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**VLC** ■ VALENCIA  
EXPERIENCE THE FALLAS



WITH THOUSANDS OF LIGHT BULBS STRUNG IN GARLANDS AND HANGING FROM COLUMNS, VALENCIA, IN ALL ITS VIVACIOUS SPLENDOUR AND AMIDST THE EAGER REVELRY OF ITS PEOPLE, STAGES THE MOST SPECTACULAR OF FESTIVALS: THE GREAT, DRAMATISED PANTOMIME OF LIFE, WHERE CURRENT EVENTS ARE SATIRISED: THE FALLAS.

THE FALLAS WERE BORN IN THE VERY HEART OF THE TOWN. A TOWN THAT HAS ALWAYS BASKED RESPLENDENTLY IN SUNSHINE AND BLUE SKIES, IN SERENE, ROMANTIC NIGHTS; WHERE FLOWER GARDENS AND VEGETABLE GARDENS, THE INHABITANTS OF ALLEYWAYS AND NEIGHBOURHOODS CO-EXIST IN COMPLETE NATURALNESS AND SIMPLICITY.

## THE ORIGIN OF THE FALLAS

On spring evenings, when the days started to grow longer, it was no longer necessary to work during the hours of darkness and the parot, a traditional lamp used to light the workshop during the winter, was burnt at the door of every workshop. The craftsmen gathered together wood shavings and gash wood which they fed to the fire along with junk brought by the people of the neighbourhood. The uprights and arms of the parot, estai or pagés, were animated with rags and old clothing, giving the lamp a human aspect, the addition of a hat provided it with a kind of head. And so the Ninot, or doll-like effigy, was born. It only remained for these effigies, based on whatever farce was gripping the neighbourhood, the city, the country or the world, to be placed on a pedestal –all the better to be seen and mocked. Another factor in understanding these ingenious sculptured structures is the llibret, a booklet containing an explanation of the “subject and theme of the Falla” in verse form. An authentic Valencian Falla consists in the combination of all these creative elements.





## FALLAS WEEK

The programme of festivities during the week of the *Fallas* has been formed out of the very heart of the process of preparing a *Falla*. An example is the *ninot indultat* (the winning caricature and the only effigy not to be burned) which is chosen by the people, who appreciate that some of the *ninots* are genuine works of art and it would be a shame to burn them. And so it was decided that the public themselves would vote for the best *ninot*, which would be saved from the flames and an exhibition would be held of the best caricatures, one *ninot* for each *falla*. Each of the winning *ninots* is on display in the Fallero Museum.

*Gunpowder* is an indispensable and intrinsic part of all Valencian festivals, and the *Fallas* are no exception. During this festival it has a special power of attraction, as thousands of people gather in the Plaza del Ayuntamiento for the *masclètà* at 2pm, from 1st to 19th March, or for the *despertàs* in the early hours of the morning, when the *falleros* set off hundreds of rockets and fire crackers to wake up their neighbourhoods. We cannot forget the spectacular *Nit del foc* (Night of Fire) that takes place in the early hours of 18th March and features a fireworks display that is the best example of its kind in the world.

### 15–16 MARCH

The *plantà* of a *falla* is the moment when the assembly of all its elements is completed and a unique monument, the

*falla*, is created. When the festival began, the *plantà* was done in a single night, the night of 15th and 16th March. Nowadays, because of the spectacular nature and great size of some of the monuments, it is necessary to begin their assembly several days before the 15th. On the night of the *plantà*, the *falleros* get together for a supper and distribute the remaining tasks to ensure the monument will be completely finished by dawn the following day.

### 17–18 MARCH

Each of the city's *fallas* or neighbourhood committees chooses their *Fallera Mayor* (*Fallas Queen*), *Fallera Mayor Infantil* (*Children's Fallas Queen*) and their *court of honour*, as their representatives at the festival. Both are solemnly named in the proclamations made in the months before the *Fallas*.

The Valencian ladies taking part, the *falleras*, are dressed at all times in sumptuous gowns that over the years have been even further embellished. Some of the materials used to make these gowns are: silks, brocade, gold jewels, pearls and emeralds, golden combs, earrings, hair pins mounted with precious stones and used to hold together braids coiled above the ears, a shawl and apron.

On the morning of 17th March, the *falleras* and their committees gather in the Plaza del Ayuntamiento for the prize-giving. Earlier the judges will have examined all the monuments in the city, between the full-scale *fallas* and the children's *fallas* there are more than 750\* in total, in order to come to their decision.



However, 17th and 18th March is when you can really admire a sight full of beauty, colour, tradition and devotion –the *Ofrenda*. This is the culmination of the falleras' festival and is a procession made by all the committees in the city from their respective neighbourhoods to the Plaza de la Virgen in order to make a floral offering to Valencia's patron saint, Our Lady of the Forsaken. The event starts at 4pm and lasts until nightfall.

In front of the Basilica is a wooden structure 15 metres high topped by the face of the Madonna and Child, the falleras hand their bouquets to the Virgin's dressers who use them to create an impressive tapestry of flowers forming the Virgin's mantle, the design of which changes every year. As well as the bouquets brought by the falleras, the *falleros* bring large flower baskets which they leave at the feet of the Virgin. An interesting fact: more than 25 tonnes of flowers are used during the festivities.

\* Data from the Central *Fallas* Committee, from its website [www.fallas.com](http://www.fallas.com)

### 19 MARCH

On the 19th, around 10pm, the time has come to begin the *Cremà* (burning) of the children's monuments and the streets of every neighbourhood burst into life once again. Two hours later it will be the turn of the full-scale monuments. Burning the monuments is often preceded by setting off

fireworks that end up in the bonfire itself, the very last of which set off the flames that will gradually consume the papier mâché, wood, paint and other things that have been used in their construction.

After watching their *falla* burn down, many people head for the Plaza del Ayuntamiento to watch the burning of the city council monument. This is the *falla* belonging to all Valencians, and the solemnity of the occasion means that it is burnt one hour after the others, at 1 o'clock in the morning. It is always preceded by a small display of spectacular fireworks that fill the square with noise, light and colour, and which lead to the *Cremà* of the city's last *falla*, and therefore the end of the festival. However, although it is a sad moment, as it means the festival is over, it is also a joyful moment as it symbolises the coming of spring and, more importantly, the start of next year's festival.

Throughout the night of 19th and 20th March, the municipal fire brigades perform the valuable task of collecting the ashes and rubbish so that the following morning Valencia can get back to normal. Now is the moment to get creative and start thinking up ideas so that next year's monuments, and the whole festival, might be even more spectacular.





## PROGRAMME OF FALLEROS EVENTS

**From 1st to 13th March at 2pm.**  
*Mascletà* (fireworks) in the Plaza del Ayuntamiento (Town Square)

### 14th MARCH

**At 2pm**  
*Mascletà* in the Plaza del Ayuntamiento (Town Square)

**At 6pm**  
Closing ceremony of the Children's *Ninot* Exhibition

### 15th MARCH

**At 8am**  
*Plantà* (finishing) of the CHILDREN'S FALLAS

**At 2pm**  
*Mascletà* in the Plaza del Ayuntamiento (Town Square)

**At 6pm**  
Closing ceremony of the *Ninot* Exhibition

**At 12 midnight**  
*Plantà* (finishing) of all FALLAS

**At 12 midnight**  
Fireworks display in the Paseo de La Alameda (between the Puente de Exposición and the Puente de las Flores).

### 16th MARCH

**At 2pm**  
*Mascletà* in the Plaza del Ayuntamiento (Town Square)

**At 4.30pm**  
Prize-giving ceremony for the children's *Fallas*, on the stage in front of the Ayuntamiento (Valencia Town Hall).

**At 10pm**  
*Folklore Parade* at the Plaza del Ayuntamiento.

### 17th MARCH

**At 1am**  
Fireworks display in the Paseo de La Alameda (between the Puente de Exposición and the Puente de las Flores).

**At 9.30 am**  
Prize-giving ceremony for the *Fallas*, on the stage in front of the Ayuntamiento (Valencia Town Hall).

**At 2pm**  
*Mascletà* in the Plaza del Ayuntamiento (Town Square)

**At 4pm**  
*First day of the "Ofrenda" of flowers to Our Lady of the Forsaken*, from Calle La Paz and Calle San Vicente to Plaza de la Virgen. Finishing at approximately 1 o'clock in the morning.

### 18th MARCH

**At 1am**  
Fireworks display in the Paseo de La Alameda (between the Puente de Exposición and the Puente de las Flores).

**At 11am**  
Homage to the poet Maximilano Thous, at the monument in his honour at the crossroads between Calle Sagunto and Calle Maximilano Thous. Ending in a *mascletà*.

**At 12pm**  
Homage to the composer Serrano, at the monument in his honour in Avenida Reino de Valencia. Ending in a *mascletà*.

**At 2pm**  
*Mascletà* in the Plaza del Ayuntamiento (Town Square)

**At 4pm**  
*Second day of the "Ofrenda" of flowers to Our Lady of the Forsaken*, from Calle La Paz and Calle San Vicente to Plaza de la Virgen. Finishing at approximately 1 o'clock in the morning.

### 19th MARCH

**At 1.30am**  
*Nit del Foc* (Night of Fire), the festival's most important fireworks display, in the Paseo de La Alameda (between the Puente de Exposición and the Puente de las Flores).

**At 11am**  
At the Puente de San José, floral offering by the *Falleras Mayores* (Fallas Queens) and their Court of Honour at the Patriarch's statue. Ending in a *mascletà*.

**At 12pm**  
Mass in honour of Saint José in Valencia Cathedral, offered by the Central *Fallas* Committee and the Carpenters Guild, in the presence of the *Falleras Mayores* (Fallas Queens) of Valencia and Court of Honour. Mass sung by the Cathedral choir with the José Iturbi conservatory orchestra of Valencia.

**At 2pm**  
*Mascletà* in the Plaza del Ayuntamiento (Town Square)

**At 7pm**  
Fire Parade along the length of Calle Colón, with a spectacular fireworks display in Plaza Porta de la Mar.

**At 10pm**  
*Cremà* (burning) of the Children's *Fallas*.

**At 10.30pm:** *Cremà* of the Children's *Falla* which won first prize in the *Fallas* Special Category.

**At 11pm**  
*Cremà* of the Children's *Falla* in the Plaza del Ayuntamiento.

### 20th MARCH

**At 12 midnight**  
*Cremà* of all the *Fallas*.

**At 12.30 am**  
*Cremà* of the *Falla* awarded First Prize in the *Fallas* Special Category.

**At 1am**  
A small fireworks display in the Plaza del Ayuntamiento, and *Cremà* of the municipal *Falla*.

The Valencia Tourism Convention Bureau accept no responsibility for any changes that may be made to this programme.



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## The Fallas

Festivities / The Fallas



Thousands of decorative lights adorn a city awakening from a deep sleep and looking for some fun; the people are preparing for the greatest of all the festivals, the huge street pantomime and satire of modern life that is "Las Fallas".

The **Las Fallas** festivals are an expression of the soul of a people, a people that were born and live under a resplendent sun aside a glittering sea, a people that have enjoyed quiet romantic evenings, the rural agricultural life and the streets of a vibrant, exciting city: in **las fallas**, all these influences are combined with a seamless simplicity.

### The origins of the festival

When autumn arrived and the days became shorter, artisans were able to continue their work by the light of crafted wooden lamps known as **parot, estal, pagés, pelmudo** or **pernioldo**...

[www.fallas.com](http://www.fallas.com)

[www.fallasfromvalencia.com](http://www.fallasfromvalencia.com)  
(official website)



In the spring, as the days became longer, the lamps were not needed and were ceremoniously burnt at the workshop door. To this small fire the craftsmen added off-cuts, wood shavings and leftovers from around the neighbourhood. The old lamp was placed in a vertical position in the centre, decorated with old rags and a hat, giving it a human form - the **NinotFallas**.

On the 1st of March, the first of the **masclietas** (an explosion of firecrackers) in the square in front of the City Hall announces the start of the festival period, although the most important events begin on the 16th, by which time the city has been decorated with over 700 symbols and figures.

Throughout the day, mass gatherings take place including the **desperias** (a firecracker wake-up call to the neighbourhood) and magnificent firework displays.

The biggest and most spectacular event is the **Ofrenda de Flores a la Virgen de los Desamparados** (a floral offering to our Lady of the Forsaken). On the 17th and 18th of March, from 4pm until nightfall, there is an enormous multi-coloured parade; with the members of the Fallas wearing their marvellous, intricately decorated, traditional costumes and carrying bunches of flowers as an offering to their Patron Saint.

At midnight on the 19th, the dramatic closing act takes place. A massive bonfire is built and the ninots, so carefully prepared in the previous months are set ablaze and destroyed: all except one, saved by the votes of the falleros, and destined to be preserved forever in the Fallero Museum.

The evolution of the festival as we know it today began in the second half of the 19th century. The fallas and ninots are ephemeral, ornamental and satirical symbols placed in the streets of the city as a humorous social or political comment. They may be human, animal or vegetable in form, portraying a critique of a local, national or international incident, personality or character. There is great irony involved and the ceremonial burning is an act of purification that takes place at midnight on el Día de San Jose (St Joseph's day).

The fire is the festival; a graphic symbol of joy and happiness that dominates all events that take place during the **Semana Fallera** (The Fallera week).

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## COME AND EXPERIENCE THE FALLAS

### SITES ON THE INTERNET

On [www.turisvalencia.es](http://www.turisvalencia.es) there is information about the *Fallas* in the Festivities section. There you can find more information about this Valencian festival par excellence. It should also be noted that just before and during the festival, on the same website, it is possible to consult a micro-site where the full programme of the most important events is listed. Alternatively you can find out more about the *Fallas* by visiting: [www.fallas.com](http://www.fallas.com) and [www.fallasfromvalencia.com](http://www.fallasfromvalencia.com).

All the information you need to organise your visit to Valencia and enjoy the festival in all its splendour, can be found at [www.turisvalencia.es](http://www.turisvalencia.es). Through this website you can make airplane and hotel reservations online, and purchase tickets for different events and other places of interest. An easy and dynamic way to prepare a fantastic holiday using information updated in real time.

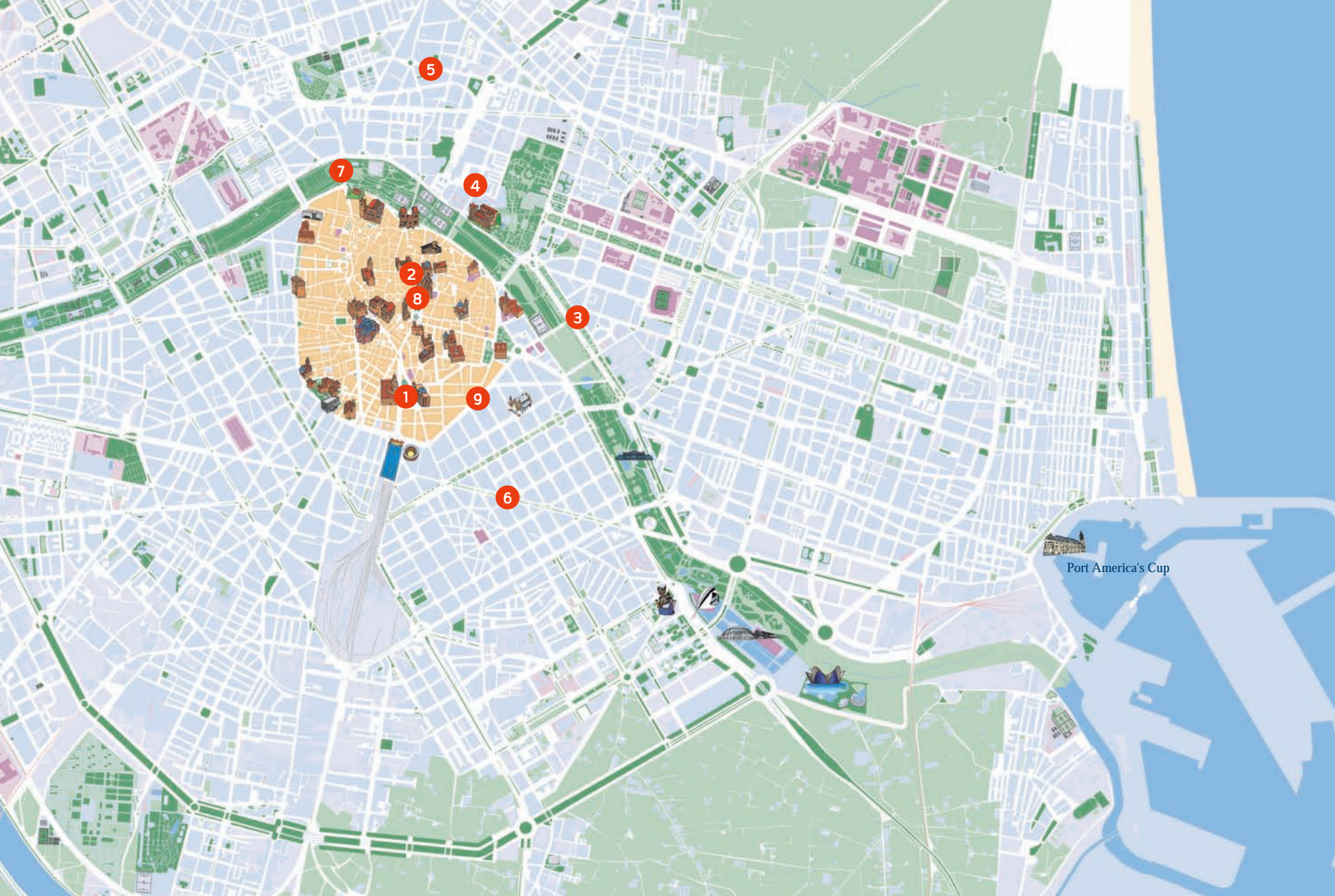
### THE FALLAS WITHIN EASY REACH

When you get here, or via the Internet, don't forget to buy your **Valencia Tourist Card**. This card offers **free public transport** and substantial **discounts** on guided tours, tickets to places of interest, car hire, tourist, leisure and restaurant services.

The card is available from: **Valencia Tourist Information offices - Reina, Airport, RENFE Station and/or Beach, and the Valencia Conference Centre, shops, The City of Arts and Sciences, hotels, hostels, apartment hire companies, kiosks and tourism companies.**

More information at: [www.valenciatouristcard.com](http://www.valenciatouristcard.com)





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