

The gales that battered the north of Tenerife obstructed the passage of vessels from the Indies en route to Santa Cruz de Tenerife Port, mainly in the 18th century. One of the areas often mentioned as the point at which shipping changed course and made for Santa Cruz de La Palma was Punta de la Gaviota in Teno (north-west Tenerife).

Work finally began on the port in 1861 and it was officially opened thirteen years later. In 1883, the port was declared of general interest and was relaunched thanks to important new budgets for improvements. However, little progress was seen until 1950. In 1861, licence was given by government approval for construction of a port measuring up to 177.54 m in length and for a budget of 854,474 *reales*. After work was seriously hindered by bad weather which tore down the construction, in 1864 the Town Council called a meeting of taxpayers to request the quay be extended. While waiting for the residents' response, the works were stopped for years. Eventually, in 1891, approval was given to a project presented by engineer Eugenio Suárez. However, in 1897, the port was still poorly equipped. At the end of the 19th century, a project was presented to the government consisting of a 100-m long berthing jetty, an outer harbour with a sea wall of 290 m in length, for a budget of 600,000 pesetas.

Improvements have been made to the road network of Santa Cruz de La Palma Port—the new north and south entrances to the port were finished in August 2007—for ease of access to port facilities from the external road and from the town centre. The existing layout of the north entrance to the harbour, prior to recent works, slowed traffic flows along the service road and hindered access to the pre-boarding area, leading to congestion along the road parallel to the quay. Consequently, a roundabout was added providing direct access to the port service road, the pre-boarding area, the harbour road and the city. The project also included the widening of the pre-boarding area for the ferries and adjoining carpark, now concluded. Other works include installing pipelines and adapting connections for water, sewerage, electricity and telecommunications for the new small craft dock. The initial works plan also included the improvements to pipelines of services in the area and resurfacing the entrance to the port before the control point.

The works for rerouting the north access and the area surrounding the maritime station were adjudicated to SATOCAN S.A. for 856 thousand euro. Thought is currently being given to the historical feature that will grace the roundabout. When the plateau was uncovered, a stone stairway and the remains of a hut that housed a tide gauge were found at the start of the original outer harbour of the port, precisely where the roundabout is located. Consequently, this original decorative element will be placed here.

A curious feature of the new roundabout is that the sea will always be visible from any part of it. To achieve this effect, excavation will commence below sea level. Unlike the north access, which is more suitable for users of services located on the dock and quay, the south access is ideal for heavy traffic entering the dock en route to the container terminal, therefore avoiding the town centre. The initial works for this project, which directly connects the entrance to port facilities via the new external road in Santa Cruz de La Palma, involved dismantling the roundabout at the entrance to the port, installing a network of pipelines and building a wall along the access road. Once finalized, the area was surfaced. The firm SACYR executed the works with a budget of just over 765 thousand euro. On 3 October last, work began on widening the middle alignment of the sea wall and the extension of the current embankment in Santa Cruz de La Palma Port.

The first of these works will result in a lengthening of the final section of the sea wall, thereby enabling larger cruise liners to berth. The section of the quay where pedestrians walk will also be wider resulting in easier access for coaches collecting passengers. This work also includes the external reinforcement of the dock.

The extension of the Muelle de Ribera or embankment will allow two vessels to operate simultaneously in this section: a Ro-Ro and a container ship. The Muelle de Ribera will be extended by 78 metres.

Works were adjudicated to the project presented by UTE (temporary joint venture)—Dragados, Drace and Tractor Canarias—which contemplates the use of caissons. As a result, the completion deadline has been brought forward considerably, which will mean fewer traffic problems in the port.

The budget for both projects amounts to 9.5 million euro and completion is planned for the end of 2008.