

# q travel: with BARRIE MAHONEY

'Tweeters from the Atlantic'

*Barrie Mahoney was a teacher, head teacher and school inspector in the UK, as well as a reporter in Spain, before moving to the Canary Islands as a newspaper editor. He is still enjoying life in the sun as a writer and author.*



'The Seven Year Itch' is often a term applied to relationships between people that have begun to fail. The early excitement and romance of the first few years of a new relationship have soured, and been replaced by mistrust, disappointment and betrayal. New responsibilities, work pressures, children and financial difficulties are often the root cause of many problems within a relationship. In many cases, talking over issues, counselling, medical help and realisation that no problem is unique will hopefully avoid leading to the cliff edge and total relationship breakdown. However, in other cases, separation and divorce may be the only answer to such serious problems.

Similar problems also face many expats. In many cases that I have seen during my time living in Spain and the Canary Islands, I have seen the initial excitement and challenge of a new life in the sun being replaced by anxiety, bitterness and a desire to return to the expat's country of origin at all costs. Often the drive to return 'home' has been forced upon the expat by an inability to find a new job, or losing a job, financial and relationship pressures and sadly, too often, following a lifestyle that may encourage the increased consumption of alcohol. Often it is a realisation that living in another country means a disconnection from friends and family in the long term. The unintentional 'out of sight and out of mind' syndrome sets in, with previous good friends and family becoming even more distant. After all, in time, the expat begins to have little in common with the folks back home.

Living on an island, the situation can become even more acute. The recession and the highest unemployment in Spain has meant that many expats living in the Canary Islands have lost their jobs and, as a consequence, also lost their homes. Regular travel to mainland Europe can be expensive and it is not easy to regularly visit family and friends. Island living is not for everyone either. The romantic idyll can soon turn into a nightmare of missing certain foods, television, entertainment and, most of all, friends and family. Even for those who have taken the trouble to learn Spanish, and many do not even make the effort, quickly realise that however long they study or however hard they try, complete mastery of the language will never be enough to share jokes, innuendo and relaxed communication that they enjoy in their native language, unless of course, they manage to find a native partner - and many have!

Seven years appears to be the time that many expats begin to re-evaluate their original decision of making a new life for themselves in the sun. Rather like a marriage, questions begin to be asked and particularly in the case of those with medical conditions and those reaching old age. It is after seven years or so that I see many expats beginning to pack up and move back to their country of origin. Hopefully, these expats will realise that nothing in life is ever wasted and it is always better to have tried and failed than not having even made the attempt in the first place.



During my time in Gran Canaria, I have known many people who have enjoyed their time on the island, but reached a point in their lives through work, relationships or finances that they are forced to return to their country of origin. This can be unsettling for the rest of us, as the expat community is a small one and each departure can make a significant difference. Strangely, I have also noticed that many people who leave the island tend to return a few years later, or certainly have expressed that it is their intention to do so. These islands are wonderful places to live and returning expats often quickly realise their mistake and make every effort to return once again, older and wiser.

I recall discussing this issue with a visiting psychic several years ago. She listened with interest, retrieved some charts, and pointed out to me that Gran Canaria is at the crossroads of ancient ley lines and, because of this, it is a place of increased spirituality. This has created the unlikely phenomena that the island draws certain people that it wants to its shores, rejects those it does not want, yet continues to draw back those that leave and the island wishes to retain. It all sounds like a good plot for a future Doctor Who series. Cynics will, of course, immediately reject this explanation as non-scientific rubbish; however, from what I have observed over the years, I do not easily dismiss the explanation.

*If you enjoyed this article, take a look at Barrie's websites: [www.bariemahoney.com](http://www.bariemahoney.com) and [www.thecanaryislander.com](http://www.thecanaryislander.com) or read his latest book, 'Threads and Threats' (ISBN: 9781843866466)*