



EUROPEAN NETWORK  
OF HOLY WEEK AND  
EASTER CELEBRATIONS  
RED EUROPEA DE CELEBRACIONES  
DE SEMANA SANTA Y PASCUA

*Discover  
Europe's most  
symbolic Holy  
Week and Easter  
celebrations*



Slovenija Loka, Slovenia



**Europe is the place where the Holy Week and Easter are celebrated in the most traditional and passionate way. Religious in nature, these celebrations have ancestral roots in some cases.**

**It is a living heritage preserved by the communities who continue it, which is not merely based on inherited traditions, but keeps evolving according to the times and the very history of each place.**



Braga, Portugal

# *Join us on this trip through the European Holy Week and Easter!*

It was in Europe where the first examples of “substitution pilgrimages” emerged, as a result of social and political instability in the Holy Land, giving rise to the creation of walking trails in the surrounding cities or hills, which were intended to replicate the Via Dolorosa of Jerusalem.

Around these places, religious corporations were born (brotherhoods and sisterhoods), which were responsible for organising devotional manifestations that have evolved over time, and that take on a larger dimension during Lent and the Holy Week. For this very reason, it is possible to observe a geographical area where a number of cultural manifestations coexist in Europe: a diversity of ways for communities to experience the traditions of the Holy Week and Easter.



Cabra, Córdoba, Spain

**Given the relevance and diversity of these practices, a European cultural route was born, which provides the opportunity to discover one of the most significant sets of cultural events on the European continent: the *European Network of Holy Week and Easter Celebrations*.**

One of the most original manifestations takes place in the small town of Škofja Loka, **Slovenia**, where an ancient, UNESCO-recognised staging of the Passion of the Christ takes place in the streets, and involves the entire community.



Andalusia, Spain

We cannot fail to mention the unique atmosphere experienced during the Holy Week in Andalusia, in **Spain**. Excitement, zeal, grandeur and devotion mark a unique experience, which takes place in the unmistakable setting provided by the unique urban planning and architecture of this Spanish region. The food, the sounds, the customs and particularly, the presence of the local people complete this very special Holy Week and Easter experience. This network suggests ten Andalusian cities to follow, which are brought together on the Paths of the Passion route. Although this celebration is

known internationally, it is not only in Andalusia that the Holy Week is celebrated with particular passion. This special time of year with great public events is celebrated throughout the whole of Spain. The biblical parades of Lorca, the Procession of the Holy Encounter in Viveiro, Galicia, or the Procession of the Holy Christ of Silence in Orihuela, are just a few of the most significant events you don't want to miss out on.

The peculiar Easter Race, held in the small Maltese town of Birgu (**Malta**) or the impressive Sicilian (**Italy**) processions, which have a special connection with Castilian traditions, are other mandatory stops on our route.

And how could we forget the city of Braga (**Portugal**)? Braga is the seat of the main Portuguese Archdiocese and home to a singular liturgical rite, where the Holy Week is the main manifestation of its kind in Portugal.



Braga, Portugal

#### Portugal

Braga

#### Spain

Alcalá la Real (Jaén)  
Baena, Cabra, Lucena,  
Priego de Córdoba and  
Puente Genil (Córdoba)  
Carmona, Écija, Osuna  
and Utrera (Sevilla)  
Orihuela (Alicante)  
Lorca (Murcia)  
Viveiro (Lugo)

#### Italy

Caltanissetta (Sicilia)  
Palermo (Sicilia)

#### Malta

Birgu

#### Slovenia

Škofja Loka

*Discover the most peculiar and ancient roots that are still alive today on the European continent.*

The cultural heritage of the cities along the route will amaze you.

*Museums and themed venues associated with the Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods can be visited throughout the whole year to discover the essence of the festival.*



Italy

**Caltanissetta** is a Sicilian community, known for its history, folklore and cuisine, as well as for being one of the most historic cities of the region. The Holy Week has a very special meaning

for its inhabitants. On the evening of Holy Thursday, floats with richly adorned, life-size statues, depicting scenes of the Passion of the Christ, walk across the city streets in a slow and gloomy march. On the evening of Good Friday, you can watch the emblematic Procession of the Black Christ, one of the highlights of Caltanissetta's Holy Week.



**Palermo** is the capital of the Italian region of Sicily. This historic city is one of the most interesting destinations in southern Italy. The Holy Week rites are also a popular religious event in the Sicilian capital. This set of rituals originates from the history of Spanish Sicily,

dating back to 1516 to 1713, when the whole island was under the rule of the Aragon Crown, which was united with the Kingdom of Naples. In total, there are 38 processions, some larger and some smaller, filling the streets of Palermo during the Holy Week.

Malta



**Birgu** is a small walled town in Malta with around three thousand inhabitants. Over the centuries, the Phoenicians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, Aragonese, Knights of St John and the British contributed to its development. The Holy Week is commemorated with great zeal. Lent is marked by weekly pious manifestations. These intensify during the Holy Week when two sober processions with life-size effigies of the mysteries are held. On Easter Sunday, the tone morphs into jubilation, in particular during the traditional run with the statue of the Risen Christ. Year after year, these religious manifestations attract thousands of believers and tourists.

Portugal



**Braga** is the third largest city in Portugal and home to one of the oldest Archdioceses in the Iberian Peninsula. Both historic and modern, the city congregates architectural examples of several periods, of which the Sanctuary of Good Jesus stands out, and is considered a piece of Cultural Heritage of the Humanity. Considered the most important Holy Week in Portugal, it consists of four main processions. Also noteworthy are the celebrations of Braga's secular liturgical rites and, the tradition of laus perennis (continual prayer), which takes place during Lent in 23 temples all over the city.

## Spain



**Alcalá la Real** is a city located in the province of Jaén, which gained economic and political importance after the year 713, when Muslims occupied this territory. The city's most emblematic monument is the Mota Fortress complex. Until the 16th century, the city was confined within its walls. During the Holy Week, there are street performances and traditional processions, and the town criers in Alcalá la Real play an important role, expressing a mixed composition of poetry and prose, whose peculiar intonation and musicality reverberate across the city's streets and squares.

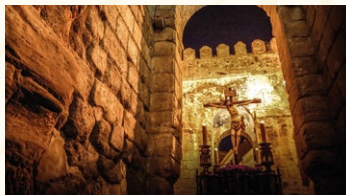


**Baena** is a municipality located in the province of Cordoba, known for its high-quality olive oil. In addition to its architectural heritage, particularly from the Roman period, it also stands out for its natural landscapes. During its Holy Week, the figure of the Jew of Baena takes prominence. He wears a very colourful dress and plays his drum throughout the entire parade. Another interesting manifestation is the use of artistically interesting

religious statues in its processions, such as the gothic Holy Christ of Forgiveness and the Holy Christ of the Expiration, both declared of Cultural Interest.



**Cabra** is located at the geographic centre of Andalusia. The baroque style dominates the city streets, with its unmistakable marks on houses and temples. The landscape that surrounds it, with endless olive groves, is one of the most important elements of Cordoba's natural heritage. Twenty-nine brotherhoods and sisterhoods take part in its Holy Week. The presence of Jews and Romans, and drums and trumpets in the ceremonies is a tradition that is still kept alive today. Another unique tradition is the use of the so-called "bumblebees" – elongated trumpets whose peculiar sound announces the passing of the processions.



**Carmona**, a city located in the province of Seville, is one of the most important historical cities of Andalusia, due to the gathering of different peoples that have occupied it throughout history, including Romans and Muslims. However, it

also boasts an important heritage from the baroque and even contemporary periods. This monumental spot is an exceptional setting for the procession of its nine confraternities during the Holy Week. The admirable statue of Our Lord of Sorrow, the oldest in the region, is particularly noteworthy. Other elements, such as the remarkable trousseau of embroideries, carved sculptures and goldsmith works enrich the Carmonian Holy Week.



**Écija**, named the city of the Sun and of the Eleven Towers, is considered one of the most important artistic centres in the region. The Holy Week is undoubtedly the most important moment in the city's calendar. Every year, locals and visitors from all over arrive with fervour, eager to see the spectacular processions and their ancient, historical religious statues. These include the Holy Christ of Good Health, the Holy Christ of the Expiration, the Holy Christ of Blood or the passage of the Holy Burial, carrying an urn made of wood with fine sterling, silver hawk leaf inlays.



**Lorca** is a city in the province of Murcia, known as the "baroque city", due to its important architectural heritage built in this style. What stands out in Lorca's Holy Week is the intensity of its manifestations. The celebration is also known as the "white and blue" due to the rivalry between its two main brotherhoods. The main event is the "La Carrera" parade, which features floats and spectacular equestrian groups. All the characters are dressed in Lorca's traditional handmade embroideries made from silk and gold.



**Lucena**, located in the province of Cordoba, has a particular status among the other historical cities of Andalusia due to its notable Jewish legacy. Every year, Lucena evokes the Passion of the Christ in its own unmistakable style. Its 16 confraternities come together to organise over thirty scenes, which are conducted in processions of magnificent imaginative richness, and following a unique sound rhythm. Its main hallmark is the *santería*, because of the particular way of carrying the floats to the sound of drums and to Torralbo's call.



**Orihuela** is the historic capital of the "Vega Baja del Segura" region of the Valencian community, and is considered to be the cultural capital of the Costa Blanca. Orihuela's Holy Week is one of the most important religious-cultural manifestations in Spain. Among these processions, the Holy Christ of Silence, which takes place on Holy Thursday, and the Holy Burial of Christ, on Holy Saturday stand out, with the figure of the "Caballero Cubierto" (The Covered Gentleman) and the only passing of the Female Devil in the world.



**Osuna** is located halfway between Seville and Granada, a fact that marked the emergence and development of its Holy Week. Because of this, the celebration, as it is known today, is the result of a series of influences received from both cities. The splendour of this celebration, which combines art, colours and smells, lies mainly in its impressive processions, which fill its monumental streets and create a unique, solemn atmosphere. Good Friday is the busiest day. At dawn, the statue of Jesus of

Nazareth rises up to the Insigne Collegiate Church of St. Mary of the Assumption, accompanied by a crowd of penitents; the highlight of the celebration.



**Priego de Córdoba** is located within the Natural Park of the Subbetic Mountains. A municipality that maintains all the essence of the Andalusian identity. Located inside a natural fortress, its streets feature baroque elements at every corner, and stand out for their beautiful temples in this style. During the Holy Week, the population takes to the streets to follow the processions, with extraordinarily large floats, in a manifestation of fervour and emotion. The most popular ceremony is that of Good Friday, where a great number of people eagerly climb the Calvary hill to see the Nazarene.



**Puente Genil**, in the province of Cordoba, crossed by the river with the same name which, since ancient times, has had a great influence over the whole territory. During the Holy Week celebrations, known locally as "Mananta", 24

Brotherhoods parade, from Passion Saturday to Easter Sunday, and are accompanied by peculiar "biblical figures", characters from the Old and New Testament and symbols and allegories from religion. The highlight of the "Mananta" takes place on Good Friday at dawn, when the Roman Empire interprets Diana at the departure of Jesus of Nazareth, "The Terrible"



**Utrera** is nestled between the Sevillian countryside and the marshlands of the River Guadalquivir. Known for its rich gastronomy, with highlight to the famous *mostachones*, the city is the birthplace of great flamenco figures. One of the most emblematic places of Utrera is the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Consolation. During the seven days of the Holy Week, its 13 confraternities walk the streets of the city with their floats in majestic processions that stir the fervour and devotion of all who attend and participate.



**Viveiro** is a Spanish city in the province of Lugo, in Galicia. Holy Week celebrations are the highlight

of their calendar. This is the most important set of Easter events in Galicia. During Lent and the days that precede it, liturgical celebrations, enactments of the Way of the Cross and drums, as well as other manifestations are held. The most significant events begin on Holy Thursday, with the Last Supper procession. The procession of the Holy Encounter is held on the morning of Good Friday, and is considered to be one of the most exciting ceremonies of Viveiro's Holy Week, along with the unlocking. The parades are formed of fifteen processions and five passages.



**Škofja Loka** is a small town located in the Gorenjska region, and is considered to be the best-preserved medieval town in Slovenia. The "Škofja Loka Passion Play" is a live performance in the form of a procession through the streets of the town centre during Lent and Easter. Involving over 900 local artists and performers, it is based on a manuscript of father Romuald written in 18th Century. Spoken in the dialect that was used at the time it was written, the play involves the entire community. Due to the complexity of the organisation, it takes place only every six years. It was inscribed in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2016.

The **European Network of Holy Week and Easter Celebrations** is a cultural route currently preparing an application for certification by the European Council as a European cultural itinerary. The main objective behind the creation of this European route is to combine efforts and synergies to consolidate a conservation and dissemination model of the Holy Week and Easter heritage for each of the communities involved. The initiative is open to adding new destinations.

*Be part of this  
experience, full of  
cultural diversity!*

Find out more at  
[www.holyweekeurope.com](http://www.holyweekeurope.com)

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Museo de Osuna. C/ Sevilla, 37  
41640 Osuna (Sevilla)  
tel. +34 955 097 207  
mov. +34 687 447 339  
[info@holyweekeurope.com](mailto:info@holyweekeurope.com)

