

# After 3 tense months, Spanish volcano eruption may be over

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Ash covers the streets and houses in Las Manchas village as lava flows from the volcano, on the Canary island of La Palma, Spain, Dec. 6 2021. A volcanic eruption in Spain's Canary Islands shows no sign of ending after 85 days. It became the island of La Palma's longest eruption on record on Sunday, Dec. 12. Credit: AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti, file

Residents on the Spanish island of La Palma dared to hope Wednesday that their volcanic eruption is over after almost three months of unnerving daily explosions, earthquakes, rivers of molten rock and a huge ash plume containing toxic gases.

The Cumbre Vieja volcano in the Canary Islands off northwest Africa fell silent on Monday evening, and scientists said its 36 hours or so of negligible activity might signal the beginning of the end of the eruption. Scientists won't rule out a resurgence of volcanic activity, which previously abated only to return with renewed force, but say it is unlikely.

"We cannot be 100% sure, as the volcano has been playing a few tricks over the last weeks," Valentin Troll, a geology expert with Sweden's Uppsala University and co-author of a geology study of the Canary Islands, told The Associated Press.

"But many parameters have now subsided, and I think the volcano is indeed in decline now," he said.

The Canary Islands government said that "volcanic activity has fallen to almost nothing." Some wisps of white smoke floated from the crater Wednesday morning. As the eruption petered out, scientists ventured out on foot to the lip of the crater to take up-close gas readings for the first time in three months.

Low and sustained levels of activity must be observed for 10 days for scientists to formally declare the end of the eruption, María José Blanco, a volcanologist and spokeswoman for Spain's National Geographic Institute, told reporters.

The eruption, which began on Sept. 19, is the longest on record on La Palma and has been a milestone for islanders, many of whom live from

farming and tourism. The volcanic Canary Islands are a popular European vacation destination due to their mild climate.

No injuries or deaths have been directly linked to the La Palma eruption, and life has continued largely as normal on most of the island of 80,000 residents. However, several thousand people were forced to abandon their homes and farms as they were engulfed by lava and a section of La Palma's southwestern side is severely damaged.



A fissure is seen next to a house covered with ash on the Canary island of La Palma, Spain, Dec. 1 2021. A volcanic eruption in Spain's Canary Islands shows no sign of ending after 85 days. It became the island of La Palma's longest eruption on record on Sunday, Dec. 12. Credit: AP Photo/Emilio Morenatti, file

For some locals, relief at the weakening eruption was tempered by frustration at government promises of help they say has failed to materialize.

"Being able to see the sun properly for the first time in nearly three months, sleeping at night without tremors, totally changes the picture," said Francisco Javier López, a 61-year-old resident of the village of Todoque. "But the future remains bleak."

López lost his home of 30 years during the first few days of the eruption and says he is living in an overpriced rented apartment in a nearby village. The future of his paragliding business, which employed him and his wife, also evaporated as lava buried the takeoff and landing strips at the top of the Cumbre Vieja mountain range.

López complained that despite pledges of free accommodation, subsidies and financial aid from national, regional and local officials, almost nothing has actually reached the La Palma residents affected by the volcano.

"The volcano has taken away our houses, including our past and memories," he told the AP. "But politicians are taking away our future and our hope."

Fiery molten rock flowing from Cumbre Vieja down toward the sea has destroyed around 3,000 buildings. The fields of thick, black hardened lava have entombed banana plantations, ruined irrigation systems and cut off roads.

The hardened lava covers around 1,200 hectares (about 3,000 acres), according to the Canary Islands volcanic emergency unit, Pevolcan. Where the molten rock has poured into the Atlantic Ocean, rocky deltas have formed over 48 hectares (120 acres), Pevolcan said.

[The eruption has drawn scientists from around the world to La Palma.](#)  
They have been using cutting-edge technology to examine it from land, sea, air and even space.

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