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More Spanish Festivals

By Mike McDougall

Tamborrada, San Sebastián

Every year on the 19th and 20th of January, the Basque city of San Sebastian prepares for the noisiest festival in the whole of Spain . From midnight to midnight the city is alive to the sound of drumming as groups of marching bands parade through the streets in honour of the city's patron saint, pounding out rhythms on their drums and barrels. The origins of the festival are a little bit unclear but legend has it that in 1720 a local baker was filling his water barrels and started to sing and a group of passing girls began to bang on the barrels to accompany him. A crowd soon gathered and the festival was born.

The festival starts with the raising of the flag at midnight on the 19 th and 24 hours of marching, drumming and revelry send the city into a frenzy until the festival is brought to a close by the drummers of the "Union Artesana" on midnight the following day.

Cava Week, Sant Sadurni d'Anoia

In the heart of Cava country in the Penedes region of north east Catalonia , the first Thursday of September heralds the start of Cava Week, a seven day celebration of Spain 's answer to champagne. The Catalonian town of Sant Sadurni d'Anoia is the undisputed home of Cava; the town produces 85% of Spain 's output of the famous sparkling wine.

The festivities begin with the crowning of the Cava queen at the start of the week; once crowned, she is given a glass of the first pressing of the year's crop - then begins a week of wine, food and concerts and events. Indeed it's not all about the Cava, gourmet food, music and a 300 man cycle race all add to the merriment. Possibly the most famous event of the week is the arrival of the Cava train from Barcelona . 1,000 revellers from the Catalan capital arrive in the sleepy village with much pomp and fanfare as they are escorted to the Cava houses and the town hall - the day out includes tastings, cellar tours and a gourmet lunch before the revellers get back on the train and return to Barcelona.

Moros y Cristianos, Alcoy

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Celebrated in venues all around Spain the Moros y Cristianos festival (literally "Moors and Christians") commemorate the many battles fought between the two sides in the "Reconquista" period of Spanish history. The most famous of these events takes place in the Valencian town of Alcoy around Saint George's day in April. Legend asserts that Saint George himself miraculously appeared at such a battle as Alcoy and turned the tide in favour of the Christians. These days the festival is the highlight of the year for the townsfolk of Alcoy with no less than 28 separate Moorish and Christian armies parading around in full medieval, military attire. The proceedings are taken very seriously by the Alcoyanos as they march in their companies all day accompanied by bands. Mock battles also take place at various points throughout the festival culminating in a huge simulated battle around Alcoy's castle.

Feria de Abril, Seville

Originally a cattle trading fair in the 19th century, Seville's Abril Feria (April Fair) is a week long

festival which takes place in the Andalucian city every year, attracting over 1 million visitors. A seven day celebration of bullfighting, flamenco and horsemanship that grips the city just two weeks after the culmination of the more solemn proceedings of Semana Santa (Holy Week). Locals are dressed in traditional Andalucian clothing with the women stealing the show with their magnificent and colourful flamenco dresses; the men wear wide brimmed "bolero" hats and short cut jackets. The main focal point of the festival is the city of "Caletas" (large temporary tents) that is set up every year - these tents are usually assigned to a political group or society with a dance floor and a bar where young and old dance the night away to the strains of flamenco.

Mike McDougall has been commissioned by Babylon Idiomas to write a number of articles about Spanish culture. Babylon Idiomas is a Spanish language institute with schools in Spain [Barcelona, Madrid, Sevilla, Valencia], Argentina [Buenos Aires] and Costa Rica. Visit

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A Culture-Fest In Barcelona

By Rent City Apartments

Barcelona is one of those cities you can visit again and again. Its fantastic location, within reach of some of Spain's most beautiful coastline, together with its history, architecture and huge cultural programme is what makes it one of Europe's most popular city destinations.

So, how can you max-out on culture when you visit Barcelona? Here are just a few suggestions:

1. The Picasso Museum

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Barcelona is awash with museum, both public and private, and the Picasso Museum is a must-see on any tourist's itinerary. Picasso trained in Barcelona, and so the museum displays a comprehensive selection of the work he created whilst studying in the city. It is an important collection that shows his technical skills and his growth as an artist. In addition, there is a collection of over 40 ceramic pieces, which were donated to the museum by Jacqueline Picasso in the 1980s. Housed in magnificent medieval palaces, and with classical music concerts as well as the art collection, the Picasso Museum is not to be missed.

2. The Architecture

Costing you nothing but tired feet at the end of the day, you can view the history of Barcelona through its buildings. From its Roman Walls, visit the Gothic quarter, where the Cathedral, public and private buildings all take you back in time to the city's Medieval period. See Modernisme buildings that are also World Heritage Sites and modern buildings such as those built for the 1992 Olympic Games, and you'll have walked through thousands of years of Barcelonian history in just one day.

3. Festivals

Like any major city, Barcelona hosts a number of festivals each year. One of the most popular and best-known is the Barcelona Grec Summer Festival, which encompasses a wide range of productions and performers. In addition, festivals such as the Ciutat Vella Flamenco Festival and the Barcelona Guitar Festival give visitors a true taste of Spanish art and culture.

There's a whole lot of other cultural activities and events to keep you busy on your visit to this amazing city - and you'll want to come back for more

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