

# Lent and Easter Week



CAMINOS DE PASIÓN



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CAMINOS DE PASIÓN

## COMMEMORATING THE PASSION IN THE HEART OF ANDALUSIA

Beauty, devotion, tradition, culture, emotion... The CAMINOS DE PASIÓN route offers visitors a fascinating journey into the heart of Andalusia. Discover ten towns that have known how to keep their unique **Easter Week** traditions alive over the centuries; traditions that represent a wealth of intangible artistic and social heritage.

The towns of Alcalá la Real in Jaén; Baena, Cabra, Lucena, Priego de Córdoba and Puente Genil in Córdoba; and Carmona, Écija, Osuna and Útrera in Seville celebrate this religious festivity with such passion, which reflects their rich cultural and monumental legacy. The longevity of their rituals and customs highlights the idiosyncrasy and character of each of the towns.

Their religious beliefs and popular traditions have lived together in perfect harmony and bring us closer to the most intimate and unknown aspects of this celebration. Each of the ten towns understands, feels and expresses its devotion in a different way, as can be perceived in the locals' everyday routines. This passion escalates during **Lent** and is at its most spectacular with the commemoration of the Passion and the death of Christ during Easter Week.

This festivity is not only an excellent opportunity to learn more about these time-honoured religious rituals, visitors are also invited to meander through the narrow streets of these beautiful towns, get a taste for their delicious traditional dishes, become inspired by the warmth of the locals, discover the amazing craftsmanship and folklore that surround this religious celebration, and of course, let themselves get drawn in by a multitude of indescribable sensations.

## Lent

The forty days that precede Easter, is the time when the Caminos de Pasión towns prepare their Easter Week celebrations. Forty days full of all manner of events and activities, which are proof of the fervour and popularity with which they are celebrated by local townspeople year after year.

These cultural, religious and popular customs originate from an unchangeable tradition that fills the towns' cultural agendas with events in preparation for Easter: spiritual Via Crucis processions, representing the Stations of the Cross, *traslados* logistical transfer processions to manoeuvre the sculptures from niches to procession floats, sacred art exhibitions, *besamanos* hand-kissing ceremonies, proclamations, open doors days at brotherhood houses, processional march concerts and *saeta* recitals.

### ALCALÁ LA REAL

One of the most awaited Lenten events in Alcalá la Real is the Celebration of the Ecce-Homo brotherhood on the Sunday before Palm Sunday. Following the Eucharist, the brotherhood's main sculpture is paraded through the streets to the sound of the band's music. The town hosts many other activities, including: worship in homage to Jesús en el Huerto and María Santísima de la Esperanza; the *besapié* foot-kissing ceremony and Eucharist dedicated to Jesús Nazareno every 18 March; worship in homage to La Borriquilla brotherhood's main sculptures; and the Local Confraternity Union Via Crucis procession through El Salvador neighbourhood. All of which perfectly complement the main event on Alcalá la Real's Lenten calendar: The Night of Fire and Drums.

#### Must see

**Noche de Lumbres y Tambores-A night of fire and drums**

On the Eve of Saint Joseph, 18 March, this beautiful town in Jaén province fills with music and warmth from the fires. Local musical groups take to the streets and visit the numerous niches dedicated to Saint Joseph, the most emblematic being on calle Ancha, calle Abad Palomino, outside Consolación church and in the Plaza de los Sauces.

### BAENA

Music plays a leading role in many of Baena's Lenten traditions. Every year on 18 March, the **Eve of Saint Joseph**, more than **three thousand drummers** meander through the historic quarter visiting the *Candelarios* (bonfires) that children light up in the plazas and streets. Other deep-rooted events are the **Local Drumming Competition and Saeta Recital**, musical traditions passed down from generation to generation that have been kept alive in specialist schools. The *saeta workshop* closing ceremony, **proclamation** of the brother Jew, **exemplary brother award**, Arco Oscuro **photography exhibition**, and the popular misereres are proof of the intensity with which Baena's townsfolk live this religious festival.



#### Must see

**Los Misereres processions and mass**

*Los Misereres* were originally penitential acts of repentance that were performed to reconcile with God after having sinned. In Baena, where this tradition dates back to the before the 18th century, these acts involve the brotherhoods undertaking processions to the churches that house their main sculptures. During the procession, a religious service is held and the popular miserere, a penitential song with music and lyrics unique to Baena, is performed. *Los Misereres* are every Friday during Lent after Ash Wednesday.

### CABRA

Cabra's brotherhoods host a myriad of Lenten events that attest the dedication and devotion with which the townspeople celebrate this grand religious festival. Many preparations for Easter Week take place during Lent. Some are logistical, such as **transfer processions**, which involve moving sculptures from their resident church to another. This is the case of Jesús en el Santo Sepulcro, which is carried from San Juan de Dios church to La Asunción parish church. **Via Crucis processions**, however, have a much more spiritual significance: the faithful accompany Jesus in his Passion and Death stopping and praying at each of the fourteen Stations of the Cross. The most representative in Cabra are Cristo de la Sangre, Cristo de las Almas, Jesús de las Penas, El Calvario and El Cristo de la Salud. **La Expiración Brotherhood Proclamation** is much anticipated and in its 34th year. Music also plays its part in the form of **Saeta Recitals** and the **Processional March Concert** organised by Cabra's Musical Association, which was founded towards the end of the 19th century. **The Night of Nissan** is also interesting; it consists of a tour that provides insight into the town's Easter Week preparations by visiting the sculptures in their churches, brotherhood houses and sitting in on the bands' final rehearsals.

#### Must see

**Belén Pasionista - a miniature representation of the Passion**

This impressive miniature representation of the Passion was initiated by the Tambores Enlutados brotherhood and is on display throughout Lent. It portrays the fourteen stations of penance and the steps taken by Jesus towards the Cross and includes the tiniest of details and effects.

### CARMONA

Carmona's streets are filled with **Via Crucis** processions, which locals receive with intense devotion given the strong ties with their brotherhoods, some of which were founded between the 16th and 17th centuries. Although the most representative Via Crucis is organised by the General Board of Brotherhoods, the **Santo Entierro, Amargura, La Expiración** and **Cristo de los Desamparados brotherhoods**, among others, also undertake Via Crucis processions. Several *besapié* (foot-kissing) and *besamanos* (hand-kissing) ceremonies and logistical **sculpture transfer processions** are also commonplace. The *saeta*, a lament sung in homage to Jesus or the Virgin Mary, holds a leading role in Carmona's Lenten traditions. In 2017, the 'Amigos de la Guitarra' Flamenco Cultural Association will host its 18th **Celebration of the Saeta**, during which a popular public figure gives a speech about the *saeta* and *saetas* and processional marches are performed.

#### Must see

**Carmona Brotherhoods' Via Crucis procession**

This procession is organised by Carmona's General Board of Brotherhoods and is the most important of many held in the town. It takes place in the evening of the first Sunday of Lent. Each year, one of the town's sculptures is elected to lead the pious act, which follows initial prayers or the Eucharist.

### ÉCIJA

The 'City of Towers' offers visitors the chance to participate in a **wide range of Lenten and worship activities**, which demonstrate the town's rich spiritual life. Écija's General Board of Brotherhoods organises many of the events, including a **Lenten Processional March Concert**, the **Penitential Via Crucis procession** on the first Monday of Lent, and the **Children's Miniature Float Competition and Exhibition** with more than two hundred participants aging from three to eleven years of age. Parish associations, institutions and Easter Week groups arrange **concerts, exaltations, besamanos** and **besapiés** (hand- and foot-kissing ceremonies) in preparation for the week of Passion.

#### Must see

**Penitential Via Crucis procession**

This event is held on the first Monday of Lent and is organised by Écija's General Board of Brotherhoods. A different sculpture is chosen to lead the procession every year.

### LUCENA

For a genuine insight into how Lucena lives for Easter Week, visitors need look no further than the **brotherhood houses**, which host many **Open Doors Days** throughout Lent. Each of them exude the true essence of Lucena's *santería* and are home to the secrets of the town's devotion. Lent is also the ideal time to sample the town's traditional dish, **bolos**, which consists of meatballs doused in a tasty wine and onion sauce, and is perfectly accompanied by one of the many locally produced wines, known as *caldos de la tierra*. Another typical Lucena delicacy are *gajarras*, spiral-shaped pastries with a hint of lemon and cinnamon. Visitors are welcome to attend the **Santeros' Mass** before María Santísima de Araceli in the Sanctuary or be moved by **El Silencio Via Crucis procession**, the oldest in Lucena. The Cristo de la Salud y Misericordia, also known as *El Silencio*, is taken through the streets by mourning brothers. The scene is deeply touching: onlookers respect the silence as the sculpture passes by and only the solemn sound of the beating drum can be heard.

#### Must see

**Solemn Miserere of Nuestro Padre Jesús Caído and Solemn Miserere mass in Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno chapel**

The first Miserere event is organised by Jesús Caído brotherhood, during which the Eli Hoshaná Chamber Music Association performs Miserere Deus composed by Gregorio Allegri for eight mixed voices. The second tradition consists of Lucena's *Hermandad de Tambores* (drum players' brotherhood) announcing the Solemn Miserere mass: they parade through the streets incessantly drumming, accompanied by the sound of the *torralbo*, an untuneful fanfare, until reaching the chapel. The Jesús Nazareno sculpture is carried outside of the chapel to the small square for the mass and to bless the town.

## Visits and related activities:

### Easter Week Museums

Discover how each of the ten towns live and interpret Easter Week in the heart of Andalusia. Visitors are invited to explore the festival's anthropological, artistic and historic wealth in each of these museums.

### Religious imagery

Visiting the towns' churches is the perfect opportunity to admire the sculptures that are paraded through the streets during Easter Week, all of which are extremely important to the region's heritage.

### Lent and Easter Week cuisine and confectionery

Many dishes and cakes are typically eaten during Lent and Easter Week. Many restaurants and cake shops specialise in Lent and Easter dishes and cakes, and welcome visitors to sample them during the celebrations.

### Easter Week craft workshops

Workshops open their doors to visitors to discover the impressive craftsmanship related to this religious festivity (including religious sculptures, embroidery, drums, candle-making, silver and gold work, gliding, etc.) and witness the meticulous care taken by these artists.

### Brotherhood houses

Brothers meet in brotherhood houses to organise their festivities. Visitors can discover interesting facts and the paraphernalia that they display. Some brotherhoods also house their sculptures and floats.

### More information and events programmes on:

[www.caminosdepasion.com/easter-week/](http://www.caminosdepasion.com/easter-week/)

### PUENTE GENIL

**Jueves Lardero** -the Thursday immediately following Ash Wednesday- marks the start of Puente Genil's Lenten calendar with events such as the **processional march competition** and the **Celebration of the Saeta Cuartelera**. The *Saeta Cuartelera* is unique to the town and came to being in the biblical groups' headquarters, called *cuarteles*. It is a variant of the *Saeta Vieja*, an old lament sung by two people that narrates the Gospels. Over time, the *saeta* has evolved through personal contributions from artists, becoming more lyrical and artistic yet preserving its original essence. The town's Open Doors Day takes place two weeks before *Jueves Lardero* and gives locals and visitors the chance to tour the *cuarteles*, churches and Easter Week museum, and even sample local products.

#### Must see

**Roman Saturdays**

At 10 p.m. every Saturday during Lent, the corporations recreate an 18th-century tradition: the *subida* when Roman soldiers march up to the Calvario hill, where the Jesús Nazareno sculpture is found. This sculpture is locally known as 'El Terrible' because he is believed to assume everyone's burdens. At the top of the hill, the brothers drink *uvinas* (a locally produced wine) and sing *saetas cuarteleras* in homage to the sculpture, and Misereres can also be heard. Then, each biblical group starts to descend towards their *cuarte* to dine with the brotherhood. After the meal, a leg is removed from the *Vieja Cuaresmera*, a Lenten calendar represented by a seven-legged lady; one leg for each Sunday during Lent.

### UTRERA

Útrera's Lenten calendar is full of activities, especially Via Crucis processions. The most noteworthy are: the **Brotherhoods' Via Crucis** organised by Útrera's General Board of Brotherhoods, and those organised by the Los Milagros, Los Muchachos de Consolación and Los Estudiantes brotherhoods, which take place around Santa María parish church, in the Sanctuary's portico and the Salesian College cloister, respectively.

Many of the brotherhoods also host proclamations, during which an influential brother or public figure delivers a speech to announce the start of Lent. Some of the most important include La Trinidad brotherhood's Proclamation, La Quinta Angustia brotherhood's Junior Proclamation and the *Costaleros* Proclamation organised by Los Aceituneros brotherhood.

The transferral of sculptures from niches to procession floats has gained more interest over the years. It is a very intimate ceremony and provides great insight into the brotherhoods' recollection and organisation. The Corona Dolorosa celebration is on Friday of Sorrows (the Friday before Palm Sunday) to pay homage to Nuestra Señora de las Angustias of the Jesús Nazareno brotherhood.

#### Must see

The town's main Lenten event is the **Brotherhoods' Via Crucis procession** organised by Útrera's General Board of Brotherhoods on the first Monday of Lent. A different sculpture is chosen to lead the procession every year.

# Easter Week

For one week of the year, the ten Caminos de Pasión towns fervently celebrate the recreation of the birth, life, Passion and death of Christ. Each town commemorates these events in a completely unique way, displaying the artistic wealth of their sculptures, showcasing the quality of their musical compositions, celebrating their most time-honoured customs and allowing their centuries-old traditions to continue to thrive.



Alcalá la Real

Baena



Cabra



Carmona



Écija



Lucena



Puente Genil



Utrera

### ALCALÁ LA REAL LOS PASOS MÍMICOS

This town, nestled in the Sierra Sur in Jaén, can be proud of preserving some of the most varied and liveliest Easter Week traditions. The town's repertoire is anthropologically interesting as piety and jovial uproar go hand in hand. It is predominated by the *pasos mimicos* with dramatized representations and town criers that declaim compositions with peculiar melodies and lyrics somewhere between poetry and prose that have been handed down the generations, the untuneful sound of the trumpet, and figures with coloured *rostrillos*, or masks and bright vestments. The origins can be found in the fusion of two traditions: the *autos*, or *misterios*, mystery plays, which had formed part of the Corpus celebrations since the 15th century; and *ingenios*, religious and festive representations associated with the town's different trade guilds.

Alcalá la Real is the birthplace of master image makers Pablo de Rojas and Juan Martínez Montañes, and offers the perfect backdrop for experiencing Easter Week. Enjoy the processions, represented by the Ecce-Homo y Jesús de la Columna and the Penitencia de los Apóstoles de Jesús brotherhoods; watch the Roman, Jewish and *Sayones* soldiers march past; or even encounter the daunting town criers dressed in mourning with their wide-brimmed hats on any of the town's beautiful streets.

#### What makes it unique

The entire town actively participates in Easter Week, which culminates on Good Friday morning. The sound of the tin trumpets and solemn beating of the drums accompany the Jesús Nazareno and Virgen del Rosario sculptures, while excitement mounts for the living dioramas and proclamations by the masked Apostles and Roman troops of the Ecce-Homo brotherhood. Another unforgettable experience is watching the proclamations that dramatize events that occurred during the Passion, such as Los Reos (offenders), La Lanzada (the piercing of Christ's side with a spear), La Venta (Judas's betrayal) and El Arrepentimiento (Judas's remorse). One of the most original customs is the character of Judas. He is easily recognisable due to his red outfit and runs from one side of the procession to the other, surrounded by the crowds who scorn him for his betrayal of Jesus.

#### Must see

One of the most emblematic moments is on Holy Wednesday during the Via Crucis procession that passes through the imposing Fortaleza de la Mota. A beautiful scene is the encounter between the Cristo de la Salud and the Virgen de las Angustias floats in the Calle Veracruz on Good Friday as the sun is setting. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is celebrated on Easter Sunday and all brotherhoods from Alcalá la Real participate in the procession.

### BAENA COLIBLANCOS AND COLINEGROS

Easter Week in Baena, declared a Festival of National Tourist Interest, is predominated by the groups of Coliblanco and Colinegro Jew brothers and the incessant beating of their peculiar drums. Baena is also known for its processions and re-enactments and typical biblical figures.

One of the most distinctive features is the way that the brotherhoods are structured, as each one consists of several associations and groups. Baena also surprises visitors with one of its most original and striking contributions: the role of the *Judio* (Jew brother). This character's attire is rooted so deeply that it has left its own mark on the different brotherhoods, which are divided by colour: white (*Coliblancos*) and black (*Colinegros*) in accordance with the colour of the horse hair coming from the Jew brothers' helmets.

The musical accompaniment is provided by bands of cornets, *saetas* and an ancient musical piece called the Miserere, which serves as a solemn mass and suffrage for brothers that have passed away or to honour the main sculpture belonging to a brotherhood. The most important sound of all is from the special drums played by the Jew brothers, which are made using cow's hide and lined with the colour of each brotherhood's uniform.

Baena's Easter Week is about becoming enraptured with colours and sounds and learning the town's own vocabulary. The best way to discover its customs is with the help of the local townspeople who live their Easter week to the full and are proud to share it with visitors.

#### What makes it unique

Many of the town's artisans solely create paraphernalia related to the Jew brothers and their hand-crafted drums. Their outfit consists of a red jacket with sumptuous embroidery, black trousers, a white shirt, a neckerchief and a metal helmet with imprinted patterns and brightly coloured plumage coming from the top, with black or white hair.

#### Must see

Easter Week officially starts on Holy Wednesday when the *Colinegros* and *Coliblancos* *echan las cajas*'. This tradition consists of the brothers playing the drums from the small hours of the morning and during most of the day. Another interesting event takes place on Maundy Thursday, when all of the brotherhoods participate in a procession and visit all of the town's monuments. On passing each of the churches, the Jewish brothers remove their helmets and change the drums' rhythm, as signs of respect. The Roman soldiers also play an 'ordinary' drum roll and the biblical figures cover their faces with *rostrillos* or masks.

### LUCENA LA SANTERÍA

Lucena's Easter Week has an individual and distinctive style, which mixes art, aesthetics and tradition. Its greatest hallmark is due to all of the special features that comprise 'La Santería', the unique way that Lucena's processions are paraded through the streets. The men who carry the floats are called *santeros* and follow strict rules of respect and solemnity. They stand outside the float and take the weight of a beam on their shoulders. They wear tunics and hoods, but their faces are uncovered. The *manijero* leads the float and directs the *santeros* to ensure that the procession runs smoothly. He rings a bell to indicate when they can rest or lift the float. In Lucena, they say that the procession is undertaken in *horquillos*, referring to the walking sticks (*horquillas*) that the *santeros* carry and upon which the float is supported when they take a short rest. Other important aspects are the *torralbo*, an untuneful fanfare that announces the arrival of some of the processions and the banging of the drum, which is essential to helping the *santeros* keep their marching rhythm.

During the eight days of Easter Week, visitors and locals can observe Lucena's rich imagery in the unbeatable settings that its streets offer. Proof of this artistic wealth is reflected in the Cristo Amarrado a la Columna by Pedro Roldán (1675); Cristo del Amor attributed to Alonso Cano; San Pedro del Lavatorio attributed to Pedro de Mena Medrano; Jesús Caído attributed to Risueño and the Virgin Mary known as 'la Piedra' by Blas Molner. This wealth is also experienced on a spiritual level, with many following the image of Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno. Two especially interesting events are the national *saeta* competition, a heartfelt song that is commonly heard during Easter Week, and the mini Easter Week processions, which has seen local children take miniature versions of the floats to the streets for hundreds of years. This distinctive celebration takes place on the Saturday following Easter Sunday. More than one hundred floats are carried by children between three and twelve years of age.

#### What makes it unique

'La Santería': Lucena's individual and intriguing way of carrying the floats was originally undertaken by groups of workers. It dates back to the years when masters would hire *capataces* and *manijeros* to lead their workers in the procession. Each float moves in a different way, depending on whether it carries an image of Christ or the Virgin Mary, seemingly making it come to life. The drummers that march behind the float mark the rhythm.

#### Must see

Good Friday is Lucena's most important day, when the Nuestro Padre Jesús Nazareno brotherhood passes through the streets Cabrillana, Flores, Las Mesas and el Paseo del Coso, and their accompanying band plays the march, La Saeta. The Nazarene awakens devotion among the people from Lucena. This represents one of the most emotive moments as the sculpture has a jointed arm and throughout the procession his arm moves, blessing the townspeople.

### OSUNA MONUMENTAL HERITAGE

Osuna's streets and monuments are living proof of its culturally rich past and traditions. Many tourists return to the town after being so impressed by the excellent sculptures that form part of Osuna's imagery, created by renowned image makers, such as Juan de Mesa, Vicente de Tena and José de Mora. Its geographical location, halfway between Seville and Granada, marked the genesis and evolution of Osuna's Easter Week, in which traditions from east and west Andalusia come together.

The monumental character and beautiful streets through which the Easter Week processions pass make it truly remarkable. A stroll around the streets of Osuna is enough to imagine its glorious and rich cultural past. Ashlar extracted from the town's ancient quarries, used to build some of the most emblematic buildings and churches, bears witness to the passing of time. The town's beloved churches, such as El Carmen, La Victoria, La Consolación and the Collegiate, hold priceless religious artworks: their sculptures of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary.

#### What makes it unique

Osuna's artistic heritage is outstanding. Invaluable treasures can be found hidden behind the doors of many of the ducal town's churches, in the form of sacred imagery, including sculptures by revered image makers Juan de Mesa and José de Mora. This artistic wealth is reflected in the monumental character of the processions.

#### Must see

Good Friday is the most intense day for Osuna's devotees. The townspeople wake up at dawn to see the sculptures of Jesús Nazareno and the Virgen de los Dolores leave the La Victoria church. The spiritual atmosphere when the *costalero* men carrying the float stop in Calle La Cilla is overwhelming. The street is full of penitents that kneel before the image of Christ and show him the cross that they will carry for the duration of the procession. When passing the La Encarnación monastery, the *costalero* men sing an emotive Salve Regina to the image of the Virgen de los Dolores.

Other impressive moments are when children participate in the Palm Sunday procession holding palms and olive branches; the Cristo de la Humildad sculpture on Holy Monday; witnessing the Vera Cruz and La Paz brotherhood arrive at Plaza Mayor; watching the Jesús Caído brotherhood pass the La Merced church or the Quinta Angustia procession in the street Calle Gordillo. It is also spectacular to see the ladies dressed in black, mantilla veils over high combs, when they accompany the Santo Entierro brotherhood on Holy Saturday.

### CABRA LOS ABEJORROS

Declared as a Festival of National Tourist Interest, Cabra's Easter Week traditions are some of the oldest. Proof of such lies in the date that the La Vera Cruz archconfraternity was founded, being recorded as 1522. Cabra is characterised by the significant number of processions that pass through its streets during Easter Week, during which 29 brotherhoods undertake stations of penance. This means that it is one of the most important, not only in Córdoba, but in the whole of Andalusia. The town also possesses religious imagery by some of the best image makers from the Baroque era, as well as other valuable sculptures pertaining to the revival in interest in Easter Week during the 20th and 21st centuries.

Some of the town's most unique customs during this celebration are the symbols that keep it alive, such as the 'Jew' brothers that belong to the Jesús Preso brotherhood, the *añales* or *abejorros* (elongated trumpets that sound their deep tone every time the floats are lifted), and the *rompevelos* drum roll and the heartfelt *saeta* songs with their peculiar tune and lyrics, both of which can be heard in the early hours of Good Friday.

Similarly, Cabra has a long list of Easter Week traditions and craftsmanship, of which, the most noteworthy are the embroidered artworks from the Augustinian or Dominican nun monasteries or delicate silver works, especially the silver reliquary created by Bernabé de Oviedo.

#### What makes it unique

The Jesús Preso procession, known as 'Señor de las Multitudes' has preserved its idiosyncrasy. The sculpture is placed on a pedestal on top of the float, which is carried by the traditional 'Jew' brothers who hold on to the beams that protrude from it -a technique that is very different from that employed in Seville. This religious group was also the first to introduce *capuchones* in processions, which is means 'penitent' in Cabra. The sculptures paraded in Easter Week are outstanding, with the Granadan School and new tendencies, such as José A. Cabello or Antonio Bernal, being prominent.

#### Must see

One of the most awaited moments takes place on the morn of Holy Saturday, when the most famed flamenco singers in Andalusia are invited to sing heartfelt *saetas* to the Virgen de la Soledad y Quinta Angustia. In the evening, the Nuestra Señora del Socorro is paraded through the streets. The local townspeople follow the Virgin Mary until she returns to La Asunción church. Along the way many pay homage to her from their balconies in the form of beautiful *saetas*. The image is considered to be rather particular as she is modestly clothed like priestess, however she is adorned with a gold heart-shaped brooch during Easter Week.

### CARMONA RELIGIOUS SCULPTURES

Carmona showcases its splendour during Easter Week: a celebration that mixes devotion and sobriety with the beauty of its streets and hidden plazas. The town is home to a wealth of extraordinary sculptures. The Señor de la Amargura, created by Jorge Fernández Alemán in 1521, is greatly cherished as it is the oldest sculpture in Andalusia that continues to be part of the Easter Week processions.

The processions are organised in the same way as in Seville: *nazarenos*, or penitents, are separated into sections by decorative standards, and *monaguillos* and *acólitos* (altar boys), which are accompanied by bands that precede floats bearing sculptures of Jesus or the Virgin Mary. The floats are carried by *costaleros*, men hidden underneath who take the weight on their necks. However, they preserve their own, special customs. Each of the religious groups undertakes a station of penance to the Santa María priory church every day of Easter Week. Every procession must pass through the Plaza de San Fernando, which provides an exceptional backdrop for the sculptures.

Some of the most emblematic scenes are: the first *nazareno* penitents from La Esperanza brotherhood as they leave Salvador church, the outstanding efforts of the *costalero* men on lifting Cristo de la Amargura's float out of San Bartolomé church, and the flurries of rose petals over the Virgen de los Dolores as she arrives at the Judería, the old Jewish quarter. All of the Vrgin Mary sculptures that participate during Easter Week represent the sorrows that Mary endured during the Passion. In Carmona, they are usually adorned with a silver moon crescent at the foot of the dress, an aspect that has been lost in other towns and cities.

#### What makes it unique

Carmona's artistic heritage and its religious imagery is astounding. The most noteworthy pieces are the Señor de la Amargura, Cristo de la Coronación, Nazareno del Silencio and Cristo de la Humildad y la Paciencia. All are fine examples of how art is paraded through the streets during Easter Week. It would be impossible to fully understand Carmona's Easter Week traditions without contemplating its wonderful architectural heritage: the Santa María church, the Puerta de Sevilla gateway, the Plaza de San Fernando and the street El Angostillo, spots in which Carmona's past and present come together. Of the liturgical events, the Palm Sunday procession inside the Santa Clara convent is very interesting and all who are present are welcome to participate.

#### Must see

On Holy Wednesday, the Virgen de las Angustias sculpture is fervently welcomed back to her neighbourhood by devotees who shower her with rose petals. There are many beautiful moments on Good Friday too, when only the shuffle of the *costalero* men's feet can be heard as the Silencio brotherhood leaves San Bartolomé church, and the nuns sing as the float passes the Hermanas de la Cruz convent.

### PUENTE GENIL LA MANANTA

This rural town in the Cordoban countryside is home to one of the most important religious devotions in Andalusia: 'La Mananta', as it is locally known. Its celebrations are unique to Puente Genil, giving way to its own vocabulary.

The most original and representative element consists of more than four hundred biblical figures that parade alongside the processions, representing characters from the Old and New Testaments, and religious symbols and allegories. The biblical figures belong to groups called *corporaciones bíblicas*, which are religious associations, who meet in their headquarters, called *cuarteles*, to carry out their activities throughout the year.

#### What makes it unique

The biblical 'figures' that accompany the processions. The characters are recognisable due to their traditional *rostrillos*, or masks, and *martirios*, which are symbols that represent the objects that were martyrsied. The groups of males that are members of the associations really make Puente Genil's Easter Week different from other towns. Every year, each associations holds a draw to decide who plays which character and where they will be positioned in the procession.

#### Must see

Although the list is endless, the Saturday before Palm Sunday is noteworthy, when the Virgen de la Guia inaugurates La Mananta. Following the recommendable Palm Sunday proclamation, many processions take place in the town and all contribute their own special characteristics to the celebration.

No visitor should miss the events that take place at dawn on Good Friday when the Imperio Romano leaves in search of Jesús Nazareno, also locally known as 'El Terrible', and play the reveille to announce the start of the procession. While they escort him, different figures appear to make their reverence and read his sentence to the culprit. In the evening, the crowds succumb to the darkness surrounding the procession that leaves from the Dulce Nombre church. During the procession, San Juan dances to the sound of the Tríplici, a lively march, when the float encounters the Imperio Romano. The *Picorucho* penitents, led by the Devil and Death, interrupt La Soledad with their disturbing pounding of the drum. Another interesting tradition is the Resurrection procession on Easter Sunday in which all biblical figures participate.

### ÉCIJA BAROQUE ART

Écija's Easter Week dates back to the 15th century and is acclaimed for its Baroque floats and religious sculptures with centuries of history.

Thirteen brotherhoods parade their sculptures through the streets, the most impressive being: Cristo de la Salud of 1500, Cristo de la Yedra of 1630 by Juan de Mesa, 17th-century Cristo de la Expiración by Pedro Roldán, and Cristo de la Sangre of 1567 by Gaspar del Águila. The glass case belonging to the Santo Entierro float was created in 1711 and is made of wood, laminated with tortoiseshell and sterling silver.

Écija preserves a unique procession style: men dressed in tunics and hoods carry the floats, taking the weight on the beams that protrude from beneath them. The sculptures are positioned atop tall, square pedestals and illuminated with decorative candelabra. The height of such ensembles is quite extraordinary, the best example being the Cristo de Confalón float.

#### What makes it unique

The sculptures' quality and the route the processions take, passing the town's wonderful historic monuments.

#### Must see

On Holy Wednesday, hundreds of locals accompany San Gil, clasping candles that represent promises and praying alongside the sculpture. Holy Thursday gives way to another emotive scene when, amidst the scent of cinnamon and clove, the faithful sing to Cristo de la Sangre.

The children accompanying *the Borriquita* (little donkey) procession on Palm Sunday; La Yedra passing through El Puente neighbourhood on Holy Monday; and El Silencio or San Juan's dawn procession in the early hours of Good Friday are equally inspiring moments.

Other important scenes on Good Friday include Jesús Sin Soga in the surrounds of Santa Bárbara church; La Piedad returning to La Merced convent, and the solemn recollection of the Sagrada Mortaja procession. The procession on Easter Sunday provides contrast: children are dressed as angels or wear white veils to celebrate the Resurrection.