

Semana Santa in Spain

Easter, one of Spain's most breathtaking celebrations, is a one-of-a-kind display of tradition, music, culture, theatre and religion. If you're thinking of visiting Spain, consider doing so during Semana Santa!

The holiday, jubilant in Andalucía and solemn elsewhere in Spain, is practically defined by its stunning processions. Each of these processions typically boasts two intensely adorned floats, one of the Virgin and the other of a scene from Christ's Passion. These massive, heavy floats are carried on the shoulders of up to forty men, called costaleros. Impossible to miss are the seemingly endless rows of nazarenos, or penitents, who walk along with the float. You may even see many nazarenos walking barefoot, which is pretty impressive, considering some of the processions last up to 14 hours! Oh, and don't be thrown off by the resemblance between the pointy hoods and long robes of the nazarenos and those of the Ku Klux Klan: it's coincidental and completely unrelated.



The origins of Spain's elaborate Semana Santa processions can be tracked back to 1521, when the Marqués de Tarifa returned to Spain from the Holy Land. After his journey, he institutionalized the Via Crucis (Stations of the Cross) in Spain and from that moment on this holy event was celebrated with a procession. Over time, the observance of the Via Crucis eventually broke up into the various scenes of the Passion, with the incorporation of portable crosses and altars. This would eventually lead to today's processions.

