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Travel

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THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

SUN, SEA, SAND AND SURFING IN THE
CARIBBEAN'S BEST-KEPT SECRET

plus...

RHODES NEW YORK MYKONOS CAPE TOWN CROATIA TENERIFE LOS ANGELES



And baby makes four

A husband and wife travel-writing team ventures abroad for the first time since the arrival of their twins six months ago. But will a tentative family trip to Tenerife prove holiday nirvana – or holiday nightmare?

Words: Tristan Rutherford. **Illustrations:** Matt Herring

Who gives a damn!" quickly became the phrase of the holiday. For my wife and I, our first foreign foray with twin babies was bound to elicit a few expletives. Can we really go to bed at 7pm? "Who gives a damn!" Were we really so preoccupied putting sunscreen on the boys we forgot to apply our own and now look like red-and-white zebras? "Who gives a damn!" Are we really singing *The Wheels On The Bus* for the 20th time (despite having only landed 30 minutes ago)? "Who gives a damn!" Did I really just order a virgin colada? Well, you get the idea.

Jetting away with a six-month bundle was always going to be tricky. Packing two of the little blighters required the preparation of Scott's

mission to the Antarctic. But luckily for us, Tenerife proved to be an inspired choice. Around 15 per cent of its five million annual visitors travel with kids in tow, making it one of the world's most family-friendly destinations. I wouldn't recommend the sweltering summer heat with little ones, but the winter weather in the Canaries hovers around 20°C, and both spring and autumn are a delicious 25°C. Plus there's no time difference, which for us was fantastic, as our baby boys got jet-lagged during the spring equinox. Island airports are all ramps and elevators, not stairs and sharp corners – a necessity when trying to find your transfer accommodation juggling a double buggy, five suitcases, two screaming children and a quietly

sobbing wife. And the sun-kissed settlements of Santa Cruz, Los Cristianos, Adeje and Garachico all have pram-navigable esplanades and shady parks. The Anaga rainforest reserve and the Isla Baja wilderness can all be enjoyed from the comfort of your own air-conditioned car. Trust me, I know.

Our first morning at the Gran Hotel Bahía del Duque (*book through thomascook.com*) defined our new holiday existence. Six years ago, after a mammoth lie-in, we breakfasted at the same hotel on early season strawberries, watermelon juice and a bespoke omelette ordered at the egg bar, leisurely reading the morning papers and planning cocktail breaks for later on. Not so now. Our breakfast is whatever we can eat between tears, tantrums and toilet needs (theirs, not ours). ➔



Our plates looked like something from a 1980s diet fad: two cups of cold tea, half a boiled egg, five buns and a banana. The twins managed one puréed pear, one smashed eggcup and only two nappy emergencies. The little darlings even tore up my newspaper.

The tactical withdrawal from poolside breakfast bar to bedroom was like Wellington's retreat to Waterloo: our double buggy loaded to bursting point with provisions, blankets and broken soldiers (favourite teddy, left eye missing in action). Thankfully, the hotel staff were lovely. We abused the bouncy castle and soft play area, then ordered baby bottles, monitors and bathtubs to be sent up to our room. When the twins are three we can leave them here for entire days of treasure hunts

and face painting at the excellent kids' club. Beats getting creative with a newspaper, I'm sure.

When it was our turn to explore the island, the hotel sorted out a nippy Renault Clio with baby seats, then played with the boys while we got strapped in. Then they sent a taxi containing the 180 nappies we forgot to pack with us...

Ah, island exploration: Shackleton meets *Sesame Street*. Our Clio was like a buggy for grown-ups: one with a motor, that we could chuck our combined stuff inside. Our first "stop" was Mount Teide, Spain's highest peak. The twins were lulled to sleep on the undulating climb through orange orchards, Alpine forest and red rock desert, scenes made famous by 2013's *Fast & Furious 6*. Each baby dreamily squeezed their

soft toys as we drove under Teide's snowy peak. We arrived a tranquil three hours later at the all-inclusive Sandos San Blas Nature Resort (*book at thomascook.com*) to find that twin number two hadn't been squeezing his soft toy, but a tiny Tenerife banana. Poor Clio.

My wife and I are not used to all-inclusive luxury. Although that could easily change. Our favourite journeys up to this point were China and Chile. But who needs high culture when you have a baby sleeping soundly under your sun lounger? I asked my wife if it was naughty to not even leave the resort? With a cocktail in one hand and a Kindle in the other, she replied: "Who gives a damn!" ^{TC}

BE THERE: Book your perfect family holiday to Tenerife with thomascook.com

Kiddie-free zone: the beauty of Tenerife without your little ones

Leave the ankle-biters at home for a driving tour of **Tenerife's award-winning vineyards**. At 200 years old, welcoming Bodegas Monje (*bodegasmonje.com*) is particularly impressive. A trip through the Abona region, where Europe's highest vines thrive at 1,800m, is unforgettable.



Stargazing at the Teide Observatory (*volcanoteide.com*), the world's largest solar observatory, is a late-night delight. Spot zodiac constellations and planets from Spain's highest peak.



For a kaleidoscopic experience, **the TEA, or Tenerife Espacio de las Artes** (*teatenerife.es*), offers all kinds of ultra-contemporary Canarian art.