

Butterflies of Tenerife

Mariposa Nature Tours trip report

24th – 30th March 2026

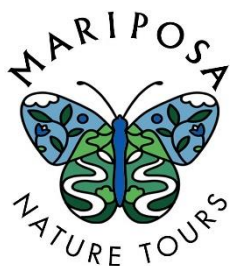


Tour leaders David Moore & Dave Fairhurst

Trip report by David Moore

(Images, clockwise from top left: African Migrant © Jenny; Canary Red Admiral © Dave W;

Tenerife Green-striped White © Neil; African Grass Blue © John)



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Trip Report – Butterflies of Tenerife, 24th to 30th March 2026

Guides: David Moore and Dave Fairhurst

Introduction

This early season tour to Tenerife is designed to take in some of the butterfly species that are either endemic to the Macaronesian Islands or are seldom seen elsewhere in Europe.

The base for the week was in the northern coastal town of Puerto de la Cruz.

Joining us for the tour were Jenny, Harry, Don, Kellee, Neil & Jan, Don, Dave W, and John.

What follows is a daily diary for the week, followed by gallery and species lists.

Day 1, 24th March

Arrivals day was largely trouble-free, with just one of the guests delayed by a couple of hours. The earlier group decamped to Playa San Juan, where in spite of the cloudy conditions, a couple of African Migrant *Catopsilla florella* were seen flying around the cassia plants growing at the roundabout.



Canary Speckled Wood © Harry

The two groups then met up with each other at the cemetery in Santiago del Teide. Once again, it was rather cloudy and hardly any butterflies were seen, although a handful of Canary Speckled Wood *Pararge xiphioides* were active in spite of the gloomy conditions.

Thereafter, the group headed to the very comfortable four-star hotel that would be our home for the coming days, settling in at the bar before enjoying a fabulous buffet meal, a tradition that would be kept throughout the week.

Day 2, 25th March

Today's weather forecast was not great – largely cloudy and with a little rain to be expected. We therefore decided to take the option with the least inherent risk, i.e. back to Playa San Juan on the western coast which is outside the northern rain shadow of the island and which was, as expected, bright and sunny upon our arrival there.



African Migrant (female) © John

This paid dividends as the group were treated to an excellent display by at least half a dozen African Migrant, several of which obliged the photographers by landing on the lantana in the surrounding gardens to have their images taken when briefly at rest.



African Migrant (male) © John

One female joined the party allowing everyone to see the sexual dimorphism in this species, which is a role-reversal of that seen in Brimstones; the females being pale yellow, and the males a creamy white.

After leaving Playa San Juan, it was only a 20 minute drive to the cemetery in Santiago del Teide, where once again the sun was regularly

behind clouds, making it difficult to find many butterflies on the wing. A handful got lucky with a Canary Blue *Cyclotrius webbianus* that briefly nectared from a low-growing flower, but otherwise there was little around, with Small Copper *Lycaena phlaeas* and Canary Red Admiral *Vanessa vulcania* joining the Clouded Yellow *Colias crocea* which was cavorting close to where the vehicles had been parked.

A stop at Barranco de Ruiz in yet more cloud did little to enthuse the butterflyers, but the endemic White-tailed Laurel Pigeon were flying there, and a handful of Canary Speckled Wood were still active in the gloom, along with a Bath White *Pontia daplidice* photographed by Kellee.



Bath White © Neil

Day 3, 26th March



Monarch © Neil

With Puerto de la Cruz and its environs rather overcast again this morning, the group headed to the north-east coast to the palmetum at Santa Cruz to begin the day.

Conditions here were warm and sunny, meaning the Monarch *Danaus plexippus* were active around the section where the asclepias are cultivated. On the other side of the water feature, there was a surprise Canary Blue sighted,

along with African Grass Blue *Zizeeria knysna* and a Lang's Short-tailed Blue *Leptotes pirithous*.

From this elevated vantage point, the panoramic vista showed that Parque de las Mesas was in full sunshine, so the group headed there after leaving the palmetum.

It was quite breezy in the car park, but down on the slope the hillside gave some protective cover and quite a few butterflies were on the wing, chief amongst them being a very fresh and



Canary Red Admiral © Dave W

fabulously behaved Canary Red Admiral, which decided to remain on its perch for a good 15 minutes, allowing everyone to get a close look.



Other species here were both Small and Bath White, Clouded Yellow, Small Copper, Canary Speckled Wood, Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*, and Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*. There was even a surprise appearance from a Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina*, spotted by Jenny.

The group then moved on to a site nearby visited during our Orchids of Tenerife tour here in late January. The main reason was that there was a rocky area frequented by lizards and skinks, both of which were seen well, perhaps unsurprisingly since there was ample food on offer for them.

The wind was quite strong and sunshine in relatively short supply, but there were still Canary Red Admiral, Canary Speckled Wood, and a regular Red Admiral about, although there was no sign of Canary Brimstone *Gonepteryx cleobule* which had been seen here in double-figure numbers during the orchid tour earlier in the year.



Day 4, 27th March

With cloud largely in charge again this morning, it was decided to head out near the coast to Tacoronte first thing. Given the hefty rainfall totals prior to the tour, the ruderal field was neck-high with brassicas and thistles, and when the sun popped out for a few minutes, a Painted Lady was seen nectaring from one of the thistle flowers. Small White and Canary Speckled Wood were on the wing too, whilst a Canary Red Admiral briefly appeared before the group decided to cut their losses and moved on, with seemingly every dog in the neighbourhood barking their farewells.

The next stop was at the Marquesado de la Quinta Roja Gardens in La Orotava, a well-tended botanic garden with excellent views to the northern coast.



Unfortunately, the section where the asclepias had previously flourished was undergoing renovation, and the lack of Geranium Bronze *Cacyreus marshalli* suggested that the many pelargoniums had been sprayed with insecticide.

A few butterflies were active; both Red Admiral and Canary Red Admiral as well as a Painted Lady, but the cloudy conditions weren't

conducive to butterfly-hunting, so the decision was made to take lunch higher up the road en route to the Teide plateau at the Zona Recreativa de La Caldera.

Although misty, preventing any potential butterflies, Canary Chaffinch and Tenerife Goldcrest kept the group entertained on the car park wall, with a brief visit from a Tenerife Blue Chaffinch raising the spirits still further.

At that point, David M thought he'd take a look at the online webcam for Mt Teide. The bulk of the surrounding terrain is at an elevation in excess of 2,000m and sure enough, the idea that this altitude might actually be above the cloud cover proved correct, as the live webcam showed a snow-clad caldera with a backdrop of clear blue sky.



As the vehicles drove higher, the clouds slowly diminished until a beautiful, clear blue sky emerged. The intention was to head to the Parador de Las Cañadas del Teide, where decent numbers of the endemic Tenerife Green-striped White *Euchloe eversi* had been seen the previous year.



With the temperature a healthy 16°C, the group stepped out at the parador but there wasn't a butterfly to be seen. There had been ice along the roadside as the vehicles travelled up so the concern was that the freak storm the previous week might have killed off the butterfly populations at this rarefied altitude.

Suddenly though, Dave F waved his arms. A solitary Tenerife Green-striped White had been seen flying in the shelter of the parador's wall and thankfully it remained here long enough for everybody to get reasonably close to this normally very skittish butterfly species.

The commotion roused the interest of plenty of other tourists, who were initially perplexed as to why ten people were crowding around a seemingly insignificant small, white butterfly.

Once the encounter was over, the group decamped to the Papillon café on the way back down towards La Orotava, enjoying drinks whilst the odd Atlantic Canary and Tenerife Blue Chaffinch provided entertainment.

There was still time for another brief stop at the same place where lunch had been taken. This time, Dave F led everybody along a different track where several examples of the Canary Island endemic





orchid *Orchis canariensis* were to be found in flower, safe from grazing pressure on the inaccessible overhangs of the sharp, rocky drops.

What had started out as a rather frustrating day had turned out, in the end and thanks to the group's diligence and patience, to be wonderfully serendipitously rewarded.

Day 5, 28th March

The forecast was much more promising for today, but clearly the weather had paid no attention to it, as low cloud once again interfered with the morning site visit to Charca de Erjos.

It was cool and misty upon arrival at the entrance to the track, and Dave F decided to head uphill to see if his group could find a few of the more desirable birds at this location, duly finding the likes of Bolle's Pigeon and Tenerife Robin.

The others made their way tentatively along the lower track, which was quite damp in places as a result of accumulated rainfall over the past couple of weeks. The sun did make the occasional brief appearance, but David M found that the copious thistles were still some way off flowering and given conditions were not improving, it was decided to travel south over the col and stop at a new site where there was a grassy barranco, a place where one of David M's European Butterfly Group colleagues had recorded Canary Skipper *Thymelicus christi* the year before. No such luck this time, in spite of a thorough search, with the opinion being that this species had simply not emerged yet given the cold and wet conditions earlier in the month.



The nearby cemetery was again used as a lunchtime stop, but in spite of the generally sunny weather, not many butterflies were on the wing, although Canary Blue was briefly seen again.



It was then time to return to Barranco de Ruiz, where the sun was ever so close to the blue sky located over the ocean, but sadly the cloud never shifted, although this did not deter the Canary Speckled Wood on the terracing, nor the pair of Barbary Falcon spotted by Dave F on the cliff faces.

Day 6, 29th March

With clear blue skies whilst at the supermarket first thing, it looked a decent bet that today might see an uninterrupted day of butterflying, with Teno Alto on the agenda for the morning. As the group travelled west, cloud bubbled up but David M decided to make the most of what sunshine was left by stopping at a verdant little spot on the narrow road leading up the mountain.

This was a good location for Canary Speckled Wood with double figure numbers seen, along with a few Small White and at least one Canary Red Admiral.

Unfortunately, having ascended the rest of the way to Teno Alto, the mist thickened and consequently not much time was spent there as it was rather cool and quite windy.

En route back to Puerto de la Cruz, the coastal strip was seemingly the only place that was not overcast, so the bulk of the group headed down to the local barranco, managing to get the final place in the rather scruffy car park.



This turned out to be rather more productive than anticipated. What is essentially an area of waste ground had quite a few butterflies active within it, including the week's only Geranium Bronze, alongside Monarch, Lang's Short-tailed Blue, African Grass Blue, Bath White, Clouded Yellow, and heaps of Small White.

There were also some sizeable Western Canary Lizards basking amongst the rocks, much to the delight of Don who has a soft spot for these reptiles.

At the final checklist meeting of the week, a total of 17 different butterfly species had been recorded.

Day 7, 30th March

Dave F left around 09:00 to take the earlier departing guests back to Reina Sofia airport. David M's group left an hour later, and everyone was able to check-in in good time for their flights.

Footnote and acknowledgements

The lead up to this tour was marked by severe storms on the back of an unusually wet Canarian winter. Whilst the weather had improved for the tour itself, it was nonetheless quite challenging with regularly overcast skies making finding butterflies more difficult than usual.



Atlantic Canary © Jenny

In spite of this, there were successful moments, such as the ascent to the Mt Teide plateau, the fabulous first morning with multiple African Migrant, and the regular sightings of Canary Red Admiral.

It was not a surprise not to find Canary Large White *Pieris cheiranthi* as this butterfly is now feared to possibly be extirpated in Tenerife. However, the absence of Canary Brimstone **was** a surprise, given that it has been frequently seen on previous trips here. It is possible that the storms in the week leading up to the tour had affected the populations.

This tour is not an especially easy one, given the early time in the year it takes place and it is always dependent on weather conditions being conducive to butterfly-watching. Mariposa would therefore like to thank all the guests who joined us for the week, with everybody contributing positively.

Most of the target species were seen, along with some desirable birds and other wildlife, and it served as a welcome break from the tail end of winter in the UK.

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BUTTERFLIES OF TENERIFE 24 - 30 March 2026							
Species name	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Butterflies							
Canary Skipper <i>Thymelicus christi</i>							
Southern Brown Argus <i>Aricia cramera</i>							
Geranium Bronze <i>Cacyreus marshalli</i>						✓	
Lang's Short-tailed Blue <i>Leptotes pirithous</i>			✓			✓	
Long-tailed Blue <i>Lampides boeticus</i>						✓	
Canary Blue <i>Cyclurius webbianus</i>		✓	✓		✓		
African Grass Blue <i>Zizeeria knysna</i>		✓	✓			✓	
Small Copper <i>Lycaena phlaeas</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Monarch <i>Danaus plexippus</i>		✓	✓	✓		✓	
Plain Tiger <i>Danaus chrysippus</i>							
Canary Speckled Wood <i>Pararge xiphinoides</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Red Admiral <i>Vanessa atalanta</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Canary Red Admiral <i>Vanessa vulcania</i>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Painted Lady <i>Vanessa cardui</i>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
American Painted Lady <i>Vanessa virginiensis</i>							
African Migrant <i>Catospilla florella</i>	✓	✓					
Clouded Yellow <i>Colias crocea</i>		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Tenerife Green-striped White <i>Euchloe eversi</i>				✓			
Canary Brimstone <i>Gonepteryx cleobule</i>							
Canary Large White <i>Pieris cheiranthi</i>							
Small White <i>Pieris rapae</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Bath White <i>Pontia daplidice</i>		✓	✓			✓	
Meadow Brown <i>Maniola jurtina</i>			✓				
Additional species recorded during the week							
Western Canary Lizard <i>Gallotia galloti</i>							
West Canary Skink <i>Chalcides viridanus</i>							
Blue Emperor <i>Anax imperator</i>							
Epulet Skimmer <i>Orthetrum chrysostigma</i>							
Red-veined Darter <i>Sympetrum fronscolombii</i>							
Broad Scarlet <i>Crocothemis erythraea</i>							
Red-veined Dropwing <i>Trithemis arteriosa</i>							
Common (Canary) Buzzard							
Common (Canary) Kestrel							
Barbary Falcon							
Sparrowhawk							
White-tailed Laurel Pigeon							
Bolle's Pigeon							
Ring-necked Parakeet							
Monk Parakeet							
Hoopoe							
Tenerife Robin							
Plain Swift							

Canary Chiffchaff							
Sardinian Warbler							
Berthelot's Pipit							
Raven							
Grey Wagtail							
Atlantic Canary							
Tenerife Blue Chaffinch							
Canary Chaffinch							
Blackbird (Canary Blackbird)							
Tenerife Blue Tit							
Blackcap							
Turtle Dove							
Quail (heard only)							
Barbary Partridge							
Tenerife Goldcrest							
Spanish Sparrow							

Galleries

All images that follow were kindly shared by tour participants



Images © John



Images © Jenny



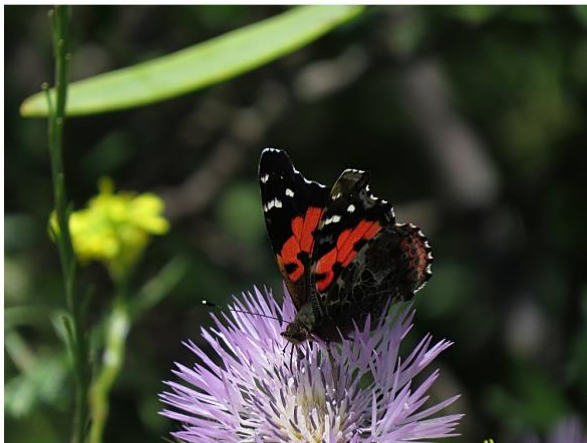
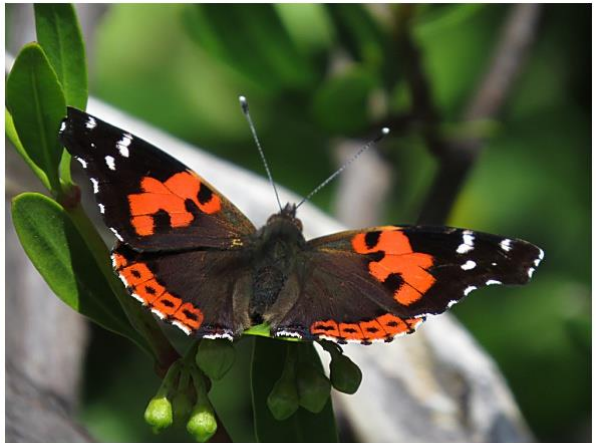
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