

# FESTIVALS in Spain



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Front Cover: Fallas Bonfire Festival in Valencia  
 Back cover: Horse Fair, Jerez de la Frontera  
 Photo: Kiko Jiménez/123rf.com

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FESTIVITIES OF EL PILAR  
ZARAGOZA

## INTRODUCTION

Spain is a cheerful, welcoming and open-minded country, which likes to share its festivals with the rest of the world. We invite you to discover our customs and spend a few days sharing the festivities with us. It'll be great fun.

All sorts of experiences await you here: from colourful festivals like **Carnival** to the religious fervour of **Easter**. There are so many popular festivals throughout the year that you'll always find something interesting to celebrate. Some celebrate natural phenomena like the **Cherry Blossom Festival** in the Jerte Valley, others pay tribute to gastronomic products from the land and sea, such as those devoted to wine

and seafood. Most are held in summer, but each season has its own attractions.

A number of these festivities have been declared Intangible Cultural Heritage Assets because they are a unique expression of ancestral customs passed on from generation to generation. The **Fallas in Valencia**, the **Festival of the patios in Cordoba** and **San Fermín** in Pamplona are some of the most spectacular.

**What are you waiting for? Come and enjoy them, take part as one more in the crowd and discover the heart and soul of our country.**

# FESTIVALS IN SPAIN

## BY SEASON

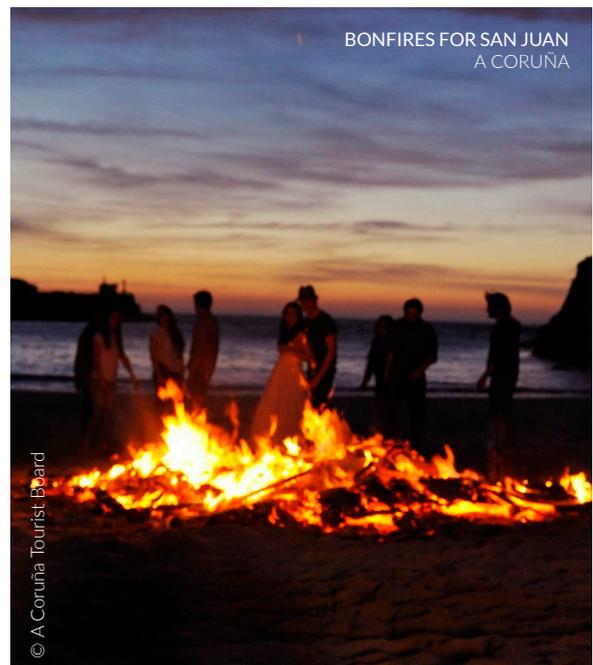
Take a seasonal tour with us, discover all the festivals and participate in them.



## SUMMER

### BONFIRES FOR SAN JUAN

Visit the city of **Alicante** for its main festivities. The night of San Juan welcomes the arrival of summer with bonfires next to the water, on the Mediterranean beaches. You'll really be impressed by the *ninots*, large carvings which are genuine satirical works of art, which will burn in the magical ritual of bonfires on the night of San Juan. For a whole week the city is filled with music and activities for young and old alike. During the night of 23 and 24 June there are also firework displays, called *mascletás* and the *cremá* (when the *ninots* are burned).



In **A Coruña** there are amazing parades and processions on 23 June, enjoy local music in the Plaza de María Pita and try the *sardinhadas* (grilled sardines). As the sun sets hundreds of bonfires are lit, especially on the *Riazor* and *Orzán* beaches. The sky is filled with fireworks, while hundreds of people plunge into the sea to perform the cleansing nine-wave ritual.

- ① *Where: Alicante (Region of Valencia) and A Coruña (Galicia)*  
*When: week of 23 June*  
[www.alicanteturismo.com/fogueres-de-santjoan/](http://www.alicanteturismo.com/fogueres-de-santjoan/)  
[www.hoguerassanjuan.com](http://www.hoguerassanjuan.com)

## SAN JUAN IN CIUDADELA, MINORCA

It dates back to the 14th century, when the main social groups in the city (church, nobility, craftsmen and peasants) rode on horseback to a small rural chapel to pay homage to their patron saint. You'll be surprised by the spectacular *jaleos* (horses bucking and dancing) surrounded by the crowd and even inside houses. The *caixers* (as the jockeys are called) rear their horses up on their hind legs while people try to touch their chests.

- ① *Where: Ciudadela (Minorca, Balearic Islands)*  
*When: week of 23 June*  
[www.ajciudadella.org](http://www.ajciudadella.org)



SAN JUAN IN CIUDADELA  
MINORCA

## FESTIVITIES OF SAN FERMÍN

Enjoy a non-stop party in the incredible atmosphere in Pamplona during the San Fermín festivities. A time when equal importance is given to the renowned bull-running, the local clubs, musical bands and cultural events programmed throughout the city.

At the end of the 19th century, they stopped running behind the bulls which the Navarre herders brought from the pastures, and started running in front of them up the Calle Estafeta. Since then every morning during the festival, you can experience the risk and the

thrill of the bull-running which is no less than a breakneck race through the old part of town until they reach the bullring, where the animals will take part in the afternoon bullfight. The festivities start on 6 July in the Plaza Consistorial, where thousands of people gather to celebrate the "chupinazo" (a rocket fired to declare the start of the festivities) in a sea of red neckerchiefs.

① *Where: Pamplona (Navarre)*

*Where: from 6 to 14 July*

*[www.pamplona.es/turismo/sanfermin](http://www.pamplona.es/turismo/sanfermin)*







▲ FESTIVITIES IN HONOUR OF SAINT JAMES THE APOSTLE  
SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

## FESTIVITIES IN HONOUR OF SAINT JAMES THE APOSTLE

Legend has it that it was the discovery of the remains of Saint James the Apostle that led to the creation of Santiago de Compostela, the capital of Galicia. It would soon become a holy city and a destination for pilgrims that eventually gave rise to the Way of Saint James. The festivities are a blend of religious fervour and popular feeling and entertainment. There are surprising three-dimensional projections onto the facade of the Cathedral, and then

there's the incredible "Botafumeiro", an enormous incense-burner in the interior. Festivities also include a number of music, dance and theatre shows, and close with a great firework display. When 25 July falls on a Sunday, then a Holy Jacobean Year is celebrated.

- ① *Where: Santiago de Compostela (A Coruña, Galicia)*  
*When: second fortnight in July*  
[www.santiagoturismo.com/festas-e-tradicions/festas-do-apostolo-santiago](http://www.santiagoturismo.com/festas-e-tradicions/festas-do-apostolo-santiago)

## THE "TOMATINA", BUÑOL

Put on goggles, a white T-shirt and be ready to have lots of fun. That's all you need to enjoy one of Spain's most original and surprising popular festivities. From early morning those taking part wait expectantly for the lorries loaded with tons of tomatoes which are thrown in a mock battle in which nobody gets hurt and everybody ends up dyed in red. Even though the battle only lasts about an hour, the party continues throughout the day and lasts well into the night.

- 📍 *Where: Buñol, Valencia  
(Region of Valencia)  
When: last Wednesday in August  
[www.latomatina.info](http://www.latomatina.info)*



Photo: © Joaquín MZ. Photo courtesy of La Tomatina Oficial, Buñol Town Council

LA TOMATINA TOMATO FESTIVAL  
BUÑOL

## VIKING PILGRIMAGE

On the first Sunday in August, the inhabitants of Catoira dress up as warrior kings and peasants to represent the village being attacked by pirates and the heroic defence by the local people. It is in memory of Galicia's defence against Viking incursions. The Vikings disembark near the Torres del Oeste, an 11th century fortified complex, and an entertaining simulated battle ensues in which those taking part end up drenched in wine. Take a stroll through the Medieval market and enjoy the culinary delights of the region.

- 📍 *Where: Catoira (Pontevedra, Galicia)  
When: first Sunday in August  
[www.catoira.gal/es/turismo/romaria-vikinga/](http://www.catoira.gal/es/turismo/romaria-vikinga/)*



VIKING PILGRIMAGE  
CATOIRA, PONTEVEDRA



## EL CANTE DE LAS MINAS INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Flamenco, one of Spain's most representative artistic expressions, holds an essential event each year in La Unión (Murcia). Here you'll be able to enjoy some of this art's greatest singers, dancers and guitarists and discover the relationship between Flamenco and the mining tradition in the Cartagena-La Unión mountains. There are competitions and galas, as well as wine-tasting and poetry recitals.

① *Where: La Unión (Murcia)*  
*When: first week in August*  
[www.festivalcantedelasminas.org](http://www.festivalcantedelasminas.org)



## INTERNATIONAL DESCENT OF THE RIVER SELLA

Come and enjoy one of the most important global canoeing events which has been held since 1930. The banks of the River Sella are the best place from where to watch the race which runs from the town of Arriondas to the finish in Ribadesella. Once the race is over, the festivities start in Campos de Ova with an open-air lunch, and then continue in the evening in the popular cider houses and fairs in Ribadesella and Arriondas.

📍 *Where: Arriondas and Ribadesella (Asturias)*  
*When: first Saturday in August*  
[www.descensodelsella.com](http://www.descensodelsella.com)

## 'MISTERIO DE ELCHE' MYSTERY PLAY

The production of a play inside The Basílica de Santa María, in the town of Elche, provides a unique theatrical experience. It has been declared a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by the UNESCO, and consists of a 13th century Medieval lyric drama in two acts. When the play has finished there is a procession in which the actors take part.

📍 *Where: Elche (Alicante, Region of Valencia)*  
*When: from 11 to 15 de August*  
[www.misteridelx.com](http://www.misteridelx.com)

## ALBARIÑO WINE FESTIVAL

Try one of the best white wines in Europe in the heart of the Rías Baixas in Galicia. The festival is devoted exclusively to this fruity, cool and smooth wine. The festival takes place during the first week of August in the small fishing town of Cambados and involves opening thousands of bottles, wine tasting and all accompanied by culinary forums, concerts and exhibitions of folklore.

📍 *Where: Cambados (Pontevedra, Galicia)*  
*When: first week in August*  
[www.cambados.es/es/item/fiesta-del-albarino/](http://www.cambados.es/es/item/fiesta-del-albarino/)

## "SEMANA GRANDE" FESTIVAL IN BILBAO

Nine days to enjoy the numerous activities taking place throughout this city in the Basque Country. Concerts, shows and firework displays await you. In the Old Town and on both sides of the Estuary you'll find *txosnas* (stalls with music, food and drink), the heart of these festivities which include traditional characters like the **Marijaia**, a doll with its arms in the air which represents the festivity and is burned as the closing event.

📍 *Where: Bilbao (Bizkaia, Basque Country)*  
*When: second fortnight in August*  
[www.bilbaoturismo.net](http://www.bilbaoturismo.net)





Photo: © Tarazona Town Council

▲ EL CIPOTEGATO  
TARAZONA

## EL CIPOTEGATO, TARAZONA

This tradition dates back to the 18th century, when a character appeared disguised as a jester (Cipotegado) who forced his way through a crowd of children so that the procession in honour of the patron saint, San Atilano could pass through. Midway through the 20th century everything changed and now it is Cipotegado who is chased by the crowd while they throw tomatoes

at him. This character marks the start of the festivities in the town, which include fairs, parades and a variety of religious and cultural events.

① *Where: Tarazona (Zaragoza, Aragon)*  
*When: from 27 August to 1 September*  
[www.tarazona.es/tu-ciudad/descubre-tarazona/el-cipotegado](http://www.tarazona.es/tu-ciudad/descubre-tarazona/el-cipotegado)



▲ BATTLE OF THE FLOWERS  
LAREDO

## BATTLE OF THE FLOWERS, LAREDO

Visit this beautiful coastal town in Cantabria and enjoy the spectacular beauty of a competition for carriages decorated with thousands of flowers. The night before the parade you can watch the carriages being decorated and enjoy the festive atmosphere. The

following day, apart from the parade, there are street markets and musical performances which end with the choice of the best carriage of the year.

📍 *Where: Laredo (Cantabria)*  
*When: last Friday in August*  
[www.batalladeflores.net](http://www.batalladeflores.net)



Photo: Jimuca Revollo Ochoa

▲ HORSE RACING  
SANLÚCAR DE BARRAMEDA

## HORSE RACING ON THE BEACH IN SANLÚCAR DE BARRAMEDA

At low tide, when the Sanlúcar de Barrameda beach turns to ochre, the horses and their jockeys get ready for one of the most important events in the sporting, tourism and social summer calendar in Andalusia. A tradition that has its origins in the informal competitions that took place between local fishmongers, to see who could get

to market first. Apart from watching the races, you can enjoy the unforgettable experience of the festivities in honour of Sanlúcar's patron saint, with floats parading through the streets decorated with carpets of flowers.

① *Where: Sanlúcar de Barrameda  
(Cadiz, Andalusia)  
When: August  
[www.sanlucarturismo.com](http://www.sanlucarturismo.com)*

## GRAPE HARVEST FESTIVAL

The grape harvest is the ideal time to get a close look at the wine-making process. This includes the traditional treading of the grapes, tasting the first must and open days in the wine-cellar.

For the first fortnight in September, **Jerez de la Frontera** (Cadiz) celebrates a festival which pays tribute to the three symbolic elements of its culture: wine, horses and Flamenco. You'll get to taste wines and typical Andalusian products as you take part in festivities with a distinctly popular flavour.

Another great festivity to celebrate wine takes place in **Logroño**, the capital of La Rioja, a region which puts its heart and soul into producing the finest wine. Popularly known as the San Mateo Festivities (21 September), they consist of eight days for you to experience a truly infectious atmosphere. Apart from the activities directly related to wine, there are also bull-running, carriage parades and a lot of music.

① *Where: Jerez de la Frontera (Cadiz, Andalusia) and Logroño (La Rioja)*  
*When: September*  
[www.turismojerez.com](http://www.turismojerez.com)  
[www.visitalogrono.com](http://www.visitalogrono.com)

▼ GRAPE HARVEST FESTIVAL  
JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA



Photo: © Jerez City Council



▲ MOORS AND CHRISTIANS  
VILLENNA, ALICANTE

▼ MOORS AND CHRISTIANS  
MURCIA



## MOORS AND CHRISTIANS

This is one of the traditions maintained throughout the country, but especially in the Region of Valencia and in Murcia. There are incredible parades to commemorate the confrontation between Moors and Christians for the control of Spain in the 13th century.

The most spectacular, and therefore the most renowned, take place in **Alcoy**, in Alicante. They were declared to be of International Tourist Interest in 1980 and are said to be the first to be held in the Region of Valencia.

Also in Alicante, **Villena** surrenders to the rhythm and color of 16 troupes, dressed up as squads of soldiers, parade through the streets to show off the traditional costumes made by each participant.

In the streets of **Murcia**, among dancing, parades and floats, both “armies emissaries” read out a text to convince the other to surrender. This takes place at historical sites in the city, to the rhythm of the “pasodoble”. Finally, you can watch the ceremonial presentation of the keys to the city, climax of the festival.

- ① *Where: Alcoy and Villena, Alicante (Region of Valencia) and Murcia (Autonomous Community of the Region of Murcia)  
When: first fortnight in September  
[www.alcoyturismo.com](http://www.alcoyturismo.com)  
[www.turismovillena.com](http://www.turismovillena.com)  
[www.morosycristianosmurcia.org](http://www.morosycristianosmurcia.org)*



FESTIVAL OF THE MUTINY  
ARANJUEZ, MADRID

## FESTIVAL OF THE MUTINY, ARANJUEZ

Every September Aranjuez commemorates the popular uprising in 1808 against Manuel Godoy, a minister of King Charles IV. Different neighbourhoods perform theatrical representations of the uprising, Goya paintings which the local people bring to life and a wide selection of cultural events and popular fairs. Another

great feature of these festivities is the Pirate Descent of the River Tagus, with hundreds of handmade vessels ploughing through the waters of the river as it flows through Aranjuez.

① **Where:** Aranjuez (Madrid Region)  
**When:** first weekend in September  
[visita.aranjuez.es](http://visita.aranjuez.es)



## THE "CASCAMORRAS", BAZA AND GUADIX

This festival dates back to the Middle Ages when the appearance of a carving of the Virgin of La Piedad confronted the two towns and ended up in Baza. The people accompany the "Cascamorras", a strikingly dressed jester, on his way from Guadix to Baza where he will try to recover the sacred image. The townsfolk stop him with black paint as they chase him through the streets of the town,

The "Cascamorras" stops a number of times to wave the flag of the Virgin of La Piedad over the people's heads as they bow down around him. Apart from the paint, another essential element for these festivities is water, which those taking part need to refresh themselves during the chase.

① *Where: Baza and Guadix (Granada, Andalusia)*

*When: from 5 to 9 de September*

*[www.bazaturismo.com](http://www.bazaturismo.com)*

*[guadix.es/turismo](http://guadix.es/turismo)*



Photo: Joan Capdevila

▲ FESTIVAL OF SANTA TECLA  
TARRAGONA

## SANTA TECLA FESTIVITIES, TARRAGONA

If you visit Tarragona in the second fortnight in September you'll get to experience some of Catalonia's most symbolic traditional festivities. The city streets are full of people dressed up as devils and dragons dancing and testing your reflexes by throwing *firecrackers*, which is what they call *El Correfoc*. Or you can enjoy the surprising ability of the *castellers*, human towers which can reach up to 9 levels. These two activities enjoy mass participation while the focal point of the festivity is the Popular Procession made up of "cabezudos" (people wearing enormous papier-mâché heads) and extras dancing to the rhythm of the music.

- 📍 *Where: Tarragona (Catalonia)*
- When: second fortnight in September*
- [www.tarragonaturisme.cat/es/eventos/santa-tecla](http://www.tarragonaturisme.cat/es/eventos/santa-tecla)



Photo: Marnet R. Granell

▲ FESTIVAL OF SANTA TECLA  
TARRAGONA

## AUTUMN

### FESTIVAL OF CARTHAGINIANS AND ROMANS, CARTAGENA

Midway between summer and autumn, Cartagena pays tribute to its ancient history with a unique festivity. For ten days, the inhabitants relive the conflict between the Carthaginians and the Romans, recalling events that occurred more than 2,200 years ago. The city becomes a stage for spectacular theatre performances by both sides, with an incredible display

of period costumes. In the festive camp you can visit the craft market, sample the specialities of Carthaginian cuisine, enjoy the atmosphere and party until well into the night.

📍 *Where: Cartagena (Murcia)*  
*When: second fortnight in September*  
[www.cartaginesesyromanos.es](http://www.cartaginesesyromanos.es)

▼ FESTIVAL OF CARTHAGINIANS AND ROMANS  
CARTAGENA



## SEAFOOD FESTIVAL, O GROVE

O Grove, on the Atlantic seaboard in Galicia, is renowned for its seafood, beaches and spas. In the first week in October, this town dresses up to hold the Seafood Festival, an incredible display of Galician gastronomy and folklore. Sample exquisite seafood at reduced prices and take part in live cooking events to the sound of bagpipes and tambourines. On the

last day you can join the crowd for the Noite Meiga (Witches Night) and try the Gran Queimada, a traditional Galician beverage made from grape pomace moonshine which is prepared following a traditional ritual to keep evil spirits at bay.

① *Where: O Grove (Pontevedra, Galicia)*  
*When: First weekend in October*  
[www.turismogrove.es](http://www.turismogrove.es)

▼ SEAFOOD FESTIVAL  
O GROVE







Photo: Cambrarian

▲ ORUJO FESTIVAL

### EL PILAR FESTIVITIES (ZARAGOZA)

In mid-October, the capital of the Aragon Region becomes a bright, festive city which blends tradition and modernity. For more than a week culture takes to the streets, with a succession of theatre, dance, film and musical performances all across the city.

The highlight of the festivities comes on 12 October with a floral offering to the patron saint, the Virgin of El Pilar. That is when thousands of citizens and devotees from all around the world gather to place flowers at the feet of the Virgin to create an enormous, multi-coloured blanket of flowers. At nightfall on the 13th, it's time for the amazing procession of the Rosario de Cristal. This procession of floats lit up with stained glass and lanterns is an unforgettable sight.

① *Where: Zaragoza (Aragón)*  
*When: 12 October*  
[www.zaragoza.es/sede/portal/turismo/post/fiestas-del-pilar](http://www.zaragoza.es/sede/portal/turismo/post/fiestas-del-pilar)

### ORUJO FESTIVAL, POTES

Potes is located at the confluence of four valleys and enjoys a mild Mediterranean climate which makes it possible to grow grapes from which they make the region's renowned schnapps. This liqueur is the focal point for one of the most deeply-rooted festivals in Cantabria which each year brings together thousands of people to try the local grape pomaces and enjoy the festivities with an abundance of music and traditional games. You not only get to witness the traditional way in which this liqueur is prepared, you can also try some of the local culinary delights like "Lebaniego" stew and handmade cheeses.

① *Where: Potes (Cantabria)*  
*When: second weekend in November*  
[www.turismodecantabria.com](http://www.turismodecantabria.com)

## WINTER



▲ NATIVITY PLAY AND THREE KINGS PARADE  
SANTILLANA DEL MAR

## THREE KINGS PARADE

In Spain, presents at Christmas time “are brought” to children by the Three Wise Men. These Three Kings, Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar came, with great symbolic meaning, from the Orient to pay homage and deliver presents to Jesus of Nazareth. Every 5 January in the evening, there is a Three Kings Parade everywhere in Spain, an event in which a large number of floats transport the kings and other fantasy characters who throw sweets to the crowds and the many hopeful children.

The **Three Kings Parade in Alcoy**, Alicante, is the most longstanding in Spain and has a number of features which make it different from the others. At sunset on 4 January you can see the torches lighting up the royal camp located on the hill overlooking the town. The children go out into the streets to look for the Royal Ambassador, a messenger accompanied by donkeys carrying letterboxes where the children post their letters to their majesties. On the evening of 5 January the Three Kings arrive by camel and parade through the streets in the town.



In **Santillana del Mar** (Cantabria), apart from the traditional Three Kings Parade, a number of scenes are enacted relating to the birth of the Child Jesus. Entitled **Auto Sacramental**, these theatrical events take place in the open air in different parts of the historical town centre. The picturesque scenario of this Medieval town with cobbled streets provides a delightful Christmas atmosphere.

📍 **Where:** Alcoy (Alicante, Region of Valencia) and Santillana del Mar (Cantabria)  
**When:** 5 January  
[www.alcoyturismo.com](http://www.alcoyturismo.com)  
[www.turismodecantabria.com](http://www.turismodecantabria.com)



▲ FESTIVAL OF LAS BODAS DE ISABEL DE SEGURA  
TERUEL

## FESTIVAL OF LAS BODAS DE ISABEL DE SEGURA, TERUEL

During the month of February, the city of Teruel relives the tragic love story between Isabel de Segura and Juan Diego Martínez de Marcilla, *The Lovers of Teruel*, legendary characters from the 13th century. You'll be able to see first-hand how the historic city centre becomes a stage where the different scenes from this eternal love story are played out. The townsfolk all dress up in Medieval costumes and the streets and squares are full of music, troubadours and storytellers. In this marvellous atmosphere all sorts of events and activities take place, like sword-fighting tournaments, jousting and sampling local gastronomic delights.

📍 **Where:** Teruel (Aragón)  
**When:** Third weekend in February  
[www.bodasdeisabel.com](http://www.bodasdeisabel.com)



## CARNIVAL

Experience the incredible outbreak of joy as the people spill out onto the streets in full costume in a symphony of colour, joy and ingenuity. Celebrations at carnival time are some of the most well-attended and entertaining festivities in Spain. Although carnival is celebrated all over the country, the festivities in Cadiz, Santa Cruz de Tenerife and Águilas are the most spectacular, original and internationally renowned.

The origin of **Carnival in Cadiz**, declared a Festival of International Tourist Interest, dates back to the 15th century. A number of features make it different from the others, like the dozens of "comparsas y chirigotas" (troupes of musicians) singing socially and politically sarcastic and critical songs. The neighbourhoods in the historical city centre, especially La Viña, are the highlight of the festival with parades, fairs and endless activities.



▲ CARNIVAL  
SANTA CRUZ DE TENERIFE



▲ CARNIVAL  
SANTA CRUZ DE TENERIFE

The **Carnival in Santa Cruz de Tenerife** stands out because it is so spectacular. The people in Tenerife spend the whole year getting ready for their most important festival, designing the floats and getting their costumes ready. The choice of the Queen attracts international attention. The candidates parade in spectacular costumes some of which may weigh up to 200 kilos.

On Saturday there is a Brazilian-style parade through the city centre announcing the beginning of the festivities. The musical and dance groups create a Caribbean atmosphere making it impossible not to dance. The highlight comes on Tuesday during the giant "El Coso" parade, when absolutely everybody joins in to create an explosion of glitter and a torrent of fun.

The **Carnival in Águilas** is one of the most eye-catching and traditional in

Spain. It lasts two weeks and consists of magnificent parades full of music, revelry and joy. The main day of the festival is ideal for enjoying the fancy dress and dances of the carnival troupes. That's the night when the "peñas" get going, groups of people getting together in bars where they spend three days sampling regional specialities and typical drinks like "la cuerva" (made from fruit and different alcoholic drinks, similar to sangria). You can also take part in surprising events like the battle of confetti-filled eggs and watch the paper fancy dress competition.

① *Where: Santa Cruz de Tenerife (Tenerife Island, Canary Islands), Cadiz (Andalusia) and Águilas (Murcia)*

*When: End of February or beginning of March*

*[www.carnavaldetenerife.com](http://www.carnavaldetenerife.com)*

*[www.cadizturismo.com](http://www.cadizturismo.com)*

*[www.carnavaldeaguilas.org](http://www.carnavaldeaguilas.org)*

## FALLAS DE SAN JOSÉ (BONFIRE FESTIVAL), VALENCIA

We bid farewell to the winter with the Fallas de San Jose Bonfire Festival in Valencia, when the whole city is devoted to its festival and the music. During the week of 19 March, the city is filled with satirical *ninots* which end up as spectacular bonfires. They date back to a tradition in the carpenters' guild, which in the 18th century used to burn old furniture in the streets to celebrate the end of winter.

Brace yourself each day for a symphony of deafening noise from the *mascletà*, a string of really powerful firecrackers that will make your whole body shake. On the night of 15 March there is the traditional *plantà*, when they set up the *ninots* in streets and squares throughout the city. On the night of 19 March, the day of San José, the *cremà* takes place, this is when they set fire to these short-lived structures. There are also other beautiful events such as the floral offering to the Virgin, as well as *paredes*, etc.

① **Where:** Valencia (Region of Valencia)  
**When:** from 1 to 19 March  
[www.visitvalencia.com/agenda-valencia/fiestas/las-fallas-de-valencia](http://www.visitvalencia.com/agenda-valencia/fiestas/las-fallas-de-valencia)

## SPRING

### CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL, JERTE VALLEY (EXTREMADURA)

When spring arrives a blanket of white cherry tree flowers covers the terraced hillsides of the Jerte Valley in Extremadura. The Cherry Blossom Festival is a popular festival that showcases the culture, gastronomy and traditions of a dozen or so towns in the province of Caceres. You can stroll

amongst the cherry trees, enjoy theatre and art festivals, and visit the Garganta de los Infiernos Nature Reserve.

① *Where: Jerte Valley (Caceres, Extremadura)*  
*When: end of March, beginning of April*  
[www.turismovalledeljerte.com/cerezo-en-flor](http://www.turismovalledeljerte.com/cerezo-en-flor)

▼ CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL  
EL JERTE VALLEY





## EASTER WEEK

Experience Spain's most spectacular and emotional religious festival. Fervour, art and music are intermingled with a series of religious acts.

In **Seville** (Andalusia) there is a special devotion for these festivities, with processions day and night. Richly adorned religious images on floats known as 'pasos', are carried through the streets to the rhythm of solemn music. Sacred Flamenco songs called "saetas" are sung by the crowds a cappella as the images go past. One of the most anticipated processions is the *Madrugá*, the night between Maundy Thursday and Good Friday when the Passion of Christ is recreated. In the town of **Zamora**, a gem of Romanesque art in Castile-León, Easter is experienced in silence and austerity. The processions mostly take place at night, through Medieval cobbled streets and squares where the only lighting comes from candles, lanterns and torches. The wonderful carved figures have extreme artistic value.

In **Cuenca** (Castile-La Mancha), a Medieval city with a great religious tradition, you can see the procession of the Road to Calvary and witness the surprising *turbas*, the thunderous noise made by drums and trumpets which precede the image of Christ. Religious Music Week is held to coincide with Easter and features international orchestras and choirs performing the great compositions of sacred music in the Cathedral.

① *Where: all over Spain*

*When: end of March, beginning of April*

[www.visitasevilla.es/la-semana-santa-de-sevilla](http://www.visitasevilla.es/la-semana-santa-de-sevilla)

[www.semanasantadezamora.com](http://www.semanasantadezamora.com)

[www.visitacuenca.es](http://www.visitacuenca.es)



▲ BURIAL OF THE SARDINE  
MURCIA

## BURYING THE SARDINE, MURCIA

This is a popular parade which marks the end of the Carnival Festivities. In Murcia it takes place later than in the rest of Spain, the weekend after Easter. These colourful, joyful festivities date back 150 years. You'll love the splendid costumes made by the carnival groups which entertain the city at this time and you can watch the great parade to celebrate the Burying of the Sardine, when the troupes make way for the floats, dedicated to the gods of Olympus, from which they throw toys and presents to the spectators. At the end of the parade comes the burning of the sardine amid a spectacular fireworks display and everyone enjoys a party which lasts until dawn.

① *Where: Murcia*  
*When: April*  
[www.entierrodelasardina.es](http://www.entierrodelasardina.es)

## APRIL FAIR, SEVILLE

You'll have a wonderful time at the most popular and well attended festival in all Andalusia. From midday you'll see the people from Seville riding on horseback or in carriages along the city's main avenues. The April Fair officially begins when they light the "portada", an enormous structure decorated with thousands of light bulbs located at the entrance to the fairground. The best thing is just to let yourself get carried along by the incredible atmosphere within the fairground and the thousand or so stalls, although you should understand that some of them are private.

Feast your eyes on the colourful Flamenco dresses and try some delicious hand-carved cured Iberian ham. You could also learn the steps for a "sevillana", a traditional Flamenco song and dance which is the unmistakable soundtrack for the April Fair.

① *Where: Seville (Andalusia)*  
*When: April*  
[www.visitasevilla.es](http://www.visitasevilla.es)



▲ APRIL FAIR  
SEVILLE

## FESTIVAL OF THE PATIOS IN CORDOBA

A visit to Cordoba in May will lead you straight to the city's treasure. For two weeks, the people of Cordoba proudly open the gates to their patios in the historical old town when their flower pots begin to blossom: geraniums, carnations and jasmines that hang from the whitewashed walls. They can be visited at practically any time of the day. And you should not miss the Flamenco shows as well as the chance to taste delicious tapas from Cordoba and Montilla-Moriles wine.

- ① *Where: Cordoba (Andalusia)*  
*When: first fortnight in May*  
[www.turismodecordoba.org](http://www.turismodecordoba.org)  
[patios.cordoba.es](http://patios.cordoba.es)



FESTIVAL OF THE PATIOS  
CORDOBA



HORSE FAIR  
JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA

## HORSE FAIR, JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA

This fair at the beginning of May brings together the three great passions of Jerez de la Frontera, in Andalusia (horses, wines and Flamenco). And the fair which takes place at the beginning of May is an expression of these three passions. Since its beginnings as a 13th century livestock market it has grown into a festival which includes horse competitions, shows with bulls and competitions for dancing "sevillanas".

The González de Hontoria Park is the venue for hundreds of riders and carriages to parade through the streets in the fair's enclosure. At night it becomes an enormous Flamenco show, surrounded by stalls serving "rebujito" (Manzanilla wine or dry sherry mixed with white lemonade) as well as exquisite varieties of sherry.

- ① *Where: Jerez de la Frontera (Cadiz, Andalusia)*  
*When: May*  
[www.jerez.es/especiales/feria-del-caballo](http://www.jerez.es/especiales/feria-del-caballo)

## PILGRIMAGE TO EL ROCIO, ALMONTE

This religious and festive event is held 50 days after Easter. As many as a million people come from all over Spain to the sanctuary of the "White Dove" in the village of El Rocio in Almonte (Huelva), very near the marshlands of the Doñana National Park. The most exciting part of the event takes place on the night of Sunday to Monday when the "salto de la reja" takes place: the people of Almonte climb over the railings in the church to reach the altar and take the image of the Virgin for a procession. A rather surprising sign of their deep religious devotion.

📍 *Where: Almonte (Huelva, Andalusia)*  
*When: May*  
[www.andalucia.org](http://www.andalucia.org)



PILGRIMAGE OF EL ROCÍO  
ALMONTE



## CORPUS CHRISTI

This Catholic festival is a tradition which is celebrated in many parts of Spain, but in **Toledo** it is especially important.

There is a solemn parade in a city adorned for the occasion with ancient standards and tapestries on the balconies of the houses and flower arrangements in the streets. You can also visit the beautiful patios in the city's palaces and stately houses because most of them open their doors to the public for Corpus Christi.

In **Villa de Mazo** on the Canary Island of La Palma, this religious festival is also celebrated with special intensity. A traditional procession and its parallel activities join together with its most characteristic feature, the floral tapestries and arches throughout the town decorated with petals, plants and seeds.

📍 *Where: Toledo (Castile-La Mancha) and Villa de Mazo (Island of La Palma, Canary Islands)*  
*When: 31 May*  
[www.corpustoledo.org](http://www.corpustoledo.org)  
[www.villademazo.com](http://www.villademazo.com)



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