

## **CULTURE & HERITAGE**

### **ORIGINS**

Alicante is a city with over 3000 years of history, as revealed by the earliest archaeological remains found at the Cova del Fum cave in Fontcalet, which date from the third millennium BC.

The earliest inhabited settlements were found on the hillside of Mount Benacantil, where there is believed to have been an Iberian population.

The earliest town as such dates back to the 4th century BC which is when Tossal de Manises, first became home to the Ibero-Roman colony of Lucentum.

### **THE MOORISH CONQUEST**

After the Roman era came the Moorish conquest, when the colony was relocated to the slopes of Mount Benacantil for defensive reasons, creating the Vila Vella or Old Town.

### **THE RECONQUEST**

In 1247, when the town was captured, for the Kingdom of Castille by the Infante Alfonso, who was to become King Alfonso X, The Wise, it came to be known as Vila Nova, or the New Town.

In 1249, King Jaime II incorporated the town of Alicante into the Kingdom of Valencia and then two centuries later, in 1490, Ferdinand the Catholic King granted Alicante the status of city.

### **19th CENTURY**

In the 19th century progress arrived in the city with shape of the Alicante-Madrid railway, the installation of street lighting and the new town planning regulations, which would eliminate the walls and create new neighbourhoods.

In the 20th century the bonfire celebrations known as the Hogueras de San Juan, which have been officially declared as of Interest to International Tourism, were born. Then, the University was opened and in 1993 the city was selected as the headquarters of the European Office of Harmonisation for the Internal Market (OHIM), the EU's largest independent agency.

### **• PLACES TO VISIT.**

#### **Santa Bárbara Castle**

Perched on top of Mount Benacantil, at a height of 116 metres, stands one of Spain's largest mediaeval fortresses, providing great views of Alicante's perfect bay.

#### **The Town Hall**

This baroque civil building was designed by architect Lorenzo Chápuli and erected on the site of the former town hall in the 18th century. The main ornamental features that visitors always admire are the barley-sugar columns on the facade and the two towers. Inside there are several interesting rooms such as the Salón Azul, styled from the period of Spain's Queen Isabel, the Salón de Plenos and a chapel in which mass is held.

#### **The San Nicolás Co-Cathedral**

Construction began on the San Nicolás Co-Cathedral in the year 1600, replacing a building that had stood there previously. It is built in the Herrerian renaissance style and is located in the heart of the city.

#### **The Santa María Basílica**

This is the oldest church in the city, dating back to the 14th century. It was built upon the ruins of Alicante's largest mosque and has a single, noncruciform nave with side chapels between the buttresses.

#### **Alicante Theatre**

Opened in 1847, this is a theatre par excellence. Its main facade is in the neo-classical style, while its interior, designed in accordance with the Italian typology of the period, is divided into three clearly differentiated areas: the vestibule, the horseshoe-shaped auditorium and the stage.

### **The MARQ Provincial Archaeology Museum**

Created in 1932, this museum was originally located on the ground floor of the Provincial Council building on Avenida de la Estación in Alicante. In 2002, it was transferred to the former site of the San Juan de Dios provincial hospital.

- **BEACHES**

#### **Playa de Saladar**

This beach is located 5 kilometres south of the city centre, in a quiet area. Its fine, golden sands stretch for over 1.5 kilometres, making it perfect for strolling along. Its setting is semi-urban and to the north there is a line of sand dunes, which enhance the view. There are various services to bathers, such as lifeguarding, an esplanade, shops and restaurants and special areas reserved for nudists. There is also an educational play area for the mentally handicapped and an area with disabled access that is open during the summer months.

#### **Playa del Postiguet**

This beach is in the city, at the foot of Santa Bárbara castle and alongside the port and the Explanada esplanade. It is renowned for the quality of its sand, its palm tree boardwalk and its cafes. This, together with its proximity to the Old Quarter, makes this beach one of Alicante's most wellknown attractions. There are zones reserved for playing sports such as beach volleyball, and lots of car parking spaces nearby, both public and private. During the summer season, there is also an educational play area for the mentally handicapped and an area with disabled access.

#### **Playa de la Albufera**

This beach is to the northwest of the city, between the Serra Grossa mountains and Tossal de Manises in an area of important archaeological sites. In fact, it is here that the city originated. It is a small beach of fine, golden sands amid the residential development of the same name. This is one of the most popular holiday spot amongst local people of Alicante.

#### **Playa de San Juan**

This is Alicante's most famous beach, with sands stretching from the beaches at El Campello right through to the Cabo de las Huertas headland. It is an open beach with very high-quality fine sands located in an area with lots of apartments, services and businesses. All along the beachfront there are all kinds of restaurants and beach bars, some of which are actually on the beach itself. San Juan beach is very close to the golf course called Alicante Golf and there are many public parking spaces nearby, as well as areas reserved for various sports such as beach volleyball, football, windsurfing, etc.

There are hotels of various categories in the immediate vicinity, plus an educational play area for the mentally handicapped and an area with disabled access during the summer months.

- **GASTRONOMY**

The local gastronomy is undoubtedly one of Alicante's most renowned tourist attractions. Alicante's cuisine is typically Mediterranean. The history of Alicante, its geographical location, and the climate and the fertility of its lands lend richness and variety to this region's gastronomy. Rice, the basic ingredient of all of the region's cuisine, plays a leading role in a huge variety of recipes, although many other ingredients are also used in the preparation of traditional recipes.

#### **Rices**

Many dishes combine rice with different ingredients such as vegetables, meat or fish. Worthy of special mention are the *arroz a banderice* dish with seafood, *arroz a la alicantinarice* dish with chicken and shellfish, *caldero* (typical dish of Tabarca Island), *arroz caldosobrothy* rice dish and the popular *olletarice* dish with meat and vegetables.

#### **Tapas and montaditos**

Small stuffed rolls, typical of this area, which combine meats and salted fish and have become popular throughout the rest of Spain.

#### **Fish**

The Mediterranean Sea provides the freshest possible fish and shellfish, of the most quality, which are a must for all visitors, as are the red shrimps from Alicante and the king prawns, crayfish, squid, red mullet, and many other types of seafood.

### **Cured Salted Fish**

Cured salted fish is used as the main ingredient for making many types of "salazones" featuring products such as mojama (dried salted tuna), roe, ventresca de atún (tuna belly), the tonyina de sorra type of tuna, herring, etc, and which are served as appetisers. Alicante is also renowned for its savoury snacks known as "cocas saladas" made with tuna or sardines, and its "esmorzaret alacanti" based on salted sardines, fried egg and chilli peppers.

### **Desserts**

These include aniseed rolls known as rollitos de anís, la coca boba –which is a sweet spongy biscuit, dates and dried fruits. That's not to mention the famous ice creams and the turrón de Jijona nougat or the delicious chocolate from neighbouring Villajoyosa.

### **Great local drinks**

Include the red wines with their double layer and intense colour, the young rose and white wines made from grapes of the Monastrell, Vermeto or Garnacha varieties and el Fondillón, a world-famous aged wine from Alicante. To accompany the montaditos we have, la "paloma" y el "cantabria", which are a traditional drink based on dry aniseed and very cold water, and a herb liqueur, respectively.

## **• LEISURE & SHOPPING**

### **What to buy**

Of all the typical products from Alicante, special mention should be made of canned fish and vegetables, chocolates, dates, sugared almonds, nougats, wines, anisettes and spirits. Our top-quality manufactured goods include leatherwear, footwear, bags, wallets and purses, belts, carpets and toys. 100% handmade products take the form of wickerwork and ceramics.

### **Where to buy**

There are certain highly recommended areas where to do your shopping, being the most popular ones the area of Plaza Nueva, Alfonso X El Sabio, and the very modern area of Maisonave Avenue with counts with two of Spain's famous El Corte Inglés department stores plus numerous boutiques, shoe stores and specialist shops.

### **Shopping Centres**

Outside of Alicante city centre there are four large shopping centres:

- Gran Vía
- Vista Hermosa
- Next to this shopping centre there are also major department stores
- selling computers, home electronics and white goods.
- Puerta de Alicante
- Plaza Mar
- Torre Golf en Playa de San Juan

## **Leisure**

### **El Barrio or the Old Town**

In the Old Town, from the Rambla towards Santa Bárbara Castle, the narrow streets with their Moorish layout are lively and home to much of Alicante's nightlife. Here visitors will find everything from the most typical, age-old restaurants through to designer eateries, passing through pubs, bars and all kinds of pavement cafes in between.

### **The Port (Muelle de Levante Pier)**

This is a newly built area of the marina, home to restaurants of all kinds and all manner of pubs and bars that stay open until the small hours of the morning.

### Panoramis

Restaurants, cinemas and bars that stay open until the small hours of the morning.

### El Golf

On San Juan Beach, next to the Alicante Golf Club, this area recreates the streets and squares of a typical regional town. Here visitors will find restaurants, cafes and bars that stay open until the early hours of the morning.