

Native sports



The **native sports** practised in Lanzarote are **Canarian lateen sailing**, **Canarian wrestling**, the **juego del palo** (literally, “game of the stick”), **Canarian bowling**, and **handball**.

Lucha canaria (Canarian wrestling) is perhaps the sport with the biggest following here in Tegüise. It is a noble sport, combining strength with technique, and it is very popular all over the Canary Islands. Two teams compete, each of which has twelve wrestlers, and inside a sand circle, or *terrero*, one wrestler has a face off with an opponent from the opposite team. After greeting each other, they each place their hands on the back and hip of their opponent and try to make them touch the floor with any part of their body other than their feet. It is not a sport designed to cause harm or even show aggression. On the contrary, the idea is for the wrestlers, with shrewd use of holds and skill, to show their worth.

The **juego del palo** is of aboriginal origin and is known to have been practised on almost all of the islands. Nowadays, it is almost exclusively seen in exhibitions, although there still are some schools which are trying to keep this custom alive. The game, which is actually more like a martial art, demands both skill and agility, since each player must avoid the long pole of their opponent whilst trying to touch them with their own.

Bola canaria is a sport with a great following in all of the towns and villages of the island. Technically, it is very similar to the French *pétanque*, except that the balls are not made of metal as in this other game, and are also larger.

Canarian lateen sailing still has plenty of supporters here in Lanzarote. There are *barquillos* (boats) of 5 and 8.55 metres that have been built according to the traditional methods. There is no doubt about it, these are authentic floating wooden jewels.

Pelota mano (handball) was introduced to the islands by the colonists and is today played with a relatively small ball and no fixed number of players (between 4 and 6 per team). The game consists, roughly, in trying to return the small solid ball, made of leather and with hardly any bounce, back to the opposing team that served it before it can bounce twice on the floor, by hitting it with the palm of the hand. This game is currently enjoying something of a renaissance here in Tegüise.