



EN

ERJOS Monte del Agua

AUTOGUIDED TRAIL



PARQUE RURAL DE TENO

Take a walk around **Erjos** to learn about its history and the values that define it today. The walk follows an out-and-back, low-difficulty route. It starts in Plaza Nueva and winds its way between houses and farmland. It then climbs upwards to reach **Monte del Agua**, where both the landscape and the climate will change radically, as will your sensations. This last section runs along an accessible path. After a few more minutes, you will reach the last stop, a viewpoint overlooking Monte del Agua.

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TECHNICAL DETAILS OF THE ROUTE

○—○ **ROUTE:** Plaza Nueva de Erjos-Plaza Vieja de Erjos-Barranco de La Risa-El Lomito-Pista Monte del Agua.


 **START and FINISH:** Plaza Nueva de Erjos (Erjos).




 **APPROXIMATE DURATION:** 30 min.

 **APPROXIMATE LENGTH:** 1,3 Km.

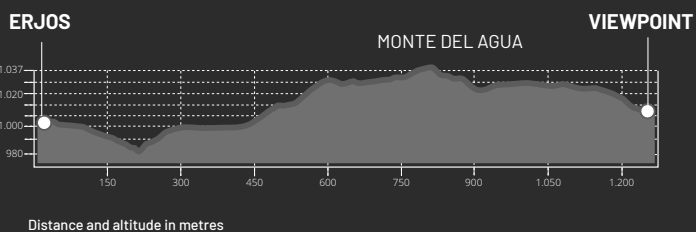
 **FEATURES:** 70 metres (net).

 **CLIMATE:** Cool and humid in the forest.

 **RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT:** Comfortable walking shoes, something warm to put on, water-proof jacket and a hat to protect you from the sun, sun screen, water and something to eat.

 **DIFFICULTY:** Low.

ROUTE PROFILE

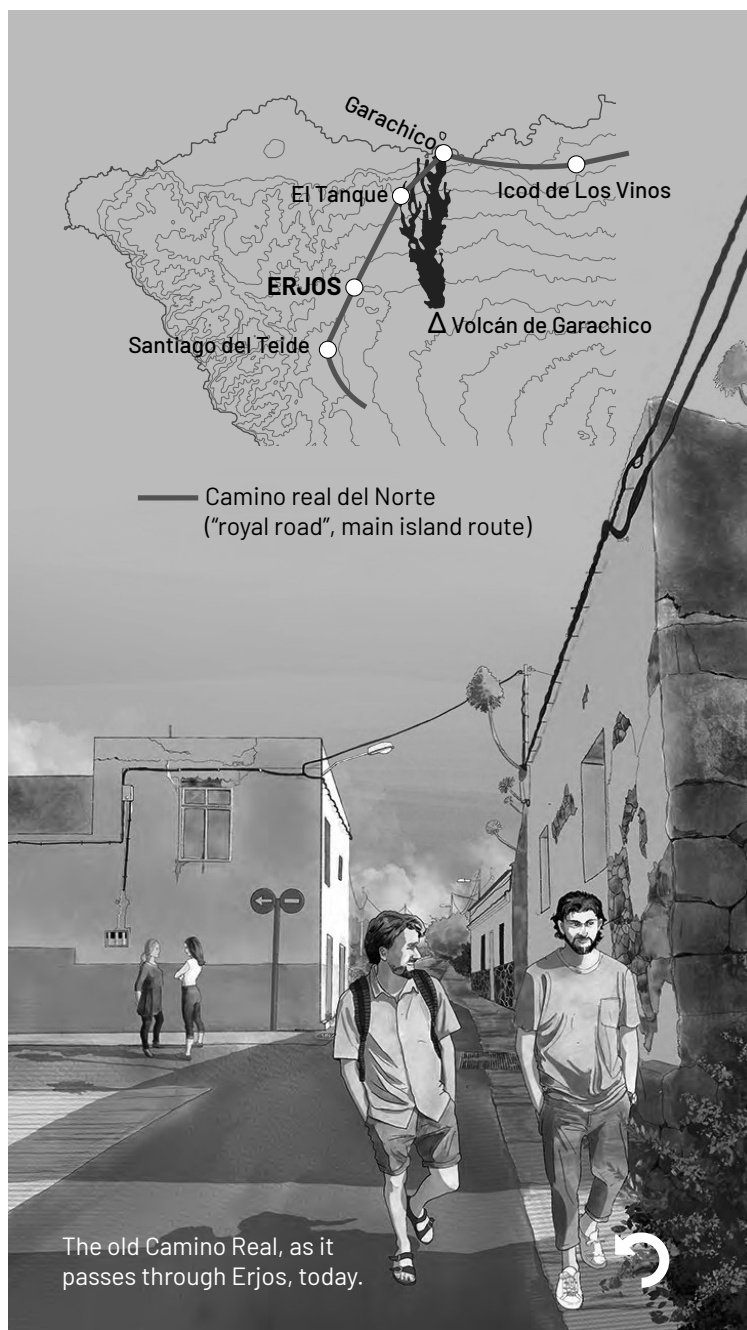


1 ERJOS, A VILLAGE SURROUNDED BY WOODLAND

There was a time when this whole area was part of a dense forest, before the arrival of human beings on the islands. The first human intervention that is known to have occurred sometime after the Spanish conquest was the building of a thoroughfare between Icod de Los Vinos and Santiago del Teide. To protect travellers, crosses and shrines were erected, such as the one that once stood on the site of the present-day church of La Sagrada Familia, which you can see here.

The origins of Erjos village date back to the beginning of the 18th century. With the eruption of the Garachico volcano (1706), much of the agricultural land in the area was lost, and new land had to be cleared at higher altitudes.

Today, most of the island's population live near the coast. But the people who decided to settle in this rural village knew that they were blessed with several advantages: good fertile land for planting, the nearby woodland to obtain wood for building and make charcoal, and abundant water sources. All this helped to shape this small village, which today is one of the gateways to the Teno Rural Park.



2 THE FOREST SEIZED THE CHANCE

On the way to Monte del Agua, you will walk through these farmlands. Before Erjos was founded, this was a densely wooded valley, with huge trees, such as til (*Ocotea foetens*) and viñatigo (*Persea indica*), growing on abundant fertile soil and supplied with plenty of water.

In the recent past, this valley was farmed to the full, supplying all agricultural products to the people of Erjos. Many years ago, all this land was ploughed up and terraced, to transform it into farmland. Even Monte del Agua, now cloaked with forest, was once also cleared for farming. But the changes that began to transform Tenerife society in the second half of the 20th century, when agriculture and livestock farming began to play a less important role in the island's economy, led to the abandonment of the lands furthest from Erjos and, years later, of the lands surrounding the village, including this valley where you now stand. Only a few plots of land are still being farmed, those closest to the houses, mainly to grow subsistence crops.

This process of change proved to be an opportunity for the laurel forest to regain its dominion.



3 THIS JOURNEY THROUGH TIME STARTED MUCH LONGER AGO

Some 60 million years ago, laurel forests were widespread in various regions of the planet (the Canary Islands did not yet exist).



Reconstruction of a laurel forest in ancient Europe

Over the years, this cloud forest has endured numerous geological events and climate changes that drove many species to extinction. In the North Atlantic, the laurel forests of early Europe disappeared due to global cooling and found refuge in the Macaronesian archipelagos.



POTENTIAL DISTRIBUTION OF ANCESTRAL LAUREL FOREST IN TEMPERATE REGIONS
- 60 million years

ERJOS-MONTE DEL AGUA | Teno Rural Park

In the Canary Islands, together with Madeira and the Azores, the warm and humid conditions, similar to the original range of the ancestral laurel forest, enabled these forests to survive, as they did in other pockets of the planet where the last remaining cloud forests of the Tertiary era survived.



CURRENT DISTRIBUTION OF LAUREL FOREST WORLDWIDE

In the Canary archipelago, this relict forest has also had its share of setbacks, such as volcanic eruptions, shrinking availability of land and the pressure it was subjected to in the not so distant past by competition from agriculture.

You are about to enter Monte del Agua, one of the last remaining refuges of laurel forest, which has reclaimed abandoned farmland.



CURRENT DISTRIBUTION OF LAUREL FOREST IN TENERIFE



Viñático
Persea indica

4 MONTE DEL AGUA LIVES UP TO ITS NAME

Laurel forests depend on humid conditions. This is why this type of forest can only grow where the sea of clouds forms, at an altitude of between 600 and 1200 metres, mainly on the northern side of the island. The trade winds, laden with moisture from their passage over the ocean, rise up the slopes and cool down. The vapour then condenses into droplets, which form the sea of clouds.

The leaves of the trees act like a net, trapping the moisture. If you walk this route on one of the frequent cloudy days, you will see a multitude of droplets falling from the leaves and drenching the ground. But the forest is generous and does not consume all the water it captures. Some of it seeps into the subsoil and flows out again in the form of springs, water that we have harnessed for our own uses. From this gift of water (agua) that the forest gives us, comes the name of Monte del Agua.

THE SOUNDTRACK OF NATURE

These areas of fields and woods have their own music. The chirping song of musicians such as canaries, finches, robins or the melodious blackbird will accompany you on this walk.



Carabus faustus cabrerai

Other sounds are more subtle and you will need to be silent to hear them: the buzzing of insects, the rustle of the wind in the treetops, the creaking of branches rubbing against each other, perhaps the rhythmic tapping of water droplets.... And with a bit of luck, the flapping of the elusive laurel and Bolle's pigeons.



Canary chaffinch
Fringilla canariensis

Si tienes buen oído, prueba a detectar cuántos sonidos
If you have a good ear, try to pick out how many different sounds you can hear. They will give you clues to the diversity of wildlife that lives here.

Share your discoveries with your companions.

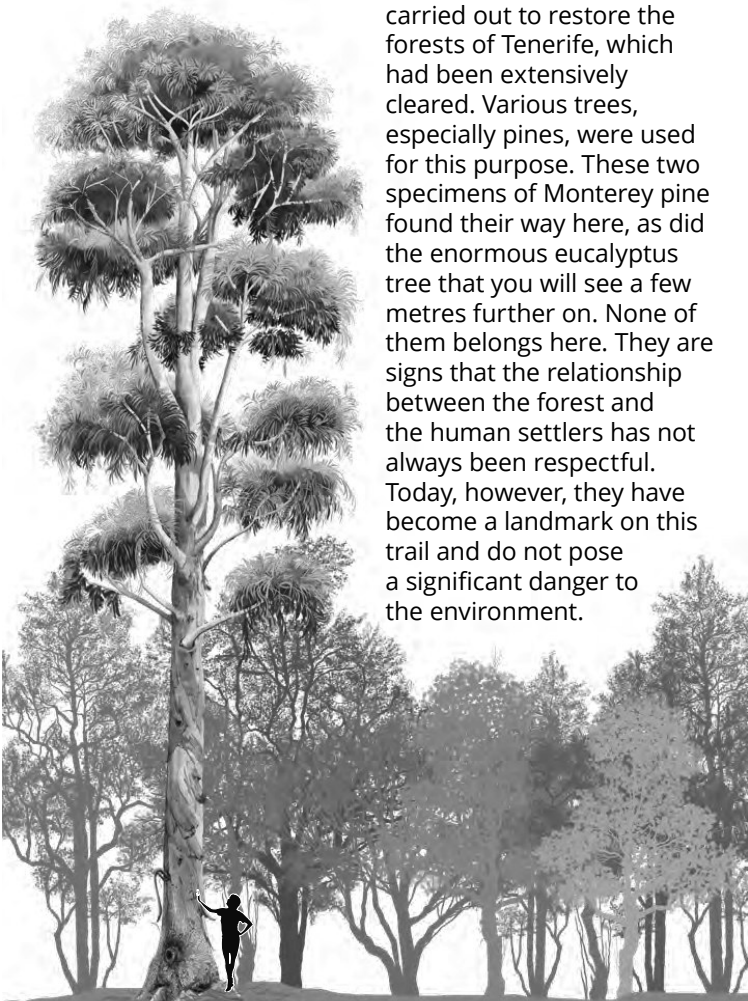


5 GIANTS FROM OTHER PLACES

At this point of the walk you can rest under two huge trees. If you look closely, you will notice that their foliage and bark clash with the “style” of the other trees that grow here. They are Monterey pines (*Pinus radiata*), a species introduced from abroad for timber, due to their fast growth.




Monterey pine
Pinus radiata



In the middle of the 20th century, campaigns were carried out to restore the forests of Tenerife, which had been extensively cleared. Various trees, especially pines, were used for this purpose. These two specimens of Monterey pine found their way here, as did the enormous eucalyptus tree that you will see a few metres further on. None of them belongs here. They are signs that the relationship between the forest and the human settlers has not always been respectful. Today, however, they have become a landmark on this trail and do not pose a significant danger to the environment.

Eucalyptus
Eucalyptus globulus

THE FOREST CANOPY BARELY LETS ANY LIGHT THROUGH



The trees of the laurel forest intertwine their branches to form a dense canopy above your head. They reach upwards for a gap that will provide them with the light they need to live.

But you are walking along a path cleared through the forest. The sun can better reach the ground here, enabling new vegetation to grow along its edges.

Your attention will be drawn to the myriad saplings – laurel (*Laurus novocanariensis*), viñatigo (*Persea indica*) and other trees – that are barely an inch high.

They can wait years for their opportunity, when a patch of light will allow them to develop into fully-grown trees.



6 A MARVEL OF NATURE

The Macaronesian laurel forest is a highly rich and complex ecosystem. It is dominated by some fifteen species such as laurel (*Laurus novocanariensis*) and similar trees such as til (*Ocotea foetens*) and viñatigo (*Persea indica*).

On the floor beneath your feet you will find a good collection of leaves. Their shapes, textures and colours will help you to understand that, although similar, each tree has its own characteristics.

The trunks and branches are covered with lichens and mosses, as are the rocks on the hillside. The collage is completed with fungi and shrubs, such as malfurada (*Hypericum grandifolium*), reina del monte (*Ixanthus viscosus*) and cresta de gallo (*Digitalis canariensis*). Their flowers, bursts of colour amidst so much green, are a magnet for a multitude of insects.



Cresta de gallo
Digitalis canariensis

THE MAIN SPECIES OF MONTE DEL AGUA

Some of the trees that grow in Monte del Agua are found only in Macaronesia, the name given to the Atlantic archipelagos of the Canary Islands, Selvagens, Azores, Madeira, and Cape Verde.



Laurel tree
Laurus novocanariensis



Tilo
Ocotea foetens



Naranjero salvaje
Ilex perado



Palo blanco
Picconia excelsa



Faya
Morella faya



7 A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THESE FORESTED SLOPES

This viewpoint, the last stop on this route, provides you with the opportunity to appreciate the contrast between the forest from the inside and the outside. It also shows you how the forest shelters you from the sun and heat, as it tends to be cooler under the forest canopy.

Just as this viewing platform offers you a different panoramic view of Monte del Agua, we hope that this walk has also provided you with new insights into its enormous ecological value.



On your visit, you can take an active part in the conservation of this area, by following a few of our recommendations:



Use the paths indicated and respect the way of life and the privacy of its inhabitants.



The less noise you make, the more life you will discover around you.



Take away all your rubbish, including biodegradable waste. That way, you will contribute to conserving the beauty of the countryside and keeping rodents under control.



Collecting plants, animals and other objects from the area could cause the loss



Red Canaria de Espacios
Naturales Protegidos



Teno
Parque Rural



Atención Ciudadana | Citizen's Advice Bureau

901 501 901

All the information on the trails
of Tenerife can be found here:

TENERIFE ON



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