

# SPAIN

## Garajonay National Park

### Brief description

Laurel forest covers some 70% of this park, situated in the middle of the island of La Gomera in the Canary Islands archipelago. The presence of springs and numerous streams assures lush vegetation resembling that of the Tertiary, which, due to climatic changes, has largely disappeared from southern Europe.

### 1. Introduction

**Year(s) of Inscription** 1986

#### Agency responsible for site management

Garajonay National Park  
Mailing Address(es)  
E-mail:  
Website:

### 2. Statement of Significance

**Inscription Criteria** N (ii), (iii)

#### Justification provided by the State Party

El Parque Nacional de Garajonay declarado por una ley del Parlamento de España el 25 de marzo de 1981, abarca 3.984 hectáreas en las cumbres de la Isla de La Gomera y comprende una excepcional representación del bosque de laurisilva, flora relictas del terciario de la que Garajonay constituye la única muestra a nivel mundial que tiene máximo rango de protección.

Este ecosistema forestal, extremadamente singular, se encuentra en la actualidad representado por escasas manifestaciones en la Región Macaronésica como muestra residual de una formación que otrora ocupó la gran cuenca mediterránea.

La vegetación de las Islas Canarias puede considerarse una paleo flora viviente con grandes afinidades con la flora de la Época Terciaria, especialmente con el Plioceno y Mioceno y representa, probablemente, condiciones ancestrales de muchas plantas modernas del Mediterráneo. Desaparecida del Sur de Europa debido a modificaciones climáticas avance de glaciaciones hacia el Sur y el proceso de sequía creciente del Sahara, fue casi totalmente eliminada

y sustituida por una moderna flora esclerófila, con plantas xerófilas, derivadas de una vieja flora subtropical, de las que existe una magnífica representación en Canarias.

El Parque Nacional de Garajonay representa la manifestación más esplendorosa de laurisilva canaria, conservada ardorosamente por la población insular que ve en el bosque su fuente principal de recursos hidrológicos.

Extraordinaria importancia, bajo el punto de vista de la fauna, tienen esta masa boscosa subtropical de Garajonay refugio de dos especies de palomas endémicas reliquias de la época terciaria, que tiene en la laurisilva su único hábitat y alberga a un número muy considerable de endemismos de invertebrados.

La existencia en el Parque Nacional de 401 especies de plantas, 29 endemismos de la Isla de la Gomera habla claramente de la extraordinaria importancia de este espacio natural.

Sin embargo, y para el observador no científico, lo que más llama la atención es la formación arbórea umbrosa, con el ruido inconfundible, de los arroyuelos, el ambiente brumoso e irreal donde los grandes árboles difuminan sus formas y en la que la espesa capa de mantillo sirve de algombra suave a su deambular en un mundo de ensueño, que parece de imposible existencia en la latitud de las Canarias y en la proximidad de las costas saharianas.

#### As provided in IUCN evaluation

#### 4. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Consideration is currently being given to increasing the size of the park and an important new area of forest may be purchased by the Government. This would add even more justification for the property. The importance of the park to the broader world science community is both the endemic plant species found there and also its critical role in understanding the functioning of the laurel forest ecosystem. A greater effort in designing a research and monitoring programme to address this latter issue should be encouraged.

#### 5. EVALUATION

The Garajonay National Park is seen as the singularly most unique protected area in all of Spain for the international significance of its endemic flora (34 species) and as the only major remnant of a once common ecosystem. It thus merits inscription on the World Heritage list on the basis of criteria (ii) outstanding example of biological evolution of the

laurel forest ecosystem and criteria (iii) where habitats of rare and endemic plant species are provided. In addition to the importance of the endemic relict flora there exist also a rich and endemic invertebrate life and two rare bird species.

#### **Committee Decision**

Bureau (1986): The IUCN evaluation of this site was expected to be completed only after its forthcoming mission to the site in September 1986. The Bureau suggested that the World Heritage Committee should take a decision regarding the inscription of this site on the World Heritage List if the IUCN evaluation is completed before the 10th session of the World Heritage Committee.

Session (1986): The Committee commended the efforts of the Spanish authorities and local people in restoring and maintaining the conservation values of this site and wished to encourage initiatives to extend the boundaries of the park and to undertake further ecosystem research work.

- Statement of Significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site

#### **Boundaries and Buffer Zone**

- Status of boundaries of the site: inadequate
- State Party provides suggestion for enlargement
- Buffer zone: inadequate. Change to buffer zone proposed by State Party

#### **Status of Authenticity/Integrity**

- World Heritage site values have been maintained

### **3. Protection**

#### **Legislative and Administrative Arrangements**

- The site has a specific legislation as well as a national common legislation for national Parks. In relation with planning the Parks has a General management Plan and specific plans, as Endangered Species Recover Plan etc.
- The protection arrangements are considered highly effective
- Actions /proposed: The enlargement of the park

### **4. Management**

#### **Use of site/property**

- National park

#### **Management /Administrative Body**

- A steering group but not related to World Heritage inscription. Created by Act in 1981, its name in Spanish is Patronato, and its function is to provide means for social participation to formulate and inform the management decisions and to inform the activities in the buffer zone as well
- Site manager on full-time basis
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national, regional
- The current management system is highly effective

Actions proposed: It is planned that the management responsibility will be taken by the regional government in 2006

### **5. Management Plan**

- Management plan is being implemented
- Implementation commenced 1986
- Adequate
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: The National Park Service

### **6. Financial Resources**

#### **Financial situation**

- State Budget
- Sufficient

### **7. Staffing Levels**

- Number of staff: 70

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Average: conservation, management, promotion, interpretation, education, visitor management

### **8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques**

- Training centres depending of the National Park Service, training courses organized by the unit

### **9. Visitor Management**

- Visitor statistics: 825,000 (a mix of methods, counting, surveys etc.), 2004

- Visitor facilities: visitor centre, trails, overviews, recreation areas
- Visitor needs: Based on analysis and a diagnosis of visitor issues such as numbers, needs, tourist companies, business, infrastructures, information and interpretation services, quality, environmental social and economic impacts

### 10. Scientific Studies

- Studies related to the value of the site, condition surveys, monitoring exercises, archaeological surveys, visitor management, transportation
- Studies used for management of site, etc.
- Biology and genetic studies of endangered species, soils, meteorology, hydrology, introduced species of flora and fauna, cryptogam and vascular flora, birds, aquatic ecosystems, economic impact of the Park, invertebrates, etc.

### 11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- Not enough signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: local communities, businesses, local authorities,
- Need for awareness raising: more dissemination. Education strategy
- Events, exhibitions, brochures. Visitor centre with exhibitions, audiovisual facilities, ethnic museum, botanical garden, handicraft centre. Trails, publications, posters, video in different languages
- Web site available
- Local participation: yes

### 12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

#### Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

#### Conservation interventions

- Conservation; restoration works of degraded areas; Recover of endangered species  
Excavations of archaeological sites
- Present state of conservation: Good

#### Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressures, natural disasters, visitor/human pressures

- Specific issues if mentioned: fire, increasing number of visitors
- Emergency measures taken: fire management programme, visitor management programme

### 13. Monitoring

- Formal monitoring programme
- Measures taken: As examples of factors being monitored are: air quality, Biological production Demographic monitoring of endangered populations; Structure and composition of natural forests; Introduced species; Predation and damages by rats; Monitoring of restoration activities
- Visitor monitoring: numbers, expenses, interests, facilities uses

### 14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: improved political and local awareness, tourism
- Weaknesses: small size of site; the economic benefits of the site do not benefit enough to local society; tourist enterprises

#### Future actions:

- Size of the site should be increased
- The European Chart of Sustainable Tourism should be developed