

## Festivals

Spain is the nation of “Fiesta”. There are Spanish festivals all over the country and in Spanish-speaking countries across the globe. In your reading homeworks so far this year, you have learnt about el Día de los Muertos, San Fermín, Las Fallas, Semana Santa y el Cinco de Mayo. However, the calendar is filled with many more ...

The '**Fiesta de Los tres Reyes Magos** (The 3 Kings) is celebrated on the 6th January to remember when the Kings brought gifts to baby Jesus. Children in Spain receive some presents on Christmas Day, but most are opened on this day. Children believe that the Kings bring presents to them; they write them letters asking for presents and on the 5th January they leave shoes on windowsills or under the Christmas Tree to be filled with presents. Gifts are often left by children for the Kings: a glass of brandy, a satsuma and some walnuts. Sometimes a bucket of water is left for the camels that bring the Kings! If the children have been bad, the Kings might leave pieces of coal made out of sugar in the presents!



During the week leading up to Lent, in late February or early March, Spain celebrates **Carnaval**. The celebration is to participate in indulgence and the splendour of life before the people practice personal sacrifice for God during Lent. Regions across Spain organise carnivals and fiestas, most involving music and dancing. Spaniards dress in colourful, traditional costumes and take to the streets to celebrate the season.

The world-famous **Festival de Jerez** is a Flamenco festival that runs for over 2 weeks in Cadiz through February and March. The festival is a celebration of Flamenco, from honouring its traditions to exploring its modern evolution. Top performers from across the country come to Cadiz to showcase their talents.



The **Moros y Cristianos** (Moors and Christians) is a festival taking place in April in Alcoy, in the Valencian Community. According to popular tradition, the festivals commemorate the battles, combats and fights between Moors (i.e. Muslims) and Christians during the period known as Reconquista (from the 8th – 15<sup>th</sup> century). The festivals last for several days, and feature festive parades with bombastic costumes loosely inspired by medieval fashion. The festival develops among shots of gunpowder, medieval music, and fireworks, and ends with the Christians winning a simulated battle around a castle.

In Seville, two weeks after Easter, it's Spain's biggest party at the **La Feria de Abril** (April Fair). This is a week-long celebration which began in 1847 as a cattle trading fair. This festival begins with the night of the *alumbrao*, the inaugural moment when all the fairground lights are lit. This is also the night the traditional *pescado frito* (fried fish) is tasted in the stands. After a week of constant celebration, the Fair concludes with a fireworks display over the Guadalquivir River.



One of Spain's craziest festivals is **La Tomatina** (Tomato Festival) which takes place in August in Buñol near Valencia. It is the world's biggest tomato fight! La Tomatina Festival started in 1945 when some young people joined in the Giants and Big-Heads figures parade. The energy of jovialities caused one participant's Big-head to fall off. The participant flew into a fit of rage, began hitting everything in his path, including a market stall of vegetables. People started to pelt each other with tomatoes until the local forces ended the fruit battle.

Usually, the fight lasts for about one hour, with an estimated 145000 kg of tomatoes being thrown! Afterwards the town square is covered with tomato debris; fire engines then hose down the streets and participants often use hoses that locals provide to remove the tomatoes from their bodies.

November begins with the sombre occasion of **Todos Los Santos** (All Saints Day) when Spanish people from all over the country return to their birthplaces to remember their deceased relatives. Most people will visit the graves of relatives and decorate them with elaborate floral displays. The Eucharist, or Mass, will often be performed in the cemetery several times during the day.



Christmas in Spain begins with **Nochebuena** (Good Night - Christmas Eve). Nochebuena includes a dinner with family and friends. It is particularly common to start the meal with a seafood dish, followed by a bowl of hot homemade soup, and lamb or roasted pig. It is also common to have desserts such as *turrón*. Following their meal, families attend **La Misa Del Gallo** (The Mass of the Rooster - Midnight Mass). It is called this because a rooster is supposed to have crowed the night that Jesus was born. After the service, one tradition is for people to walk through the streets carrying torches and playing guitars, tambourines and drums.

**Nochevieja** (Old Night - New Year's Eve) is similar to our celebrations and involves making a toast and exchanging a kiss or hug. However, one Spanish tradition which is different is eating twelve grapes—one for each stroke of midnight—to ensure your wishes come true for the New Year!