

**EUROPE / NORTH AMERICA**

**RISCO CAIDO AND THE SACRED MOUNTAINS OF GRAN  
CANARIA CULTURAL LANDSCAPE**

**SPAIN**

## WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION – IUCN COMMENTS TO ICOMOS

### RISCO CAIDO AND THE SACRED MOUNTAINS OF GRAN CANARIA CULTURAL LANDSCAPE (SPAIN)

IUCN considered this cultural landscape property based on a desk review of the nomination and the comments of two external desk reviewers to provide inputs to ICOMOS on the natural components of this property. The external desk review was also shared directly with ICOMOS to contribute to their detailed reflections on this nomination. The evaluation of the nomination for the World Heritage Committee will be finalised by ICOMOS.

The nominated property is in the mountainous heart of Gran Canaria Island, in the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands, Spain. The core area encompasses 9,425 ha and the surrounding buffer zone 8,557 ha.

With the exception of the Risco Caído and Barranco Hondo de Abajo area, practically all of the proposed cultural landscape and buffer zone is included in at least one, or more, of the different protected categories of the Canary Island Network for Protected Areas (Red de Espacios Naturales de Canarias). The area in question is protected under four different types of protection: Rural Park, Natural Monument, Nature Reserve and Protected Landscape (see p. 425 of the nomination).

The areas of overlap with protected natural areas include:

- a) Over 2/3 of the site overlaps with the El Nublo II (rural park); category not assigned on Protected Planet, but correspond to categories V and VI according to the nomination text.
- b) The northern area of the proposed property, including the buffer zone, overlaps with the Tamadaba (natural park/nature reserve); category V according to Protected Planet, but category II according to the nomination text (p.428).
- c) A small part in the extreme south-west and the buffer zone overlaps with Roque Nublo (natural monument); category III.
- d) A part of the buffer zone in the south overlaps with Inagua (Strict Nature Reserve/Reserva Natural Integral) (called Ojeda; Inagua y Pajonales on Protected Planet); category not assigned according to Protected Planet, but according to nomination text declared a Strict Nature Reserve (Reserva Natural Integral) corresponding to category I.
- e) An area in the northern part of the proposed cultural landscape that only impacts on the buffer zone, overlaps with Las Cumbres (Cultural landscape/protected landscape); category V.

The nomination notes that, in terms of environmental and scenic protection, practically the entire proposed property is listed as an integral part of the Canary Island Network of Protected Natural Areas. Most of the area is listed as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) as part of the European Natura 2000 Network.

Almost all of the nominated area is also included in the Gran Canaria Biosphere Reserve, declared in 2005 by UNESCO, however the boundaries of the nomination are conceived in a different configuration to the buffer zone. The nominated property has also been certified as a Starlight Reserve and Destination, an initiative that seeks to protect dark skies, and is supported by UNESCO.

The nomination includes a description of biodiversity values, and suggests reduced human pressure is supporting a more favourable conservation status for the area. The nomination reports 163 taxa endemic to the Canary Islands are represented (130 species, and 33 subspecies), and that at least 28 taxa are threatened. The areas of Tamadaba and Ojeda are both classified as Key Biodiversity Areas, notably for conservation of the Gran Canaria Blue Chaffinch *Fringilla teydea polatzeki*, a bird classified as globally endangered (EN) in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. This species has received attention through on-site conservation projects, including with EU funding. As recreational activities are noted as one threat to this species, it will be important to ensure that any changes in visitation resulting from possible World Heritage listing are actively managed to avoid areas important for its conservation.