

SPANISH FESTIVALS



Spain is the land of fiestas. Every year, in every city, town and village there is a festival of some kind.

The biggest festivals of international fame are the bull running of Pamplona, the fireworks of Las Fallas in Valencia, the mock battles of Moros y Cristianos in Alcoy, Semana Santa in all of Andalusia and the massive Feria de Abril in Seville.

Purely by accident, I was lucky enough to be in Seville at the time of this year's Feria, and lucky enough to be able to book a hotel room at a reasonable price. At the hotel, I met 2 Australian women (one from Melbourne and one from Adelaide) who were paying 3 times the price for their room as I was paying for mine. They had booked much later than I had. And I paid twice what friends paid for the same hotel in October.

In all of Andalusia at feria time, there are bullfighting, flamenco, music and wine festivals whilst in small towns you'll come across all kinds of strange festivals such as a snail festival in Lleida, a seafood festival in O'Grove and a paella festival in Sueca.

Holy Week is known as '**Semana Santa**' in Spain and is most widely celebrated in the towns and cities of Andalusia. In Seville it is one of the city's two biggest annual festivals along with the April Fair (**Feria de Abril**) which follows two weeks later. Semana Santa takes place the week leading up to the Easter weekend and consists of **processions** in which enormous '**pasos**' (floats) are carried around the streets of Seville by teams of '**costaleros**' (bearers) followed by hundreds of '**nazarenos**' (penitents). Many of these floats are religious works of art that date back as far as the 17th century, each showing a small part of the Easter story.

Throughout the city thousands of people line processions, each of which takes many hours after following a set route around the city. Each floats.

For the 'costaleros' who carry the float it is a bers wishing to be carriers far outnumbers the caused the cancellation of many processions knowing they would never again get the oppor-

Seville's Feria de Abril officially begins on Monmana Santa (Holy Week), and ends with a at midnight.

There are over 1000 marquees, known as 'casetas' at the event site, most of which have ongoing flamenco performances, loud music and a bar.

As well as flamenco, the other main themes of the party are horses and bullfighting in what is so clearly a typical Spanish affair.

At noon and dusk every day there are processions called 'Paseo de Caballos' in which local girls and women in their full flamenco outfits are pulled through the city in beautiful carriages by splendid horses. After the procession, the streets are fill with hundreds of babies, girls and women who continue to stroll around the streets in their costumes. The shops are full of the costumes with matching shoes and hats in all price ranges. Red with black or white dots seems to be the most popular colour.

In the evening some of the year's top bullfights take place across the river to the feria site at the Plaza de Toros de Maestranza with tickets selling out well in advance. In the streets each night after the bull fight, I saw hundreds of people walking around with striped cushions under their arms. It was not until the 2nd day, that I realised that they had bought the cushions at the bull fight to sit on. The seats must be hard.

Marion Jones



the streets waiting to catch a glimpse of the between leaving its parish and returning there of over 50 brotherhoods (**cofradías**) have two

once in a lifetime honour to do so as the numplaces available. Heavy rains in 2004 and 2005 and grown men were left crying in the streets tunity to be a 'costalero'.

day at midnight, normally 2 weeks after Se-fireworks display the following Sunday, again,

