

Trip report Lanzarote 24 - 31 January 2026

As was our trip to [Tenerife in 2025](#), our trip to Lanzarote was a family holiday. We decided to change our traditional winter trip to Terschelling for an island in the Canaries, since our visit to Tenerife had been such a good experience. We were well aware that Lanzarote would be different: less habitat diversity, more barren. We expected something like [Iceland](#), but without the water. However, there were some interesting birds to be found and most of the flora would be a surprise. It would be our first trip where we would not be able to find any orchids: to our knowledge, no orchids grow on Lanzarote.

To prepare ourselves we used the most recent [Crossbill guide](#) and the ever slightly dated [Gosney](#). In both books one can find the statement that birders with a family tend to stay in Playa Blanca, the touristy part of the island. We tried, but ended up not being an exception. It means that everything one needs is at hand, but one ends up driving quite a bit. At least in our case. In comparison to our trip to Tenerife, we changed the telescope for a camera, given that most seabirds wouldn't have returned to the island yet.

Saturday 24 January 2026

The morning flight from Eindhoven Airport meant getting up at 03.00, but otherwise it was easy travelling. Upon arrival we found that our accommodation was ready ahead of time, so we could check in early, get settled and have a look around.

We had a beach within walking distance, so we started our holiday there. Yellow-legged gull (*Larus michahellis*) and Eurasian collared dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) were the first species we found. Unsurprisingly. However, some more scanning soon yielded two Laughing doves (*Spilopelia senegalensis*) - still a lifer for us - , the local subspecies of Raven (*Corvus corax canariensis*) and a Sandwich tern (*Thalasseus sandvicensis*). Upon return we found Spanish sparrows (*Passer hispaniolensis*) guarding the gate.

Sunday 25 January 2026

For us one of the main attractions of Lanzarote was African houbara (*Chlamydotis undulata*), technically Canarian houbara (*C. u. fuertaventurae*). I imagined it would be somewhat difficult to find, as are all the other bustards in Spain.

Following the advice in our books we started slowly driving the plains of El Jable. Here, if the books were correct, the chance of seeing them should be close to 100%. I wasn't convinced. As always the landscape is vast, the bird small and well camouflaged. A probability of 1 doesn't exist in birding.

Indeed, the first bird we found wasn't a houbara, but a lark: Lesser short-toed lark (*Alaudala rufescens*). I was able to see it better than I saw it previously in Ballobar (Spain). While stopping and scanning for only a few hundred meters, I suddenly found a suspicious grey stick coming out of a bush. The stick soon produced a white ball and started 'running' in circles. We had found it! Canarian houbara! Only some hundred meters in! Displaying! The bird gave great views and seemed to be moving around in the same small area. We decided to take a turn in its direction from the next crossing and managed even better views from the car (29.04515, -13.59212).



African houbara (*Chlamydotis undulata*)

It took some time to leave the bird, but when we did, scanning soon produced a Great grey shrike of the local subspecies (*Lanius excubitor koenigi*). Although there would have been more to see and we planned to spend the entire day here, we unexpectedly had to return to our accommodation in order to fix a minor problem with said accommodation.

Since we still wanted to go somewhere in the afternoon, we decided to visit the Salinas de Janubio. It is advertised for shorebirds. Under normal circumstances, we may not have gone there since The Netherlands are rather rich in shorebirds and travelling to almost the other side of the world to visit specific sites to see them feels rather silly. It was however enjoyable to see the Black-winged stilts (*Himantopus himantopus*), but more so to build a dam against the raging ocean with the little guy.

Monday 26 January 2026

We were already two days on the island and hadn't paid any real attention to the flora. Somehow your eyes needed to start seeing it. Just after landing the land looks inhospitable, vast and barren, but after spending some time there more and more colour could be seen.

We decided to try and get our heads around Lanzarote's flora on Farmara cliffs and around Haría. On the way there we - obviously unintentionally - almost ran over both a Common kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus dacotiae*) and a Barbary partridge (*Alectoris barbara*) just outside Playa Blanca.

When we started - at the viewpoint close to Ermita - the funniest thing happened. Surprisingly, we could recognise quite a few species. Almost. A lot of the plants seemed to look exactly like something we knew from home, but were just off. In some cases it turned

out to actually be the same species as back home, but more often it was only in the same family...together with two or (often) more possibilities. This was going to be difficult. Like at Tenerife, without a dedicated flora we probably were going to manage poorly. So it may be, but it was beautiful. Especially the trail from Haría into the countryside (29.14374, -13.50837). We found Greenish black-tip (*Elphinstonia charlonia*) and species interesting to us like Spectacled warbler (*Curruca conspicillata*), Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*) and a very confiding pair of Great grey shrike.



Trumpeter finch (*Bucanetes githagineus*)

Tuesday 27 January 2026

One of the species we hoped to find - and consciously ignored on Tenerife - was Trumpeter finch (*Bucanetes githagineus*). I expected it to be easy given the habitats we were in, but we didn't seem to be able to run into them. We decided to visit a location where they had been seen relatively regularly according to eBird (29.04254, -13.48724).

It turned out to be a reserve for African houbara, with a farm building in it. There a flock of Trumpeter finches gave excellent views, switching the cultivated, grassy area outside the fence for the stables inside it. We saw about eight individuals.

On route to our next stop, we were greeted by two Egyptian vultures of the local subspecies (*Neophron percnopterus majorensis*) flying by. Neat, since we didn't manage any birds of prey around the Farmara cliffs. We didn't find any African houbara.



'Caralluma' (*Apteranthes burchardii*)

We stopped at the finches also because it was on route to an area where we could possibly find one of the cacti we would really like to see: 'Caralluma' (*Apteranthes burchardii*).

In the Crossbill two locations are given. At the first we found what we believed to be the right habitat, but I could only find small green sticks (29.07527, -13.46568) not at all resembling the image I had in mind. So I decided it was some other cactus and we decided to try the second location.

There we quickly found what we believed to be the right habitat again. After some searching, I again found those same green sticks. But one of them had the flower we were after! It was there (29.07174, -13.45821)! Beautiful! Such an amazing plant, growing in such an amazing habitat.

Turns out I did find them at the first location as well, but - without the flower - just didn't recognize them for what they were. Amateur hour. It just underpins how difficult it is to correctly identify the island flora without proper material, preparation and knowledge. It also shows that both arrows in the Crossbill are really very, very accurate!

The tidal pools just a little further come highly recommended!

Wednesday 28 January 2026

Visiting Timanfaya National Park is somehow obligatory. The entrance fee has gone up to €30,- per person (from €12,- in the books) and it feels like a huge tourist trap, but the scenery was well worth it. The fact that 'there is no one else out there', adds to the experience.

However, the trail to Corona Blanca was more up our street. The change from the black lava - where we actually managed *Roccella tinctoria* - to the more weathered lava supporting plant life was really excellent. We spent some time looking for lichens and flora. My heart skipped a beat when we first saw Brown bluebell (*Dipcadi serotinum*). Mainly because it struck me as an orchid at first glance, although it is exquisite in its own right.

In and around the National Park birdlife seemed virtually non-existent. But once back at our apartment, I am positive I saw a Barbary dove (*Streptopelia risoria*) amongst the many Eurasian



Roccella tinctoria

collared doves. The colour of the smallish bird struck me as odd and from what I could see, the undertail appeared all white (contra grey). But the bird didn't call and I didn't quite get the look I wanted so I didn't tick it, although I didn't see a bird quite like it during our entire stay.

Thursday 29 January 2026

Because we had to sort out our accommodation, we didn't get to explore El Jable like we had imagined. So we tried again. It appears that male African houbara hold a territory, since we found a bird at the exact same spot as a couple of days earlier! We spent quite some time searching, but only found a single other bird (29.04515, -13.59212), again displaying. A sharp contrast to the numbers mentioned in the Gosney! It may not have helped that the little guy could have imagined more fun things to do this time around.

We slowly worked our way up through the plains all the way to the beach, but failed to find any trace of Cream-coloured courser (*Cursorius cursor*) or Eurasian stone-curlew (*Burhinus oedicnemus*). It should be noted that, especially in the more sandy areas nearer the beach, we didn't dare to take our rental with the little guy in it on quite a few trails. They either were buried under drift sand or seemed to consist of (too) loose sand. We didn't want to risk getting stuck. So at least for Cream-coloured courser we likely missed the primary habitat. Funny enough the only Cream-coloured courser I have ever seen is on my Dutch list.

Friday 30 January 2026

Already our last full day on the island. We decided to go all the way up North again and make the crossing toward La Graciosa. Somehow surprisingly, it turned out to be a lot cheaper compared to Timanfaya National Park.

Given that we were too early for most if not all seabirds, we found none during the crossing. Apart from Yellow-legged gull. On the island itself we took the shorter, 7,5 kilometre walk, the little guy travelling in his child carrier. It is a beautiful place, really, where we got to experience every habitat available on Lanzarote. Or so it felt.

We again got very good views of two Egyptian vultures. They were mobbed by a Barbary falcon (*Falco peregrinus pelegrinoides*), which had eluded us so far. Although there should be African houbara, Cream-coloured courser and Stone curlew around, we failed to see all of them. There were, on the other hand, plenty of Great grey shrikes around. We ended our stay at La Gomera at the beach, collecting shells and watching crabs (*Grapsus adscensionis*) with the little guy.



Yellow cistanche (*Cistanche phelypaea*)

On our way up I noticed large yellow flowers by the side of the road (29.20419, -13.42453). They resembled something we had seen in our books. When we investigated on our way down, it turned out to be Yellow cistanche (*Cistanche phelypaea*). And quite a few of them.

It somehow holds great beauty, such a lavishly flowering, large yellow plant in an otherwise quite empty, sea-battered, barren, sandy landscape!

Saturday 31 January 2026

Since our flight was at 11.00, there was no time for any last visits and the day was spent travelling home.

Closing remarks

In the time available we managed 3 out of 4 available lifers when it comes to birds (Laughing dove, African houbara and Trumpeter finch). Identifying flora was a real challenge again, but we managed at least to our satisfaction with 'Caralluma' and Yellow cistanche sharing top spot. As far as butterflies go, we found that the number of species we found was a bit lower than we expected. We were likely early in the season. In all the contrast with Tenerife when it comes to biodiversity was stark, but Lanzarote has a rugged beauty all its own.

A full list of the observations can be found [here](#) (when needed further details are provided in the text. We usually only logged each (sub)species ones, at first occurrence).



Berthelot's pipit (*Anthus berthelotii*) is ever present and usually quite tame.