

THE CANARY ISLANDS AGAIN THE MAJOR STAGE FOR THE UNIVERSE OF SCIENCE WITH THE THIRD EDITION OF THE STARMUS FESTIVAL

* **With less than a week to go until the start of the Starmus festival, the Canary Islands are preparing to welcome once more the greatest stars of science and scientific communication and to pay special tribute to the great Stephen Hawking, the most popular theoretical physicist of all time**
* **“Astrotourism” is gaining popularity on the archipelago thanks to the privileged location and climate of the Canary Islands with their clean and protected skies and the islands’ spectacular facilities for the study of astrophysics and observation of the stars**
* **Protection from the natural influence of light has made it possible for three separate points of the archipelago to be included in the global circuit of “Starlight Reserves”**
* **In a tribute to the great Stephen Hawking, during this third edition of the Starmus Festival, the islands will welcome 11 Nobel Prize Winners, 7 astronauts and the great Brian Eno as the keynote speaker along with major contemporary legends such as guitarist Brian May and composer Hans Zimmer**

**Canary Islands, XX June 2016 –** The Canary Islands are a unique destination where the stars and the universe connect to the Earth at three separate points classified as **“Starlight Reserves”,** thanks to their protection of the skies and control of light pollution. Advantageous environmental and weather conditions position the archipelago of the Canary Islands as the best place in the world for hosting and embodying the union of science and music in an encounter that every year brings together the greatest stars of our planet in the field of scientific communication: the [**Starmus Festival**](http://www.starmus.com)**.**

In its third edition, to be held from 27 June to 2 July, the Canary Islands will again play host to the renowned theoretical physicist **Stephen Hawking** for a stellar encounter that will pay tribute to him under the title “***Beyond the Horizon***”, featuring the **presence of 12 Nobel prize winners, 7 astronauts** and the most important universal figures of different scientific disciplines joined by musical legends such as **Brian May.** Also, this year the festival will make history with the creation of the **Hawking Medal for Scientific Communication**, to be awarded during the festival to various candidates who have stood out for their scientific communication work not only in the world of science, but also of art.

Thanks to their privileged geographical location and the clearness of their protected skies, the Canary Islands are home to two of the top international observatories, namely the **Teide** Observatory and the Observatory of **Roque de los Muchachos,** in **La Palma,** which has the world’s largest optical telescope, the **Gran Telescopio de Canarias,** forming, under the direction of the **Institute of Astrophysics of the Canary Islands,** the **European Northern Observatory**, one of the most renowned research centres in the world. Tenerife and La Palma, along with the island of **Fuerteventura,** are the archipelago’s three “Starlight Reserves”, and also form part of the **EU Sky Route** which defends the protection of these destinations in five European countries.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the Canary Islands, for the third time, are the stage for the meeting of the foremost global representatives of astrophysics in a unique encounter. According to the words of **Stephen Hawking** himself, the festival “***will continue to pursue the objective of bringing the best scientists, musicians and artists together under one roof: the starry sky of the Canary Islands*”**, which he has recognised has **“*an infinite power to inspire any human being*”.**

Yet the “Starlight Reserves” are not the only areas for observing the stars in the Canary Islands. There are other installations devoted to teaching, informing about and studying astronomy such as the **Observatory of Temisas (OAT), in Gran Canaria,** accessible for both enthusiasts and professionals. Also on La Gomera, the **Las Nieves recreational area,** **within the National Park of Garajonay**, offers an excellent location from which to observe the skies of the Canary Islands from a height of 1,250 metres above sea level. Finally, El Hierro is the southernmost point of the archipelago from which to contemplate the stars, particularly from the **Orchilla lighthouse**, a place with barely any light pollution set against the peaceful background of the Atlantic Ocean swayed by the breeze of the trade winds.

Furthermore, the excellent climate that prevails on all seven islands, characterised by pleasant and gentle temperatures, make it possible to enjoy contemplation of the stars at any time of the year. With averages of 19 degrees Celsius in winter and 23 in summer, it is considered to be *“*[*The best climate in the world*](http://www.elmejorclimadelmundo.com/) *”.*

**Starmus III’s star-studded panel**

The programme for the Starmus Festival’s third edition “*Beyond the Horizon – A Tribute to Stephen Hawking”* will bring together in Tenerife – in addition to Hawking himself – a wide range of famous personalities winners of Nobel prizes in the fields of Physics, Chemistry, Medicine and Economics, namely: **Eric Betzig**, Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 2014; biologist **Elizabeth Blackburn**, jointly awarded a Nobel Prize for Medicine in 2009; **Robert Wilson** and **David Gross**, Physics Nobel Prize winners in 1978 and 2004, respectively; **Adam Riess** and **Brian Schmidt**, jointly awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics in 2011; spouses **Edvard Moser** and **May-BrittMoser**, both awarded the Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine in 2014; **François Englert**, Nobel Prize for Physics in 2013 shared with **Peter Higgs**, and **Joseph Stiglitz**, Nobel Prize for Economics in 2001 and also joint Nobel Peace Prize winner in 2007 for his work since 1995 as a member of the Intergovernmental Panel of Experts on Climate Change.

In addition to this outstanding panel of Nobel prizes, the festival will bring together the world’s most renowned astrophysicists, such as **Neil deGrasse Tyson**, **Kip Thorne**, **Martin Rees, Jill Tarter** and **Robert Williams.** The assistance has also been confirmed of physicist **Neil Turok**, evolutionary biologist **Richard Dawkins**, the professor of Astronomy and head of Astrophysics of Oxford University **Steven Balbus** and the professor of Physics of Manchester University **Brian E. Cox,** popularly known for his work as a TV presenter of scientific programmes.

The space race will be represented at the festival with the participation of astronauts **Michael López-Alegría, Garrett Reisman, Chris Hadfield**, **Russell Schweickart** and **Claude Nicolier,** along with Russian cosmonaut **Sergey Volkov.** The finishing touch will be provided once more by cosmonaut **Alexei Leonov**, the first man to walk in space, and a member of Starmus since its origins.