



## The paths to the hills

Traditional paths were a crucial part of daily life until relatively recently. The Mill Path, for example, was used for centuries by people and animals travelling every day to and from the mill (n° 6).

When paths were used as extensively as this one, or when they were very steep, they were paved in stone to allow animals to use them and to prevent deterioration. Thanks to such maintenance, many still survive today and give us the opportunity for direct contact with Tenerife's natural environment.



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## The power of water

The old Las Vegas water mill is one of the best-loved constructions among the residents of the hamlet and the town generally, perhaps because for centuries it provided basic foodstuffs for the population at low cost.

This type of mill did not require blades because it was driven by water, not the wind. For this reason it was built on a strategic spot where the fast-flowing water was enough to power the mill's working parts, which were connected to the millstones that ground the cereal, turning it into flour.



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## Wrinkles carved by water

Barranco Seco is just one of the many water courses that scar the surface of the land in south Tenerife. It was formed over a period of hundreds of thousands of years by running water. The frequent spells of torrential rain during that particular geological era have left their definitive mark on the island's present-day relief.

Today less rain falls and only a few ravines now carry water, albeit during certain seasons only. One example is Barranco del Río, which runs next to Barranco Seco.



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## The forest returns home

Until a few decades ago a large proportion of the hillsides encountered along this walk were used to grow crops or were deserted, generally because land was more valuable when used for farming and trees were more valuable when they were chopped down. Timber was indispensable for day-to-day life. It was needed for heating, lighting, building, making furniture, etc. Today we have many more resources available than previously and priority can therefore be given to the forest's ecological and landscape functions. Over time, the pine forest has regained its place in the hills around Granadilla.



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## Living "in" the land

In the old days, many people in south Tenerife inhabited caves excavated in the hillsides made of "tosca", a very workable and light yet highly resistant rock. The cave dwellings are not just a cheaper alternative to having to build walls and a roof but are also cooler in summer and warmer in winter.

For this reason, in addition to being used as dwellings, many caves have been used as wine cellars, animal shelters or to store harvested crops. Some are still used today for these purposes.



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## The south's circulatory system

A number of water-related constructions can be seen along the walk. Canals are the most abundant infrastructure and range from small drainage pipes, some of which are carved into the stone, to the South Canal, which is the main artery of the water system.

These canals carry the water to the tanks, mills, reservoirs and old washing places... The presence of the network reflects the ingenious ways in which people in the south have tapped available water resources as fully as possible.



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## A small church with a peculiar bell tower

The small church of Our Lady of Hope, which dates back to the early 16th century, was one of the first to be built in south Tenerife following the Conquest of the island. Its most peculiar feature is its bell tower, a twisted Canarian pine tree which stands next to it.

The feast day of the church's patron falls in December but the weather there is usually not good enough to take the statue out to the square. For this reason, the big day is held on 26 July, which is St Anne's Day. The main event of the celebrations is the traditional Stick Dance, which is unique in the Canaries.



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## Objective: self-sufficiency

Living in the south of Tenerife has been far from easy throughout history. The climate, which is much harsher than elsewhere on the island, has been the most formidable obstacle, along with the fact that communications routes were limited to paths like the one followed by this walk. In order to survive ways had to be found to make fullest use of anything found close to home. This explains why the landscape is dotted with caves, cultivation plots, canals, or this kiln, which was used to bake figs and prickly pears. While they could be eaten fresh in summer only, once they were dried they could be stored to last all year.



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## A sheet to cover crops

Agricultural land in south Tenerife is covered with a sheet-like layer of jable volcanic ash, which is the most abundant volcanic material in these parts and originated during the highly explosive eruptions that occurred in the centre of the island.

This light-coloured and porous volcanic rock is crushed to tiny fragments and spread over the plots. The covering protects the soil from the sun, ensuring that it retains its moisture for longer.



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## Legend

- SL-TF 242 LAS VEGAS PATH
- FOREST ROAD
- RAVINE
- BUILDINGS
- ROAD
- RESTAURANT
- ACCOMMODATION
- TOWN WITH HISTORIC INTEREST

