

THE BLOG



Apr 3, 2023

ANAGA RURAL PARK: FIRST SOLO MOUNTAIN HIKE.

FILED IN: Hiking, Spain, Tenerife, Travel Writing

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Volcanic, black sand, rocky terrain and imposing stark landscapes were the words I thought I would use to describe the Canary Island of Tenerife, that was until I took a solo trip and went hiking in the north of the island in an area I now know as Parque Rural de Anaga. (Anaga Rural Park)

I love to hike. I have hiked several mountains with friends and have [ascended the two highest peaks in the lake district](#) within one late spring day. My fitness levels are good, so when in Tenerife on a solo trip I planned a 12km intermediate hike to explore a section of Parque Rural de Anaga which is only accessible by foot.

A visually stunning, easy to follow, 3.5 hr route that I highly recommend. However, due to several factors that I hadn't taken into consideration:

This was my first solo mountain hike and will likely be my last.

Let me explain why:

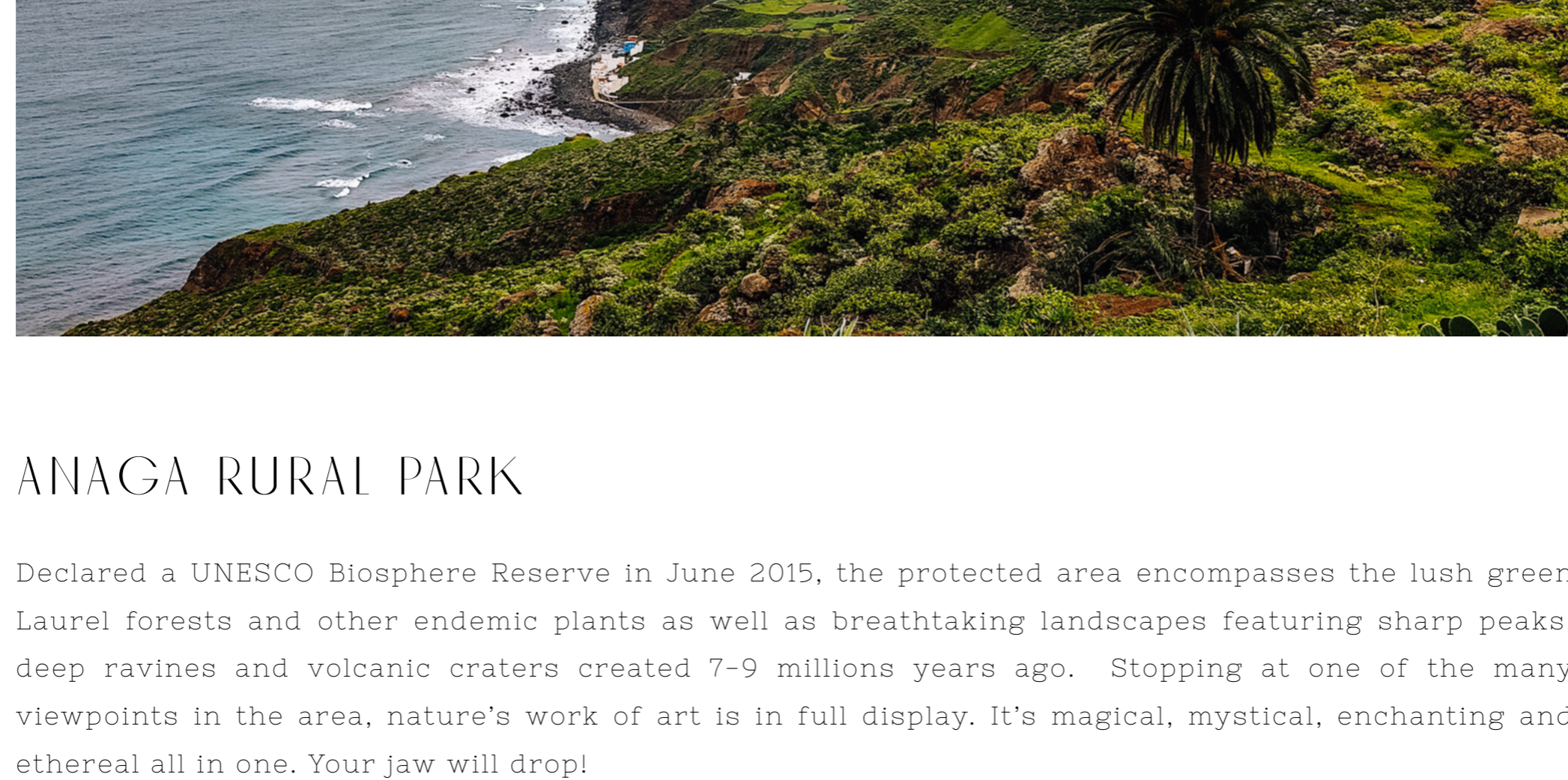
I hike for fun.

This day was NOT FUN!

In fact I cried, I plonked myself down on the dusty, muddy floor embarrassingly more than once. I prayed for a piggy back, a rescue helicopter, a hug, you get the vibe.

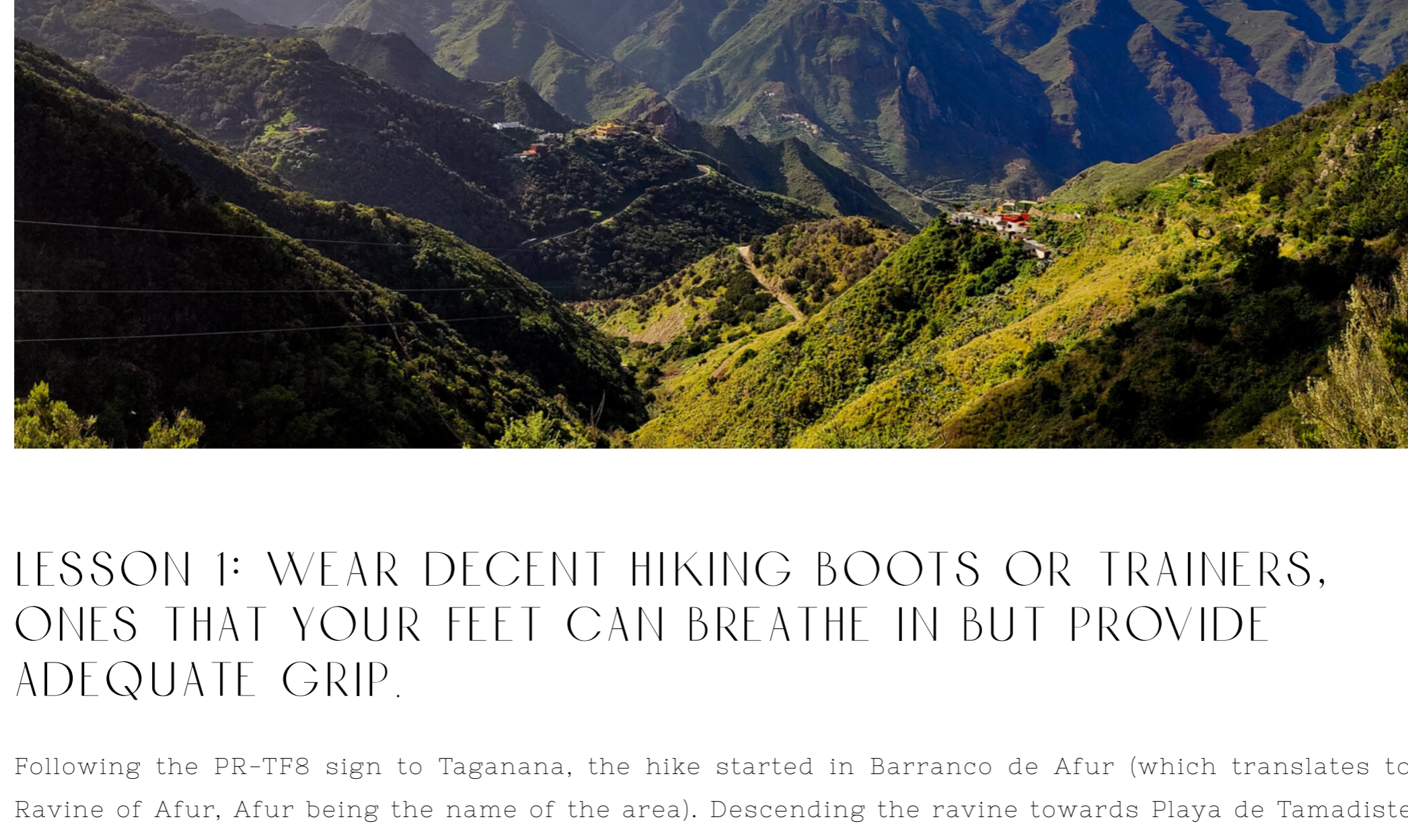
So if you are considering a solo hike or an adventure on the trails of the Anaga Rural Park keep reading, I will share with you my mistakes so hopefully you can enjoy the aesthetically pleasing trail without the tears!

I saved the [route on Kamoot](#), my favourite app for discovering trails in a new country and arrived at the starting point by scooter. Meandering down the Northern ridge, along the TF-136, my senses were on high alert, I was excited and ready to explore the hamlets, ravines and viewpoints of the Barranca de Afur region within the Anaga Rural Park.



ANAGA RURAL PARK

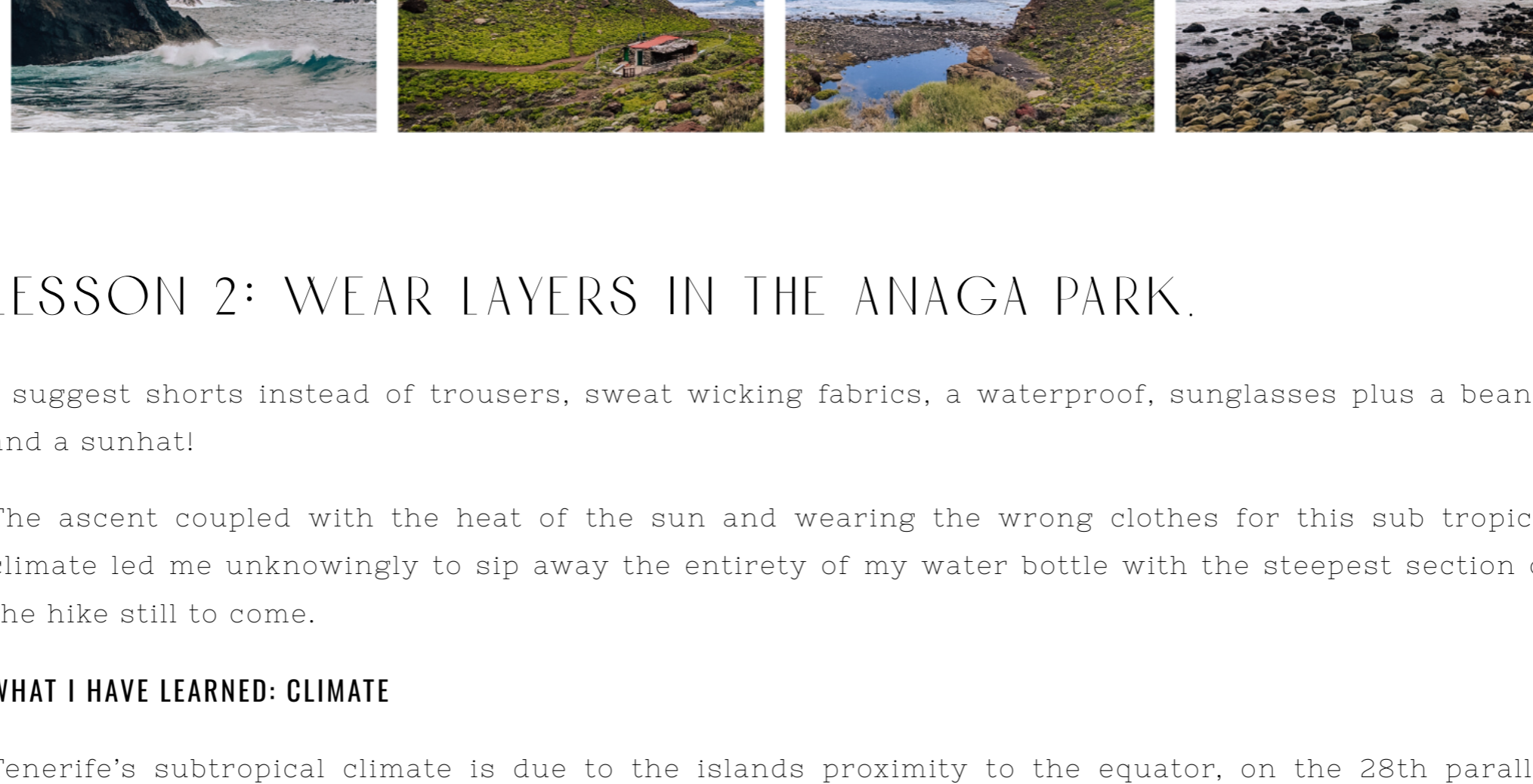
Declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in June 2015, the protected area encompasses the lush green Laurel forests and other endemic plants as well as breathtaking landscapes featuring sharp peaks, deep ravines and volcanic craters worked 7-9 millions years ago. Stopping at one of the many viewpoints in the area, nature's work of art is in full display. It's magical, mystical, enchanting and ethereal all in one. Your jaw will drop!



LESSON 1: WEAR DECENT HIKING BOOTS OR TRAINERS, ONES THAT YOUR FEET CAN BREATHE IN BUT PROVIDE ADEQUATE GRIP.

Following the PR-TF8 sign to Taganana, the hike started in Barranco de Afur (which translates to Ravine of Afur, Afur being the name of the area). Descending the ravine towards Playa de Tamadiste was a relatively easy and enjoyable start to the hike. I did however pass a lady that was limping after she had slid on a slime covered rock. This section of the trail follows a small stream to the Atlantic Ocean so moisture is felt underfoot. Thankfully I had my Vivobarefoot Primus trail hiking boots on, which allow me to grip the terrain and intuitively move my foot with the contours of the ground.

Playa de Tamadiste was a great spot for a little break, to refuel, rehydrate and capture the white water waves crashing into the imposing steep cliffs. From here the circular route increases in difficulty due to the continuous ascent up the ravine but the higher elevation does reward you with 180° views of the Atlantic. The meandering path leads you past a watering hole and terrace like slopes that I discovered are vineyards of Caserio de los Auchones.



LESSON 2: WEAR LAYERS IN THE ANAGA PARK.

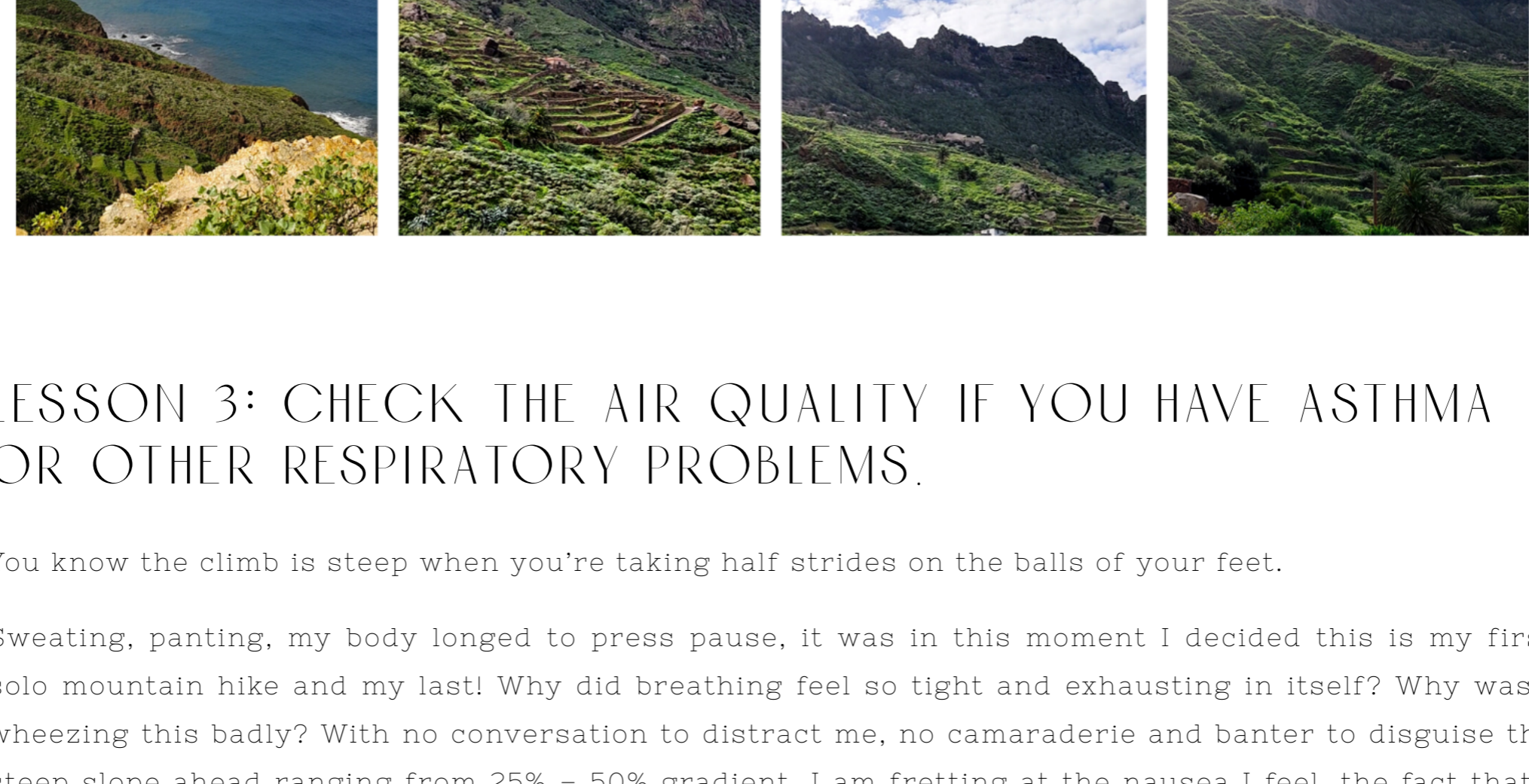
I suggest shorts instead of trousers, sweat wicking fabrics, a waterproof, sunglasses plus a beanie and a sunhat!

The ascent coupled with the heat of the sun and wearing the wrong clothes for this sub tropical climate led me unknowingly to sip away the entirety of my water bottle with the steepest section of the hike still to come.

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED: CLIMATE

Tenerife's subtropical climate is due to the islands proximity to the equator, on the 28th parallel North. This invisible latitude line around the earth also crosses, Rajasthan in India, Egypt, Myanmar, Florida and even Mount Everest lies on the parallel as it crosses from Nepal to China. A subtropical climate combined with the elevation of the Anaga Rural Park can cause the weather and temperature to easily fluctuate, so its best to be prepared with layers.

The North of the island receives far more rain than the south, particularly above 500m sea level and across the northern slopes. It is said that these imposing mountains create a rain shadow effect and typically leave the south of the island with a drier climate and a terrain more typical of a volcanic island.



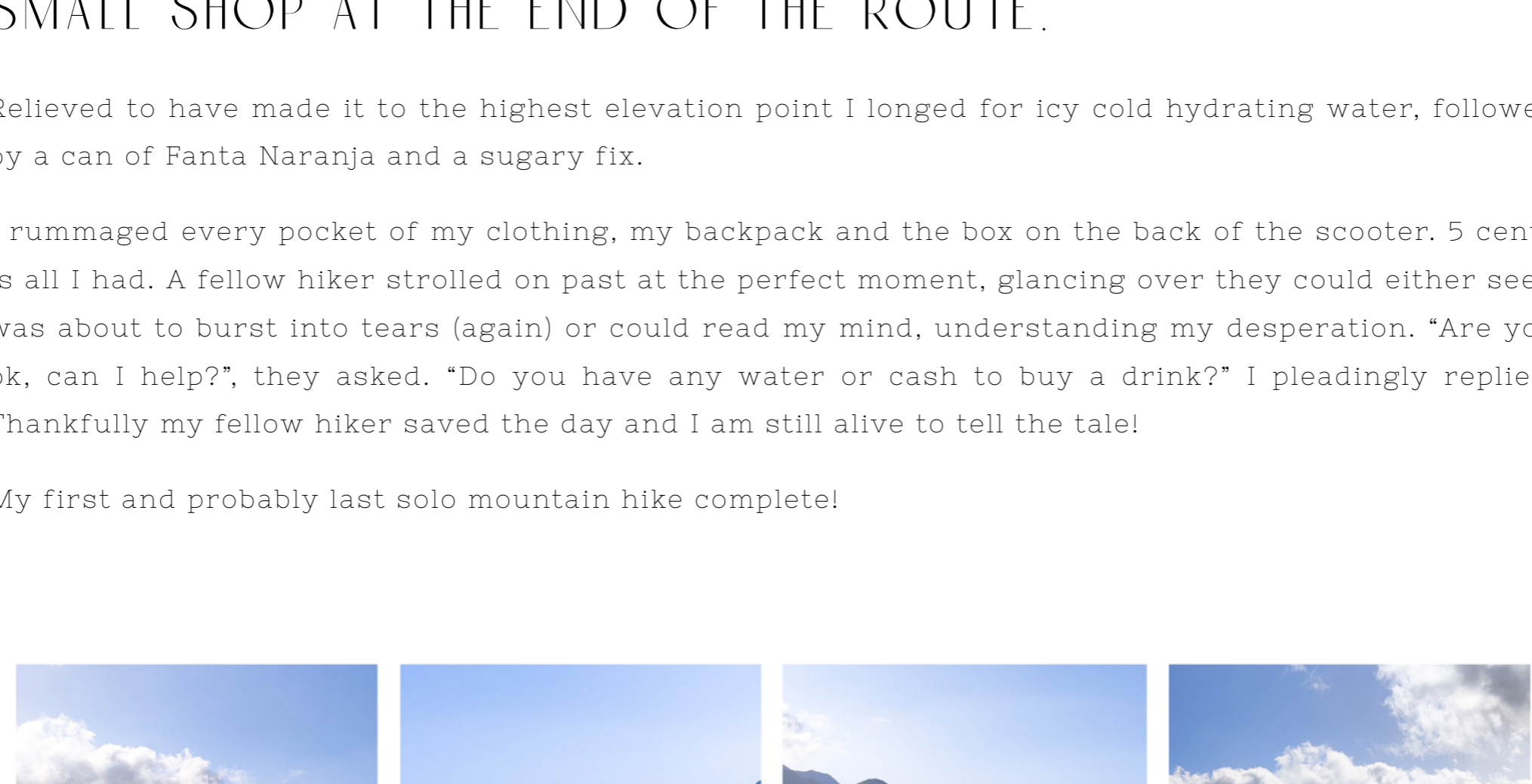
LESSON 3: CHECK THE AIR QUALITY IF YOU HAVE ASTHMA OR OTHER RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS.

You know the climb is steep when you're taking half strides on the balls of your feet.

Sweating, panting, my body longed to breath pause, it was in this moment I decided this is my first solo mountain hike and my last! Why did breathing feel so tight and exhausting in itself? Why was I wheezing this badly? With no conversation to distract me, no camaraderie and banter to disguise the steep slope ahead ranging from 25% - 50% gradient, I am fretting at the nausea I feel, the fact that I am not getting enough oxygen and could pass out and how pathetic I am to just stand on the slope, crying helplessly. This kind of hike was type 2 fun!

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED - AIR QUALITY

The Calima is a unique wind that blows over the Canary Islands out of a high-pressure system over the Sahara and Northern Africa. The hot winds carry a smothering concoction of dust and sand that clogs the air and settles on the landscape. My asthma symptoms are not only triggered by exercise but also an allergy to dust so this was a recipe for hell!

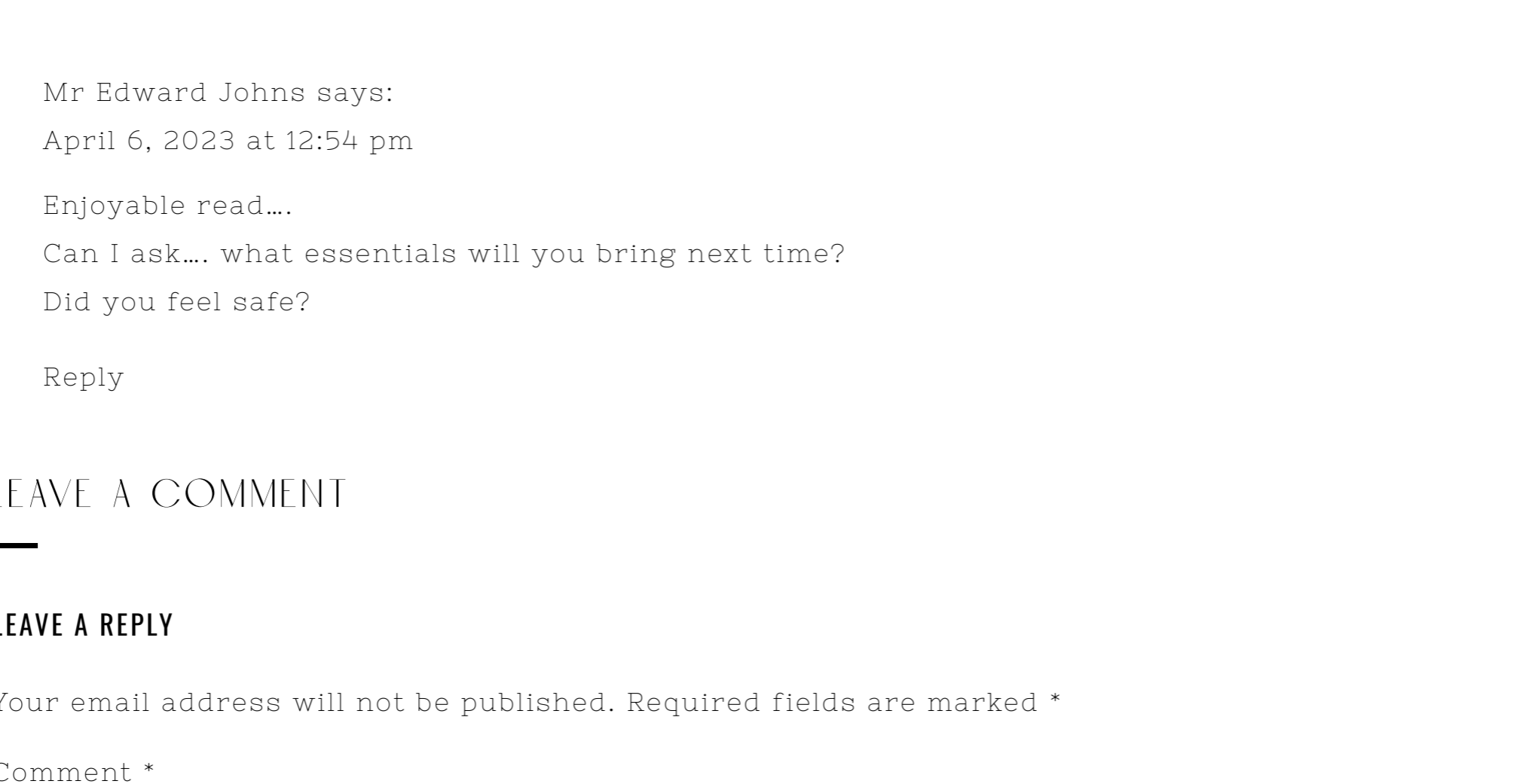


LESSON 4: BRING CASH IF YOU WANT A DRINK FROM SMALL SHOP AT THE END OF THE ROUTE.

Relieved to have made it to the highest elevation point I longed for icy cold hydrating water, followed by a can of Fanta Naranja and a sugary fix.

I rummaged every pocket of my clothing, my backpack and the box on the back of the scooter. 5 cents is all I had. A fellow hiker strolled on past at the perfect moment, glancing over they could either see I was about to burst into tears (again) or could read my mind, understanding my desperation. "Are you ok, can I help?", they asked. "Do you have any water or cash to buy a drink?" I pleadingly replied. Thankful my fellow hiker saved the day and I am still alive to tell the tale!

My first and probably last solo mountain hike complete!



FINAL THOUGHTS AFTER MY FIRST SOLO MOUNTAIN HIKE IN ANAGA RURAL PARK

Like any challenging adventures, these moments build grit, integrity and mental toughness. There are times when these kind of adventures are what you signed up for, what you need. Other times an adventure is just about enjoying the movement of your body, connecting with the rural landscape and nature around you. This adventure helped me to distinguish between the two and I will set an intention before planning my next solo adventure.

YOU SAID :

Mr Edward Johns says:
April 6, 2023 at 12:54 pm
Enjoyable read...
Can I ask... what essentials will you bring next time?
Did you feel safe?
Reply

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