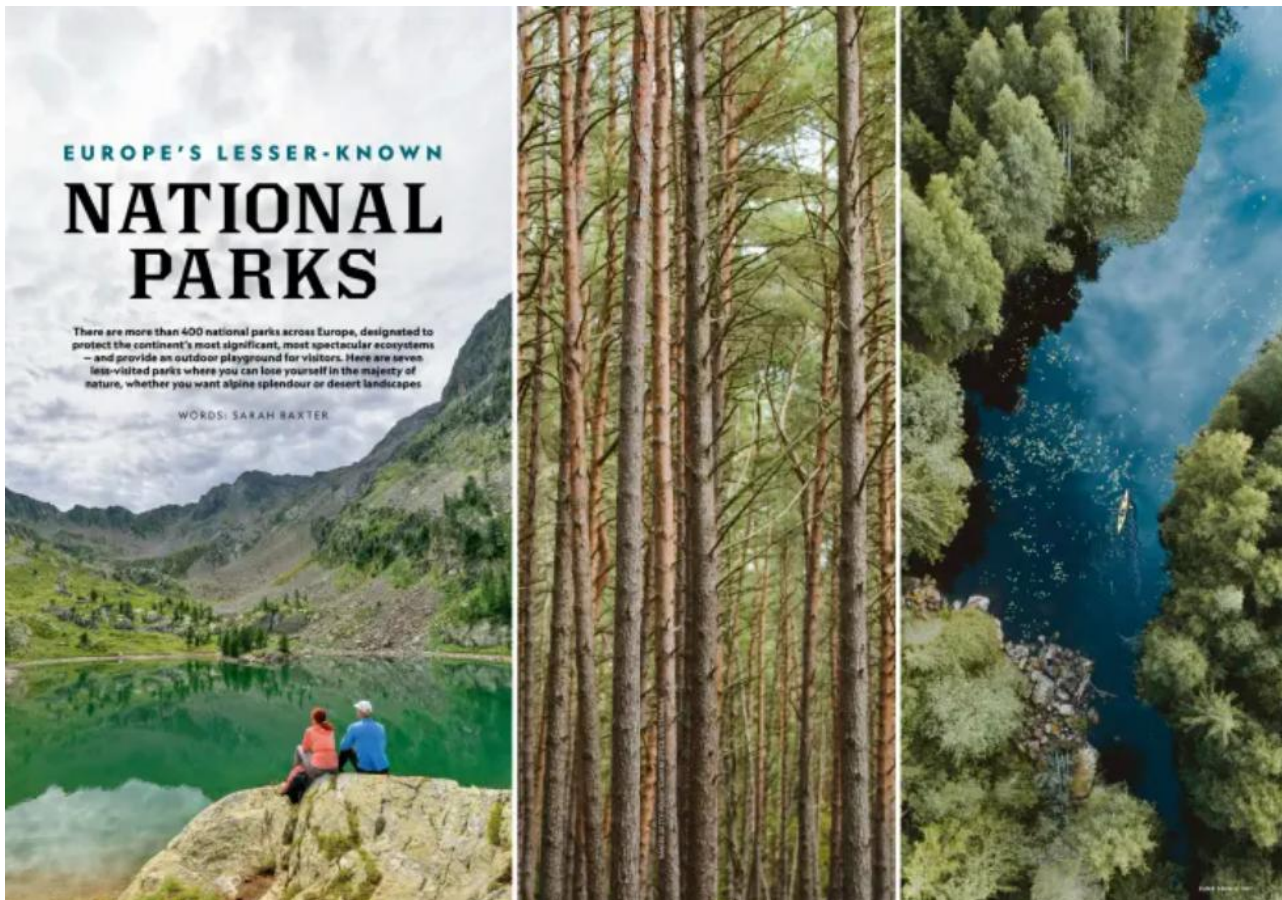




7

GARAJONAY NATIONAL PARK

LOCATION: **SPAIN**

BEST FOR: **PREHISTORIC ATMOSPHERE**

SIZE: **155Q MILES**

All of rugged little La Gomera is a Unesco Biosphere Reserve, but Garajonay is the jewel in the crown of this less-visited Canary island. It's both a national park and a World Heritage Site, a place of deep ravines, volcanic plugs and precipitous cliffs. It's particularly prized for its laurel forests, living remnants of the warm temperate forests that cloaked much of Europe and North Africa during the Tertiary period. To enter this mossy, mist-swirled park is to step back two million years. It's incredibly biodiverse, too, rich in endemic species including the La Gomera giant lizard.

For an introduction, head to the Juego de Bolas visitor centre, which has information on self-guided trails. Try the Gran Circular Pajarito, a challenging but magnificent 10-mile loop, or make the hike up 1,487-metre Alto de Garajonay. Go by day for views over to Mount Teide on Tenerife; go by night to appreciate the stars in the island's dark skies.

lagomera.travel □