

Wish you lived here?

Canary Islands

The Spanish archipelago is pulling in crowds of all ages with luxury villas and eco villages. Buy in from €120,000

The Canary Islands offer year-round sun, a laid-back lifestyle and volcano-shaped vistas, making it popular with “swallows”: retirement-age Brits and northern Europeans who have flocked to their shores to enjoy warm winters. But now, with Covid restrictions lifted, the islands’ appeal is widening.

Estate agents are swamped with post-lockdown demand. “For the first time in ten years we have more buyers than homes for sale. Everything is selling, including properties that sat on the market for years before the pandemic,” says Alexandra Bonnet, who runs Lanzarote Agents in the resort town of Playa Blanca. Last year there were 8,000 sales to foreign non-residents in the Canary Islands, an increase of about 50 per cent on 2020 numbers, according to the Spanish housing department. This year there is set to be a further increase.

“Properties are selling for asking price or more, which is unheard of here,” Bonnet adds. She notes that budgets have risen in the past year or so, and cash buyers are more commonplace. “There’s healthy demand for the middle bracket, about €500,000-€750,000 (£423,000-£635,000), and we’re seeing people spending up to €2 million.”

The war in Ukraine is further driving buyers to seek sanctuary in this safely detached archipelago, according to Manuel Caraballo of Viva Sotheby’s International Realty. “Since the war started we’ve seen a significant increase in demand for purchase and rental from countries that had been unusual for us — Romania, Bulgaria, Moldova,” he says.



Of the eight Canaries Tenerife receives by far the most visitors — more than five million a year pre-pandemic. About one in three property sales are to foreign buyers, according to official figures. Most buyers with low to mid-range budgets focus on the south, including the Costa Adeje, home to the resorts of Los Cristianos and Playa de las Americas. One-bedroom flats start at €120,000 and three-bedroom villas cost from about €550,000 through the estate agency Tenerife Property Shop. For those with bigger budgets there’s just one five-star resort: Abama, which offers luxury villas, and amenities including golf, tennis and Michelin-starred dining. British buyers at Abama are fewer in number since Brexit, but Germans, Swiss, French and Belgians are snapping up flats from €580,000 and off-plan Las Atalayas villas from €1.25 million.

“Many buyers work flexibly and are spending three or more months here, and coming back more than once a year,” says Abama’s sales manager José Miguel Mesa. Lanzarote has a different vibe. “It’s tranquil. All you see is mountains, sea and white houses,” says Kevin Roper, founder of Roper Properties in Puerto del Carmen, the island’s party town on the southeast coast, though he is seeing demand all over Lanzarote, especially for villas with pools costing from €500,000. However, Lanzarote’s strict planning controls mean there are few new-builds there. “There’s a lot of pressure on the Canaries to develop, but in Lanzarote we have the foot on the brake,” Bonnet says.

Lack of stock is driving buyers to consider more remote places, such as the surfing town of Famara on the northwest coast. “It has the best beach on the island,

but property here wasn’t in demand pre-pandemic. Now it is, and you can get great rental returns,” says Bonnet, who is marketing an isolated three-bedroom country house there for €380,000.

Michelle Braddock, 50, moved from Surrey to Lanzarote in 1993. With her husband, Tila, and four children she has built up an empire of eco properties that includes Finca de Arrieta, a solar and wind-powered village with 17 Mongolian yurts and cottages near La Garita beach.

“There’s a north-south divide here. If you like one, you don’t tend to like the other,” says Braddock, a definite north devotee. “The south is volcanic. It’s much more barren. The north is greener, with farms and vineyards such as La Grieta.”

One British family stayed in one of Braddock’s properties and never went home. They bought a villa on the island, run their business from there and send their daughter to the British school.

Shelley Tooke, 62, was similarly spontaneous after a stay in her holiday home in Fuerteventura, another of the



Main: this villa on Tenerife, left, is on sale for €1.25 million; abamahotelresort.com. **Above right:** a villa on Fuerteventura, available for €595,000; fuerteventurapropertyworld.com

Canaries that attracts overseas buyers. She and her husband, Richard, 49, from Leicestershire, decided to extend their stay when another UK lockdown loomed in early 2021. They then realised they could largely run their shutters and blinds company remotely, so have decamped to Lanzarote where they are building a villa in Playa Blanca.

“Fuerteventura has a more bohemian holiday feel and rustic properties. Lanzarote felt like a place we could live and work and build a much more modern villa,” Tooke says.

Roy Webber, director at Fuerteventura Property World estate agency, describes the “magnetic pull” of the island that drew him 20 years ago. “It has similar, treeless volcanic landscapes to Lanzarote but the mountains are no higher than Exmoor. You come here for the empty beaches and fresh air,” he says. Corralejo in the north is a hotspot for buyers, with apartments from €140,000, according to Webber.

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Zoe Dare Hall

Need to know

British residents can spend 90 in any 180 days in Spain or any other Schengen zone country. There are visas that allow greater flexibility, including a golden visa if you invest at least €500,000 in property, and a non-lucrative visa for those who want to live but not work in Spain — although you are taxed on your worldwide income. Spain is launching a “digital nomad” visa soon.

Location lowdown Haywards Heath

Where? Nestled in the shadow of the South Downs and only about 35 miles from London.

Tell me more Big-brand shops in the town centre include Boots, Waterstones and Co-op, and there are indie delis selling local produce.

The schools are a big draw. “The private schools, such as Ardingly College and Great Walstead School [in the nearby village of Lindfield], are great hooks for the housing market,” says Rohan Vines, the head of residential sales at the Haywards Heath branch of Savills estate agency. “Haywards Heath can feed the

appetites of first-time buyers who have roots in the area or young families looking to buy within their preferred school catchment areas.”

There are plenty of state and private schools in the RH16 and RH17 postcodes. Blackthorns Community Primary Academy is rated outstanding by Ofsted; pupils go on to Oathall Community College or Warden Park Academy, both rated good.

Any green spaces?

Wakehurst — managed by the Royal Botanic Gardens — is on the outskirts of Haywards Heath, while the National



A four-bedroom home in Cuckfield village is on sale for £1.45 million via Savills

Trust’s Standen House and the High Weald area of outstanding natural beauty are a 25-minute and an hour’s

drive away respectively. If you like posting snaps of rolling hills and striking architecture on Instagram, take the hop to Balcombe on the Brighton-London railway line. Walk the two-mile trek parallel to the Ardingly Reservoir — popular with sailing enthusiasts — to the 19th-century Ouse Valley viaduct. Made of about 11 million bricks, it overlooks the River Ouse and is popularly regarded as one of Britain’s most elegant viaducts.

Is it expensive? More so than the neighbouring town of Burgess Hill or nearby Crawley; but, for an average *

price of £612,330 (according to the property portal Zoopla), prospective buyers in Haywards Heath would be getting the best of rural and urbanised worlds.

There are plenty of pretty villages near by if you’d rather be out of town — Ardingly and Lindfield to the northeast and Cuckfield to the west — with properties ranging from one-bedroom flats to rent for £870 per month to £1.5 million period country homes to buy.

How do I get there? From Haywards Heath station it takes about 45 minutes to London Bridge, 40 minutes to

London Victoria, and 15 minutes to Brighton and Gatwick airport. There are regular “tap in and tap out” bus services to the surrounding villages.

Do move here if ... You want to live within a commutable distance of London and Gatwick airport. Or you own a spaniel and want to dust off your Ordnance Survey map.

Don’t move here if ... You want to be excited. Haywards Heath is a far cry from the artsy and bustling city of Brighton and town of Lewes. **Georgia Lambert**