

5 KEYS TO UNDERSTANDING THE FALLAS



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Intangible
Cultural
Heritage

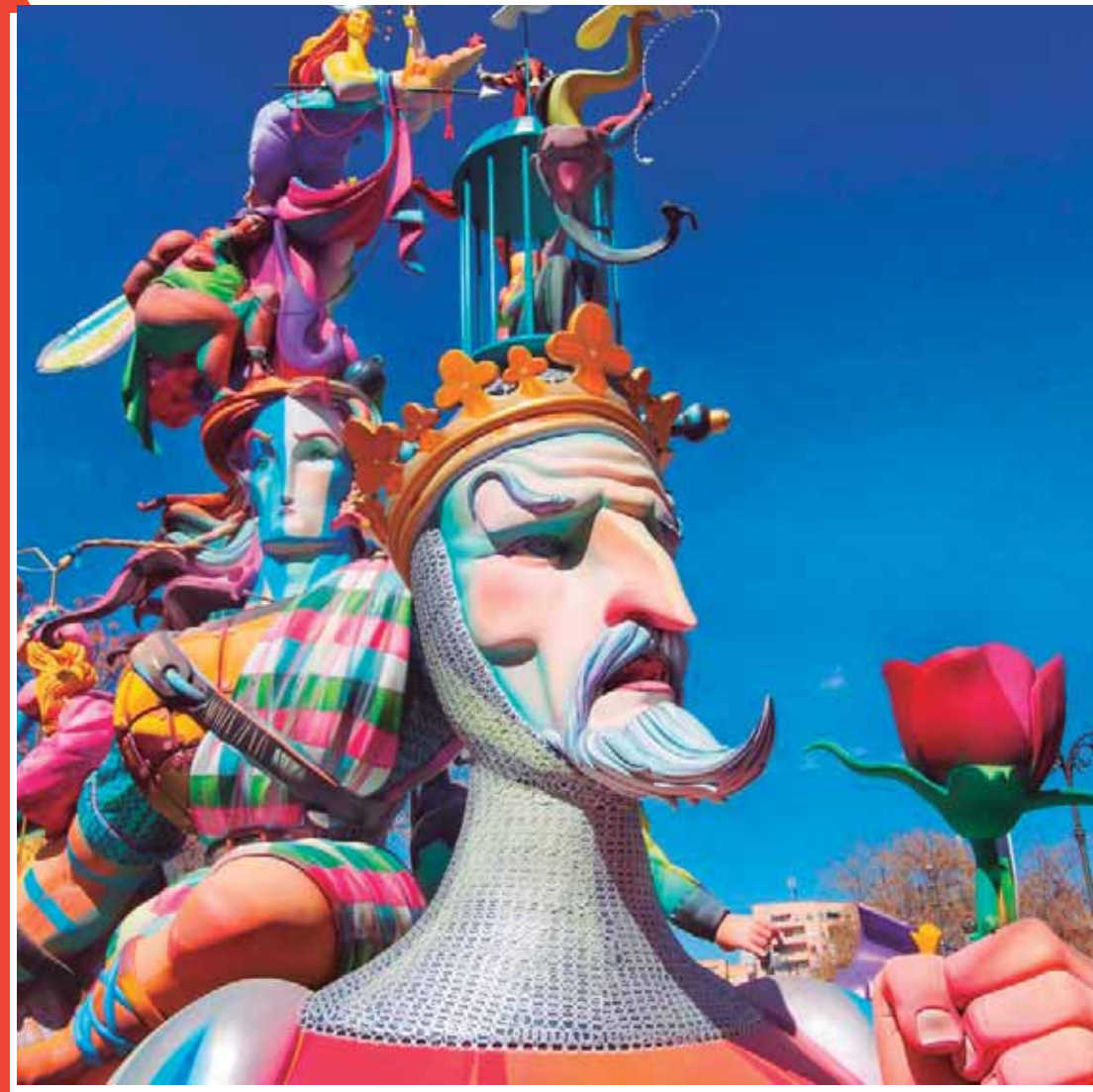


1. WHAT ARE THE FALLAS?

The Fallas are unique. For several days in March, this festival converts the towns of the Valencian Community into momentary street art museums to celebrate the arrival of spring. Around 800 monuments made of wood, cartón piedra (literally “stone cardboard”, similar to papier maché) and other materials fill the city’s streets. Music, gunpowder and traditional clothing are all essential ingredients, making the Fallas a unique festival. In fact, its creative values and practical rituals have resulted in the festival being declared Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.

2. ORIGIN OF THE FALLAS

According to certain reports, with the arrival of spring, when the days started to get longer, bonfires were made with wood and old furniture. Often, dolls were added to criticise the behaviour and attitude of neighbours, a common practice in other European towns. The first records of the Fallas of Valencia as we know them today appear from the 18th Century onwards. The neighbourhood-based festival was joined by the work of carpenters and other professionals who helped to spread it throughout the city, until reaching a total of over one thousand Fallas commissions in the Valencian Community today. From the outset, the festival has evolved consistently thanks to its critical outlook and cultural and rejuvenating spirit.



3. KEY ELEMENTS OF THE FALLAS



CITY OF FALLAS ARTISTS

This is the creative district formed by the warehouses where the Fallas artists work. You'll find information panels about their trade and about their other kinds of complementary work (floats, thematising stands or fairs and film and theatre set design) Here is where you'll find the Museum of the Guild of Fallas Artists, is the professional association which supports the activity of such visual artists.



PYROTECHNICS

Pyrotechnics, which date back to the times of the Muslim presence in Valencia, are one of the basic elements of the Valencian festival. Of all the events that take place during the Fallas, the spectacular pyrotechnics are of particular importance, and they include local displays such as the *mascletà* and the *tro de bac*. The professional pyrotechnics give the festival a sound that will make your heart beat in the most astounding way, mixing colour and sound in perfect harmony.



MUSIC

Musical tradition in València, based on music associations and *tabal and dolçaina* groups, Valencian instruments par excellence, has developed thanks to popular festivals, particularly the Fallas. The city's streets are alive at all hours with music performed by musicians at the different events held by the commissions over the day.



FALLAS COMMISSIONS

These groups are responsible for organising the festival in each neighbourhood. Their activity is not limited to the festival's main days, and they also organise varied activities during the rest of the year: theatre, traditional dances, sporting events, playbacks, exaltation of the Fallas Queen, monthly meetings, children's parties, publication of the *llibret* and visits to the Fallas workshop, along with other charity events and cultural activities.



FESTIVE LITERATURE

There is a wealth of written culture surrounding the festival. There are literary genres associated with the festival (theatre, poetry, oratory, narrative, etc.), which connect popular and traditional literature, and which are written in Valencian. In fact, the Fallas have contributed to preserving the language of the Valencians, even during times when its public use was forbidden.



CLOTHING

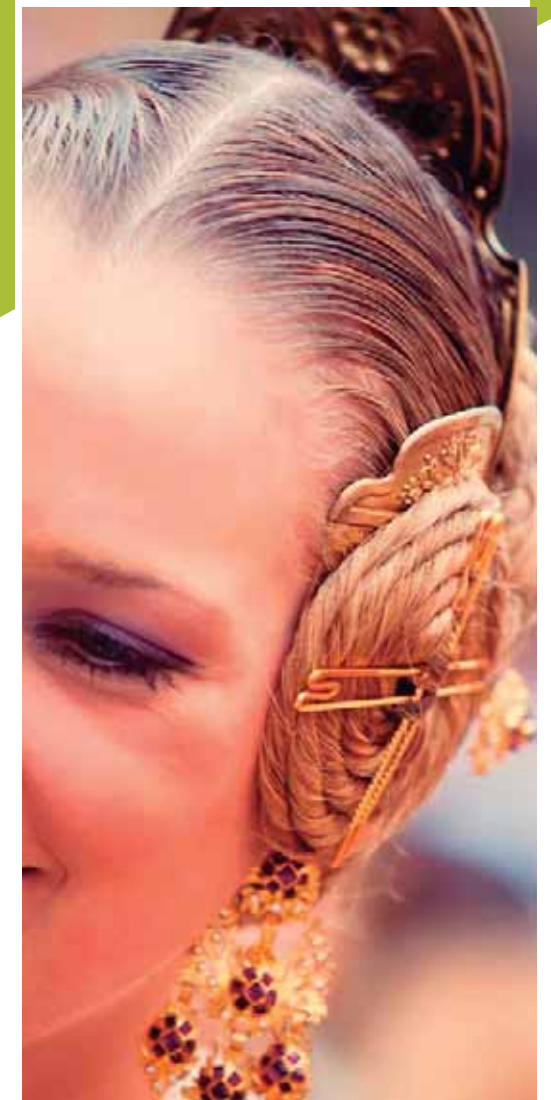
In all official acts, the falleros and falleras dress in their best attire, recalling the elegance displayed by Valencians in the 18th and 19th centuries. It is the official clothing of the festival, something that has served to recover a number of garments, accessories and a large variety of shapes and colours that show the richness of traditional Valencian dress.

You'll find endless Valencian costume shops through the city's streets where you can see precious fabrics, aprons, shawls and other accessories pertaining to the regional costume, along with gold forging and chiselling workshops where the jewellery and combs worn with the costumes are handcrafted.



ARTS AND CRAFTS

A series of local craft trades, creating products which are unique in the world, have been able to coexist and develop thanks to the Fallas, including goldsmiths, weavers, fan makers, chisellers, dressmakers and jewellers. They all demonstrate the artisanal wealth of the Valencian professionals, associated with a tradition that has evolved throughout the centuries.



4. MAIN FALLAS EVENTS



THE NINOT EXHIBITION

The *Ninot* exhibition is held at the beginning of February to 15 March. *Ninots* are the figures that form the scenes of the Fallas monuments. Each commission puts its best *ninot* on display in an exhibition until the day of the *plantà*, which is when each figure is collected by its commission and taken to its particular monument. Visitors can select their favourite *ninot* and the one that receives the most votes will be pardoned. Therefore, it will not be burnt on 19 March and will become a part of the collection at the Fallas Museum.



THE CRIDA

This is the Fallas inauguration ceremony. The day begins with a barrage of fireworks and a Fallas breakfast, followed by the entrance of marching bands and a *masclètà* (firecracker barrage) in Plaza del Ayuntamiento. In the afternoon, and from the Serranos Towers, after a spectacular opening ceremony including light, sound, music and pyrotechnics, the Fallas Queen of Valencia, accompanied by her Court of Honour and the city's authorities, invite the entire world to enjoy the festival.



THE MASCLÈTÀS

Thousands of people gather at Plaza del Ayuntamiento from 1 to 19 March, at 14:00, to see the *masclètà*, a pyrotechnic show that last between 5 and 7 minutes and has a determined rhythm, where the gunpowder explosions gradually increase with an amazing finale.



THE PLANTÀ

On 15 March, the Fallas artists leave the Fallas completely finished and prepared to be visited on the streets, with all their *ninots*, posters and other details. This marks the beginning of the great Fallas week and Valencia becomes a momentary outdoor art museum.





FIREWORKS DISPLAYS

The first, known as the Nit de l'Alba, brings together the synchronised displays of hundreds of Fallas commissions at midnight on the 15th. From the 16th to the 18th there are firework displays in the Turia Gardens, between the "Exposición" and "Las Flores" bridges. The most spectacular display is known as the *Nit del Foc* (night of fire). It is held on the night of 18 to 19 and is a prelude to the main day of the Fallas.



THE FLOWER OFFERING

On 17 and 18 March a flower offering is made to the *Virgen de los Desamparados* (Our Lady of the Forsaken), the patron saint of Valencia. All of the commissions put on their finest clothes to offer their bouquets of flowers to a huge statue of the Virgin, located in the centre of the square that bears her name and where her Basilica can be found.



THE CREMÀ

The *cremà* is the most popular event on an international level and it gives meaning to the whole festival. All of the Fallas monuments are displayed on the street to be burnt in the early hours of 19 to 20 March. This is the finale of the festival and it represents all of its grandeur.



THE FALLAS IN NUMBERS

- 19 *masclètàs* (firecracker barrages)
- 770 monuments
- 150 Fallas artists
- 238 marquees and *casales* (premises where members of the Fallas commissions meet)
- 6.7 million euros
- 2,300 kilos of gunpowder
- 130 *buñuelo* (fried dough balls) stalls
- 2,200 tonnes of ash
- 1,300 kilos of recycled containers, 55,000 bouquets of flowers for the Virgin, 95,000 visitors to the *Ninot* exhibition


5. DISCOVER THE FALLAS DURING THE YEAR



FALLAS MUSEUM

Visit the collection formed by the winning ninots which, since 1934, have been saved from the fire by popular vote. There are also Fallas posters and Fallas photographs.

 Plaza de Monteolivete, 4

 Monday to Saturday: from 9:30 to 19:00
Sundays and public holidays: from 9:30 to 15:00.


€ Single entry: €2.
Free entry on Sundays and public holidays.
Free entry with the Valencia Tourist Card.



MUSEUM OF THE GUILD OF FALLAS ARTISTS

Here you will find an extensive selection of the work carried out by guild members, both in the professional Fallas field, and in other fields.

 Av. San José Artesano 17

 Monday to Friday: from 10:00 to 14:00 and from 16:00 to 19:00. Saturdays from 10:00 to 14:00.
Closed on Sundays, public holidays and in August.

€ Entry: €4
Entry: €2.5
10% discount with the Valencia Tourist Card.



SILK MUSEUM

Find out how silk came to Valencia and the importance of this trade during more than three centuries and the legacy that can still be seen today in the traditional dress worn at Valencia's festivals.

 Calle Hospital, 7

 Mondays and Sundays: 10:00 to 15:00.
Tuesday to Saturday: 10:00 to 19:00

€ Entry: €6, Reduced: €5
50% discount and 5% at the museum's shop with the Valencia Tourist Card



THE BALCONY OF VALÈNCIA CITY HALL

Take a selfie in front of the balcony of Valencia City Hall where, every day from 1 to 19 March, the Fallas Queen announces the beginning of the mascletà with the phrase: *"Senyor pirotècnic pot començar la mascletà"*.

 Plaza del Ayuntamiento, 2

 Monday to Friday from 9:00 to 15:00.

€ Free entry.

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Fallas Week Visit

March 16, 17 & 18: 10.30 am & 3.30 pm
March 19: 10.30 am & 9.45 pm

Sit back and discover the origin, events and costumes of the Fallas. You'll have access to some of the Special Section Fallas and be able to see them close up in the company of an expert guide. An unforgettable experience! Limited places. Spanish-English. Advanced booking: 24 h before departure date.

15€ adults

Visit the Special Section Fallas

From 15 to 19 March

Buy your ticket here for a visit that takes you inside the Special Section Fallas. Save money and avoid queues!

10€ adults

 Information and bookings at www.visitvalencia.com and tourist offices.

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