

Hearts of Tejina (Corazones de Tejina)

Lose your Heart and soak up the fun at Tenerife's most unusual summer fiesta

Experience Tenerife as you've never seen it before at the amazing Festival of Hearts which be held on the last weekend of August in the village of Tejina in the N E Tenerife (Canary Islands) (*link to a map of Spain, Canary Islands and Tenerife*). The stars of the weeklong festivities are three huge hearts weighing roughly 1000 kilos each, which compete in a unique beauty contest. The "Corazones de Tejina" has been received several regional and international awards.

The people of Tejina have been celebrating the festivities in honour of their patron saint on St Bartholomew's Day, 24th August, from long time ago. This hundred year old tradition is an exciting mixture of rituals both old and new, and also combines Catholic and Pagan rituals. The whole village comes together in a friendly competitive way despite the traditional rivalry.

Three twig Hearts known as "Corazones" are painstakingly made out of wood and metal and decorated with flowers, ribbons, fruit and local cakes called "Tortas", which are not to be eaten yet. Each Heart (12 m high) consists of one large heart underneath a smaller one, with an enormous bouquet of fresh flowers on top.

The three Hearts represent three rival village streets (El Pico, Calle Arriba and Calle Abajo) and compete in terms of beauty and artistry. The entire village gets involved, and everyone is motivated by local pride and a strong love of the land.

At noon on Sunday (normally the last Sunday of August) the Hearts are paraded through the village, escorted by minstrels and dancers. The parade finishes in the square in front of the local church where the Hearts are offered to St Bartholomew at the church door in a ceremony known as "La Ofrenda" (The Offering). The Hearts are solemnly raised up into the air and crowds gather round to get a glimpse of the elaborate handy work. Afterwards, the Hearts are vertically hung on a Latin cross like structure and are left standing in this position until Monday afternoon at 6 p.m. when the people eagerly await the moment when the Hearts are ritually dismantled and the fruit and cakes are removed and then thrown to the public.

On Tuesday the rivalry reaches its high point with the famous "Pique" (singing contest) where each street's musical band sings a tribute to their heart and tries to outdo the other with

wit and sarcasm. After the “Pique” everybody carries on dancing in the main square of the village until nightfall when the festival comes to an end with the ritual burning of a rag dummy called “El Haragan”, the Layabout, who is paraded around the village streets while the locals boo and whistle. The tradition will be maintained for ever since youths and children repeat the ritual along the next week end. This marks the return to the normal life in the village after a week of song, dance and fireworks.

[More information at www.corazonedetejina.com]



The pictures show three “Corazones de Tejina”, with an older black and white version at the back and a more modern colourful version at the front.

 **Asociación Corazones de Tejina**