a café - "¡Hola!" + a smile

Adiós · Goodbye

Pronunciation: ah-dee-oss

Used when saying farewell. Works in shops, restaurants, taxis - everywhere.

Example: After paying at a shop - "¡Adiós, gracias!"



Muchas Gracias · Thank you very much

Pronunciation: moo-chas gra-see-as

Stronger than a simple "gracias". Use it when you're particularly grateful for something.

Example: The waiter makes a special recommendation - "¡Muchas gracias!"

Useful in every situation

Por favor · Please

Pronunciation: por fah-vor - Use it before and after every request. The cornerstone of Spanish courtesy.

No hablo español · I don't speak Spanish

Pronunciation: no ah-blo es-pan-yol - If you get stuck, say this with a smile. People will immediately become more helpful.

Sí / No · Yes / No

Pronunciation: see / no - Short, clear, works in every situation. A shake of the head is enough on its own.

¿Habla inglés? · Do you speak English?

Pronunciation: ah-bla ing-les - A polite way to switch to English if needed.



At the Restaurant & Café

In Tenerife, dining is not merely eating - it is a ritual. The local bars and restaurants are defined by a warm, direct, and convivial atmosphere. Learn the key phrases so you can order with confidence and truly enjoy the local cuisine.

Arriving at your table

Tengo una reserva de mesa · I have a reservation

Pronunciation: ten-go oo-na reh-ser-va de meh-sa

Say this as soon as you arrive, if you've booked a table. The waiter will immediately look for your name on the list.

La cuenta, por favor · The bill, please

Pronunciation: la kwen-ta, por fah-vor

In Tenerife, the bill is never brought automatically - you need to ask for it. Raise your hand gently and say: "*La cuenta, por favor.*"

Con tarjeta / Con efectivo · By card / In cash

Pronunciation: kon tar-heh-ta / kon eh-fek-tee-vo

When paying, indicate how you'd like to settle the bill. Some places only accept cash.

Drinks & Ordering

The Canary Islands are famous for their local drinks - from local beer and wine grown on volcanic soil to the layered coffee that has become a morning ritual.

 **Cerveza · Beer**

Pronunciation: ser-veh-sa

The most popular drink. In Tenerife, the local beer is **Dorada** - well worth trying!

 **Vino · Wine**

Pronunciation: vee-no

The Canary Islands have their own wine regions. Ask what the local recommendation is!

 **Café · Coffee**

Pronunciation: kah-feh

In the mornings, the **barraquito** - a layered coffee with liqueur - is the finest choice.

 **Agua · Water**

Pronunciation: ah-gwa

Always ask for water with your meal. Tap water is safe to drink, although bottled water is more commonly served.

Useful food words

These words will help you navigate the menu and the breakfast buffet with ease.

Jamón · ha-mon

Ham

Queso · keh-so

Cheese

Pan · pan

Bread / roll

Leche · leh-cheh

Milk

Té · teh

Tea

Tónica · to-nee-ka

Tonic water

Sin lactosa · sin lak-to-sa

Lactose-free

Sin gluten · sin gloo-ten

Gluten-free

Shopping & Getting Around

At local markets, supermarkets, and small shops, using a few Spanish phrases instantly changes the dynamic. Getting around by taxi is also far smoother when you know how to ask.



In shops and at the market

¿Cuánto cuesta?

Pronunciation: kwan-to kwes-ta

How much is it? - One of the most frequently used questions when you want to know the price of something.

Con tarjeta / Con efectivo

Pronunciation: kon tar-heh-ta / kon eh-fek-tee-vo

By card / Cash - When paying, indicate which method you'd like to use.

¿Necesito bolsita?

Would you like a bag? - The cashier will always ask this. Simply reply: **Sí** (yes) or **No** (no).



Getting around & asking for help

¿Me llamarías un taxi, por favor?

Pronunciation: meh ya-ma-ree-as oon tak-see, por fah-vor

Could you call me a taxi, please? - Ask the hotel or restaurant staff.

¿Dónde está el baño?

Pronunciation: don-deh es-ta el ban-yo

Where is the toilet? - Useful in shopping centres, restaurants, or petrol stations.

¿Dónde está la gasolinera?

Pronunciation: don-deh es-ta la ga-so-lee-neh-ra

Where is the nearest petrol station? - An essential phrase if you're hiring a car.

¿Me darías fuego?

Pronunciation: meh da-ree-as fweh-go

Could you give me a light? - Useful for smokers who need a lighter.

Un cenicero, por favor

Pronunciation: oon seh-nee-seh-ro, por fah-vor

An ashtray, please - Ask for one on a terrace restaurant or in the smoking area of a bar.

Typical conversations

Taxi scene

"¿Me llamarías un taxi, por favor?"

- "Sí, claro. ¿Para cuándo?" - Yes, of course. For when?

- "Para ahora, por favor." - Right now, please.

In a shop

"¿Cuánto cuesta esto?" - How much is this?

- "Con tarjeta, por favor."

- "¡Gracias, adiós!"

Asking for Help & Emergencies

We hope you'll never need these - but if you do, they'll be right at hand. In Tenerife, locals are extraordinarily helpful, and the police and emergency services also speak English.

¡Ayuda!

Help! · ah-yoo-da

In any emergency. Say it loudly and clearly - those around you will react immediately.

¡Llame a una ambulancia!

Call an ambulance! · ya-meh a oo-na am-boo-lan-see-a

In a medical emergency. The **112** number is free across Europe and available in English.

No hablo español

I don't speak Spanish · no ah-blo es-pan-yol

This phrase alone will bring help - locals will immediately try to assist you in English as soon as they hear it.

112 - European Emergency Number

Free of charge, available in English

In Tenerife and throughout Spain, 112 is the universal emergency number. It can be dialled from any phone, even without credit.



Important: In Tenerife, the police (*Policía*), ambulance service (*Ambulancia*), and fire brigade (*Bomberos*) are all reachable on **112**. The call is free from any phone, and English-speaking operators are available.

Pronunciation Tips & Cultural Advice

Perfect pronunciation is not the goal - confidence is. But by following a few simple rules, you'll sound far more natural, and locals will appreciate your effort all the more.

 PRONUNCIATION BASICS FOR ENGLISH SPEAKERS

Sounds that might surprise you

Spanish pronunciation is logical and consistent - once you know the rules, you'll never be caught out. Here are the five most important things to know:

J = "h" sound

Jamón sounds like "ha-mon". The "j" is never a hard "j" - avoiding this is the most common mistake to sidestep.

LL = "y" sound

Llamar (to call) is pronounced "ya-mar". Soft, like the English "y" - easy once you know it.

Ñ = "ny" sound

España sounds like "Es-pan-ya". Similar to the "ny" sound in "canyon".

C (before e, i) = "s" sound

Cerveza sounds like "ser-veh-sa". In Spain and the Canary Islands, this is pronounced as "s", not "k".

Stress

If a word ends in a vowel, the stress falls on the second-to-last syllable. This is almost always the case - and it's one of the secrets to Spanish rhythm.

 CULTURAL TIPS

What locals truly appreciate

Language is only half the equation. Small gestures - a smile, a greeting, a patient moment - are worth more than any perfectly constructed sentence. The people of Tenerife are warm and friendly, and they always reciprocate genuine attention.

Greet when you enter

A ¡*Hola!* at the door immediately shows that you respect local customs. It's standard practice in shops, restaurants, and even lifts.

Always say *por favor*

Por favor (please) and *gracias* (thank you) are the two most useful words you can learn. You can never say them too often.

Don't rush - the pace is different here

The Spanish rhythm of life is slower, and deliberately so. Long coffees, easy conversation with the barman - these aren't wasted time, they're quality of life.

If you make a mistake, laugh about it

Locals appreciate that you're trying. Sharing a laugh over a mispronounced word often creates a better connection than a flawless sentence ever could.

  **Did you know?** In Tenerife, the afternoon siesta (*siesta*) is still a living tradition in many places. Between **14:00 and 17:00 (2 PM - 5 PM)**, smaller shops may be closed - plan accordingly, and take the opportunity to rest yourself.

Bonus Phrases & Closing Thoughts

These are the phrases that will truly set you apart. They're not strictly necessary - but use them, and in the eyes of the locals, you won't be a tourist. You'll be a traveller. And that makes all the difference.

The Traveller's Vocabulary

Six phrases that open doors.

Buenos días

Good morning · bweh-nos dee-as

Until noon. Always with a smile - the finest way to start the day.

Buenas tardes

Good afternoon · bweh-nas tar-des

From noon until 8pm. Elegant and courteous - locals genuinely appreciate it.

Buenas noches

Good evening / Good night · bweh-nas no-ches

After 8pm. Perfectly at home in a restaurant or hotel.

¡Qué bonito!

How beautiful! · keh bo-nee-to

For a view, a dish, anything lovely. Locals absolutely love hearing this.

¡Muy bien!

Very good! · mwee bee-en

Expresses satisfaction. Perfect in a restaurant or after any service.

¡Hasta luego!

See you later! · as-ta lweh-go

A warmer farewell than "adiós". It implies you'll be back - and perhaps you will.

"Language is not merely communication - it is a sign of respect and curiosity. When you speak Spanish in Tenerife, you don't enter a place as a tourist. You enter as a guest. And that changes everything."

Guide at a glance

Three figures that sum up this guide.

30+

Phrases

In this guide

112

Emergency number

Free, in English too

1

Golden Rule

Just try - that's what counts

Every great journey begins with a single word.

¡BUEN VIAJE! · SAFE TRAVELS!

LEAVE NOTHING TO CHANCE