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The Valencia Spain Fallas Nowadays

By Rob Carlton

Spain and especially Valencia is filled with tradition, and Las Fallas is the most popular and

outstanding tradition in this marvellous city. It is a festival where everyone can participate whether you are from the local land, a foreigner who has chosen to spend some time there or an intentional tourist who has planned to visit the city on purpose to find out what emotions can be lived. Satire and gaiety are two very important concepts that you must keep in mind along with good food and entertainment on practically every corner. It is always held from March 15th to the 19th, Saint Joseph's Day, when the great bonfire or Fallas are burnt. Let's find what its all about.

No one really knows how it all started, but it seems to have began with a pagan festival having to do with Saturn, something very much celebrated in the old Roman Times. All activities were put aside except cooking, in those times done over wooden fires where a lot of kindling wood was not only used for light and cooking but also to alert the towns people and those travelling by sea. Saturn is also linked to Satan and there is no doubt that all this can be tied together with fire and the pagan tradition of burning things to get rid of bad spirits.

But a more recent explanation will take you back to 16th century when the carpenters guild used tall sticks with various arms and rags soaked in tar as if they were candelabros for lighting in the streets in winter. But when spring time came around, they did their spring cleaning and made heaps of wood and all the material that they no longer needed in the town square with the candelabros in the middle. Soon, many people would take advantage of this massive clean-out and threw old clothing and other household objects. With the imagination of a few townsfolk and being as the candelabros could be dressed with the old clothing, they started to make real like figures, some of which looked quite like some of the people from the village. And being as the people needed this time to organize their homes and some time to enjoy themselves and the spring season, they made it an annual event and from there – a tradition. They other surrounding neighbourhoods started to do the same and now there are over 360 huge Fallas or intricately elaborated carton monuments as if there were comics made real, just in the capital of Valencia.

Fallas and spring cleaning go hand –in–hand

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But even though we can still relive traditions from many centuries ago, none can escape progress. So in order to make Valencia Fallas more well known, the printer guild came up with booklets or pamphlets explaining what satire or criticism all the different Fallas wanted to express. Back then, the people did not dare to openly criticize the king or political leader in power so the figurines were mainly about machism and females who were "slaves" in their own homes and to men. But this has completely changed and there is an ample range of freedom in expression and very astutely done. The only problem is that the explicative signs which accompany each fallas or carton monument are in Valencian, the local language.

Easy come and easy stay for Valencia Fallas

One of the best parts of fully enjoying a popular festival is being able to get there and have a comfortable stay with the minimal amount of problems possible. And thanks to the nearness of the Valencia Airport to the city, the long lists of flights you can catch daily from almost any European city,

especially from England, the wide range of prices and availability of hotels and the quickness of having a car hire for your personal use, your trip cannot be anything but a great success. And now with the city's preparation for the 2007 America's Cup, the world's most important sailing competition, the whole port area where many luxury yachts is being transformed, adding to the magic of Valencia Fallas.

Robert Carlton publishes very often for the website

<http://www.valencia-information.com>

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publication he is specializing in subjects like local culture and especially the fallas

<http://www.valencia-information.com/spain/valencia-fallas.html>

Surprises In Valencia Spain

By Ciara McNamara

I have been an avid visitor on my holiday to the city of Valencia since 1980, and only noticed slight improvements and changes as far as its tourist offers were concerned, but in the last five or six years, this city has so much to do that I find myself travelling there whenever I can. I have always been fascinated by the Saint Joseph Festival of Fallas, then came the opening of the first buildings in the complex called 'The City of the Arts and Sciences', with the last building just recently opened. But living on the coast, you indirectly get caught in the tidal wave of sailing and the Americas Cup event which started in Valencia on 26th of November 2003 and which has brought many people into the world of navigating. Yearly Valencia Happenings Valencia Fallas is a yearly happening which reaches its highest points on the night of March 19th after having initiated the beginning on March 15th with stunning carton monuments on almost every corner, half hour long fireworks every night, historical

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parades of the Moorish in the streets and the local people dressed up in their best brocade traditional outfits in a jovial religious procession bringing flowers to the Virgin of the Unsheltered (the Patron Saint of Valencia).

Another `not to be missed' permanent attraction is the architecture which houses the now complete City of the Arts and Sciences. There are four main buildings:

+ Oceanographic– with over 45,000 samples of 500 different species of underwater life including a special tank with sharks which you can walk under.

+ Museum of the Sciences Prince Philip– where you can participate in all kinds of experiments and learn a lot more about biology and genetics.

+ The Hemispheric– where you can sit back, choose and enjoy any of the three audio–visual shows, either at the Planetarium, the Laserium or on the gigantic screen watching documentaries where you feel you are an active part.

+ The Queen Sophia Palace of Arts - this was just opened in October 2005 with the presence of the Queen. Here, all visitors will be honoured with performing arts in theatre, opera and all kinds of dance exhibitions. Let's Monkey around in Valencia Spain If you are planning to travel to Valencia for whatever holiday at the end of next year, you will find yourself with the new Valencia Zoo or BioPark situated in a new green area and housing among other animals, over 250 species from the African savannah. Its to be 14 times bigger than the existing one and will take approximately six hours to see it all, but do not worry because the weather in Valencia is sunny and mild in winter. The young and old will be able to enjoy seeing the natural habitats of all these different animals that one usually cannot contemplate unless you actually travel there.

In 2006, there will also be more fleet and match races with the Americas Cup. Valencia will have three more Louis Vuitton Acts starting in May and continuing on into autumn. The port area will have undergone a big change and you can leisurely stroll around to get a close up view of the competing boats. There is also an official store where you can get all the seafaring attire your heart desires.

With all these new activities, the Valencia Airport has been making important improvements and has been gradually increasing its offer of flights from all over the world. There are new hotels and better

transport for all those who wish to be an important part of Valencia Spain.

Ciara McNamara distributes very often to the information source at

<http://www.valencia-information.com>

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