

HOLY WEEK IN CORDOBA

The origins of Holy Week in Córdoba, as we know it today, go back to the Middle Ages. Small brotherhoods, first formed in the 16th century, organised the first religious street processions, which soon gained an enthusiastic popular following. The custom has survived to this day, despite changes that have taken place over the years. In Córdoba, some of these early brotherhoods are still active, while some have fallen by the wayside and others have grown in popularity over the years. Nowadays, Holy Week in Córdoba boasts a rich heritage in the form of carvings, ornaments and liturgical objects and arouses passionate feelings among the spectators, with 38 different brotherhoods organizing processions around the city.

Every Holy Week is a unique experience, and particularly so in the case of Córdoba, since it takes place against the incomparable backdrop of the old city, which has won four World Heritage Site awards, two of which, the Mosque (1984) and the Historic Quarter (1994), are of special relevance:

- + **The Historic Quarter** is home to the 'Fernandine' Churches, the first churches to be built in the 13th-14th centuries, just after the Christian conquest, by King Ferdinand III. Many of the brotherhoods have their offices in these parishes, and the charm of their well-preserved, close-knit neighbourhoods helped Córdoba gain these coveted UNESCO awards.
- + **The Mosque-Cathedral** is the stand-out monument in Córdoba, and one of the very first in Spain to be awarded World Heritage status. All the Holy Week processions pass through its church, built inside the ancient mosque, to fulfil their rites of penance.

Interesting facts:

- + **Throughout the long history of Holy Week in Córdoba**, there have only been two "official routes" designated for processions. The first used to run from Calle Claudio Marcelo to Plaza de las Tendillas and around the city's main shopping streets, and was originally established by Bishop Trevilla in the early 19th century and continued by Córdoba Town Council. This was the main route for all processions until it was changed in 2017 to the area around the Mosque-Cathedral. This change was the result of a grand 'Stations of the Cross' procession, held in 2013, which clearly showed that the setting of the Mosque-Cathedral lent Holy Week in Córdoba a very special, unique character.
- + **For three decades** in the 19th century, a decree by the authoritarian Bishop Trevilla limited Holy Week processions to just one official procession, held on Good Friday.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS CONNECTED WITH SPANISH Holy Week

Bulla (Street Noise)

The name given to the crowds of people gathered in the streets where a procession passes.

Capirote (Pointed Hood)

These characteristic hoods are made from cones of cardboard or plastic, covered with a cloth known as a Cubre-rostro (face cover).

Capataz (Foreman)

This person is responsible for guiding the bearers as they carry the image, and is helped by assistants.

Chicotá (Time/distance of route)

This term denotes the time and distance an image is carried from the start of the procession to the end.

Carrera Oficial (Official route)

This is the route through the city where all the processions must pass, and it is controlled following a strict schedule.

Costalero (Image-bearer)

The people who carry the heavy images wear a special uniform, including espadrilles, a belt and a costal, a kind of padding worn over the head and neck, with a folded cloth to prevent injuries.

Cofradía (Part of a Brotherhood)

This refers to the section of a brotherhood that deals with the processional acts in Holy Week.

Cruz de Guía (Guiding Cross)

It is the cross that opens the processional parade. She is usually accompanied by two or four Nazarenes with lanterns.

Crucificado (The Crucified Christ)

Image of Christ nailed to the cross. All the images which depict Jesus nailed to the cross are known as a Crucificado.

Estación de Penitencia (Penance Station)

The route that the processions take during Holy Week.

Dolorosa (Our Lady of Sorrows)

Image of the Virgin, afflicted by the death of her Son.

Hermano Mayor (Older brother)

One of the members elected democratically to preside over the Brotherhood for a certain period of time. The appointment must be ratified by the bishop.

Hermandad (Brotherhood)

A congregation of devotees who worship the sacred images.

Levantá (Lifting)

When the image bearers first lift the image to start a procession.

Nazareno (Nazarene)

A member of a brotherhood dressed in tunic and hood who accompanies the procession.

Madrugá (Early morning)

The most important night of Holy Week, from late Thursday night to Good Friday morning.

Parihuela (Frame)

A wooden frame on which the images and artistic objects are carried.

Palio (Canopy)

A canopy held up by twelve poles which covers the image of the Virgin Mary, with wings hanging down on either side.

Penitente (Penitent)

A Nazarene who walks in the procession without a hood and carrying a cross on their back. This name is also given to lay people who follow the procession, despite not being members of a brotherhood.

Paso (Float)

A wooden frame with supports which is used to carry an image in procession.

Saeta (Prayer-song)

A prayer in the form of a Flamenco-style song.

Trono (Throne)

Large board with poles on which the different carved images, silver, and candles which adorns or supports the holy image to be carried in procession by a brotherhood.

Trabajadera (Cross-beam)

Cross-beams are attached to the underside of the frame to enable the image-bearers to carry the image.

Via Crucis (Stations of the Cross)

The way of the cross, with 14 stations representing specific events of Christ's last day.

Varal (Pole)

Each one of the twelve poles supporting the top of the canopy.



Holy Week

Scent and devotion, *our passion*



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is MORE



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Preparations prior to Holy Week

Early in the year, with everyone's hopes firmly set on a new Holy Week, the preparations begin for the great event: the distant echo of rehearsing bands, the distribution of new tunics, and the orders for flowers, wax and bags of incense... As Lent arrives, which begins on Ash Wednesday and reminds us that the

image-bearers, the renewal of subscriptions for seats and boxes, checking the hoods and padded neck supports, the distribution of new tunics, and the orders for flowers, wax and bags of incense... As Lent arrives, which begins on Ash Wednesday and reminds us that the

long-awaited Holy Week is just around the corner, the rehearsals gather momentum. Lenten recipes start to be prepared at home, and everyone has one eye on the weather forecasts, hoping for rain, but not during Holy Week, of course. We smile when we see startled tourists gazing at the sight

of the image-bearers rehearsing. We hope they return to see Córdoba come alive in that special time of Holy Week ... with the characteristic scents of incense and orange blossom pervading the air!

PALM SUNDAY

The processions departing on Palm Sunday in Córdoba represent: the entry of Our Lord into Jerusalem (known as the 'Borriquita' procession), the dead Christ on the cross and the Virgin Mary at his feet accompanied by Saint John (the 'Penas' procession), Jesus presented to the people after being scourged (the 'Rescatado' procession), Jesus bearing the cross on the route to Calvary (the 'Vera Cruz' procession), the moment in which Jesus is ordered to carry the cross on the route to Calvary (the 'Esperanza' procession), Herod's contempt (the 'Amor' procession) and Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane when the angel appears to comfort him (the 'Huerto' procession).

Points of Interest:

- Departure of the Penas procession.** The street Calle Agustín Moreno comes into its own in the early hours of Palm Sunday next to the parish building, when the neighbourhood turns out in force for the procession by the Santísimo Cristo de las Penas brotherhood.
- Crowds flock to greet the Rescatado procession.** The image of the Rescatado (The Rescued Christ) is one that attracts the most penitents and inspires the greatest devotion. Every year, thousands of devotees wait for the procession to arrive in the square and then follow it through the city streets to fulfil their vows.

Interesting facts:

- The Brotherhood of La Entrada Triunfal (Triumphal Entry)** is popularly known as La Borriquita (The Little Donkey).
- The Brotherhoods of Amor and El Huerto** are those with the most processions (3)
- The Brotherhood of La Esperanza** has many processional marches dedicated to its patron.
- The Brotherhood of El Rescatado** is the brotherhood of Córdoba with the most penitents, who follow the image of Christ in fulfilment of their vowscumplimiento de sus promesas.

HOLY MONDAY

The processions departing on Holy Monday in Córdoba represent: the moment Our Lord Jesus Christ receives the crown of thorns (the 'Merced' procession), Jesus being led before the High Priest Caiaphas (the 'Estrella' procession), Jesus escorted by a Roman and Barabbas, while Pilate receives the sentence from a member of the Sanhedrin, and his wife Claudia implores mercy for the innocent defendant (the 'Sentencia' procession), Christ fixed to the cross with three nails (the 'Vía-Crucis' procession) and Christ dead on the cross (the 'Áimas' procession).

Points of interest:

- Departure of the procession of the Áimas brotherhood:** A deadly silence falls over the Plaza de San Lorenzo. The bells toll for the dead, while the Nazarenes emerge carrying their characteristic lanterns, carefully negotiating the narrow doorway as they make their way down the steps.

Interesting facts:

- The Brotherhood of La Sentencia** is a brotherhood with a large number of Nazarenes.
- The musical band of the Brotherhood of La Estrella** is one of the best-known Holy Week marching bands in Córdoba.
- The Brotherhood of the Vía-Crucis** is the only one in the city of Córdoba which bears an image of Christ but does not carry it in procession down the streets.

GOOD FRIDAY

The processions departing on Good Friday in Córdoba represent: Christ on the cross (the Buena Muerte procession), the Virgin Mary alone at the foot of the Cross (the Soledad procession), Christ expiring on the cross while the Most Holy Mary accompanies him in silence (the Expiración procession), Jesus being taken down from the Cross by the holy men in the presence of Our Lady, Saint John, Mary Magdalene, Salome and Cleopas (the Descendimiento procession), the crucified Christ still alive and accompanied by the good thief and the impenitent thief (the Conversión procession), Christ dead on the cross with his head bowed and resting on his right shoulder (the Dolores procession), and the recumbent image of Our Lord in the holy sepulchre (the Santo Sepulcro procession).

Points of interest:

- The image of the Virgen de los Dolores (Our Lady of Sorrows)** passing next to the Cristo de los Faroles (Christ of the Lanterns). The Plaza de Capuchinos becomes a devotional focal point in the city when the image of the Virgen de los Dolores, known popularly as Our Lady of Córdoba, passes in procession past the statue of Cristo de los Faroles.
- The Descendimiento on the Roman Bridge.** As the Cristo del Descendimiento (The Descending Christ) crosses the Roman Bridge, against the brooding backdrop of the city's old quarter, the afternoon breeze gently rustles the garments hanging from the cross.
- The feast of the Santo Sepulcro** procession making its way down Calle Deanes. Negotiating this narrow, winding street poses a daunting task for the Nazarenes bearing the image of the Virgen de Desconsuelo en su Solitud (Our Lady in Her Solitude), as it gingerly makes its way, brushing against the balconies.
- The Brotherhood of La Conversión** will take its image out on procession for the first time in 2022, after the two years of the Covid-19 pandemic halted the Easter processions.

Interesting facts:

- The Buena Muerte Brotherhood** procession takes place in the early hours of Saturday morning.
- The Expiración Brotherhood** was the first brotherhood to form a team of image bearers.
- The Virgen de Dolores** is the image of the Virgin Mary which attracts the most popular devotion in Córdoba.

EASTER SUNDAY

In 1562, by order of the ecclesiastical authorities, the Brotherhood of the Benditas Áimas del Purgatorio (the Blessed Souls of Purgatory) was formed, with its headquarters based in the parish church of Santa Marina. Since then, to this day, the image of the Resurrection, one of the oldest in Córdoba, is worshipped in Santa Marina. The image represents the moment Jesus rises from the dead, and its composition also includes an angel announcing the good news, and two Romans soldiers guarding the tomb.

38- The Resucitado Brotherhood

HOLY TUESDAY

The processions departing on Holy Tuesday in Córdoba represent: the crucified Christ accompanied by a Roman centurion and two assistants at the moment when they cast lots for his garments (the Agonía procession), Christ dead on the cross flanked by four large candles (the Universitaria procession), Our Lord Jesus being vilified of the people (the Sangre procession), Jesus Christ meeting his mother on the Street of Bitterness (the Buen Suceso procession), Our Lord Jesus, Saint Veronica and the Holy Women (the Santa Faz procession) and Christ being arrested on Mount Gethsemane by Jewish temple guards led by Judas (the Prendimiento procession).

Interesting facts:

- The image of the Christ of the Universitaria Brotherhood** is closely modelled on the image of Christ's face printed on the Turin Shroud.
- The Prendimiento procession** is the largest procession in the Holy Week in Córdoba.

HOLY WEDNESDAY

The processions departing on Holy Wednesday in Córdoba represent: Our Lord of Forgiveness appearing before Annas, while being slapped in the face by an executioner (the Perdón procession), Jesus carrying the cross on his back on the way to Calvary (the Calvario procession), the moment before the crucifixion, when Jesus arrives at Calvary and a Roman soldier begins to strip him of his garments, while a Sanhedrin elder offers him a potion to alleviate his pain (the Paz procession), the crucified Christ (the Merced procession), Jesus carrying the cross on his shoulder (the Pasión procession) and Christ with the Most Holy Virgin Mary at his feet (the Piedad procession).

Points of interest:

- The procession of 'La Misericordia' in the Plaza de la Corredora.** The beauty of this 18th century square provides a breath-taking setting for the beautiful procession of Nazarenes with the Cristo de la Misericordia (Christ of Pity) and forlorn-looking Nuestra Señora de las Lágrimas (Our Lady of Tears) under her graceful mauve canopy.
- The procession 'La Paz' through the gardens of Colón Park.** When the itinerary is about to conclude, the procession of the Brotherhood of Paz y Esperanza passes through the gardens of the Plaza de Colón, below a dense canopy of trees.

Interesting facts:

- La Pasión** is the procession with the shortest route.
- The Brotherhood of La Paz (Peace)** takes its name from the time when the image of the Virgin was sculpted, towards the end of the Spanish Civil War. It is one of the Brotherhoods with the greatest number of Nazarenes in its procession.



MAUNDY THURSDAY

The processions departing on Maundy Thursday in Córdoba represent: Jesus carrying the Cross on his shoulders (the Nazareno procession), the crucified Christ accompanied by the Virgin Mary at the foot of the cross (the Caridad procession), one of the moments Jesus falls to the ground with the cross on the way to Calvary (the Caído procession), the moment of the institution of the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper (the Sagrada Cena procession), the Virgin Mary carrying the dead body of her son (the Angustias procession) and Christ dead on the cross with the Most Holy Virgin Mary, Saint John and Mary Magdalene at his feet (the Cristo de Gracia procession).

Points of interest:

- The Señor de la Caridad procession through the Plaza del Potro.** The Brotherhood has kept this point in its itinerary to make an annual visit to its founding building: the brotherhood was created at the former 'La Caridad' Hospital, currently the Museum of Fine Arts.
- The Angustias procession in the Patio de los Naranjos (Orange-Tree Courtyard).** The image of the Virgin Mary sculpted by Juan de Mesa stands out for its brilliance everywhere along the route, but it is in this courtyard where it takes on a special majesty that moves everyone who is lucky enough to see it.

Interesting facts:

- Manolete**, the famous bullfighter, was appointed 'Elder Brother' of the Caído Brotherhood.
- The Brotherhood of Las Angustias** is the oldest brotherhood in Córdoba, dating back to 1558.

HOLY FRIDAY

The processions departing on Holy Friday in Córdoba represent: the Resurrection of Jesus (the Resucitado procession), the Virgin Mary at the foot of the cross (the Soledad procession), the Virgin Mary alone at the foot of the cross (the Expiración procession), the Virgin Mary in the Desconsuelo (the Desconsuelo procession), the Virgin Mary in the Solitud (the Virgen de la Soledad procession) and the image of Christ in the Sepulchre (the Santo Sepulcro procession).

Points of interest:

- The Resucitado Brotherhood** is the oldest brotherhood in the city.
- The Soledad Brotherhood** is the first brotherhood to start its procession.
- The Expiración Brotherhood** is the last brotherhood to start its procession.
- The Desconsuelo Brotherhood** is the first brotherhood to finish its procession.
- The Virgen de la Soledad Brotherhood** is the last brotherhood to finish its procession.

Interesting facts:

- The Resucitado Brotherhood** is the only brotherhood that processes on both sides of the Guadalquivir river.
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