



FEBRUARY 24, 2010

Experience the Fallas in Dénia – Friday 19th March 2010

Jacki Mudge

Dear Members

We are considering organising a visit to the final night of the Fallas in Dénia on Friday 19th March, so we would like to know prior to the AGM next Tuesday, if you would be interested in joining us?

For those of you that have not witnessed the event before, it is a fascinating and funny combination of art, satire, and politics. The Fallas brings the streets of Dénia alive - the atmosphere is full of bright lights, colours, smells, sounds and of course the massive fires and fireworks. In Dénia the Fallas are burnt simultaneously which gives you the chance to see more than one burning!

If you would like to know a little more about this famous festival, please see below a brief history of the Fallas.

Due to the nature of the *Fallas*, it would be impossible to 'stick together' for the whole evening so below is a summary of the key timings and events taking place. Whilst I'm sure a number of members will join together in their tour of the numerous events and attractions, our main social gathering will be in a good Spanish restaurant at approximately 22:00.

Our proposed schedule for the evening would look something like this...

	Members to travel to Dénia, sharing cars if appropriate
21:00	Mascleta (firecracker festival) at the Railway Station
21.30	La Cremà (burning) of the 1 st Prize of the Children's Fallas
22:00	Meet at restaurant for Spanish meal
Midnight	Watch the Nit del Foc (fireworks) and Cremà of the Town Hall Falla
00.15 to 01.30	La Cremà of the Adult Fallas – situated in various parts of the town
02.00	Watch the spectacular Cremà of the 1 st Prize

The cost of the meal will be circa 15 Euros per person, depending on numbers.

So please do let me know if you would be interested by emailing me NOW at jackimudge@gmail.com

For a full list of events from Monday 15th March, please see http://www.Dénia.net/uk/actualitat/noticia.asp?id_actualitat=259

Las Fallas History:

Like many Spanish festivals, Las Fallas was, in its origin, a simple pagan ritual that celebrated the Spring Equinox - the longest day of the year - and the subsequent coming of summer. The religious undertones and celebratory association with Saint José, the patron saint of carpenters, was added later by Spain's ultra-Catholic leaders. The history goes a little something like this:

In 15th-century Valencia, as autumn crept in and the days began to get shorter, artisans and carpenters had to spend the last few hours of the work day working by the light of oil lamps hung from crafted wooden "parots." When spring arrived, the days naturally became longer and it was evident that the pleasant days of spring and summer were just around the corner. No longer needing the lamps, artisans took to ceremoniously burning the "parots," standing them up in the middle of wood shavings, extra cuts of lumber and old junk accumulated with spring cleaning.



Over time, these workers added a creative touch to the ritual, decorating the lamp post with rags and a hat, thus giving it semblances of a doll or human form; these figures, often depicting someone from the neighborhood, that came to be known as a Ninot Falla (Doll Fire). The evolution of the festival of Las Fallas as we know it today took place during the second half of the 18th century, as the artisans and carpenters began to arrange these figures into groups to depict a certain scene, normally of a humorous nature.

Launching - quite literally - the wild Valencian festival known as Las Fallas into action is the first of many "mascletàs," as five straight minutes of window-rattling firecracker explosions are set off on March 1st in the Plaza del Ayuntamiento- simply a signal that it's *almost* party time.

The real action kicks into high gear on the night of March 15th-16th, when the *falleros* have exactly one night to erect the elaborate and towering Ninot Fallas. You may be asking yourself exactly what is a "falla?" Each year, teams of local artists, designers and architects slave away for months designing and constructing brand-new, giant and elaborate structures of wood and papier-mâché.

You hear "papier-mâché" and you think elementary school project, right? Well, these massive structures stand up to 15 meters (nearly 50 feet) high and can cost as much as €120,000! Appearing in cartoon-like form, the groups of figures depicted in the fallas are usually of both an ornamental and satirical nature, and are used to make a humorous comment about local, national or international events, personalities or characters from the past year.

Between March 16th and March 19th, herds of locals and tourists gaze up wide-eyed at the incredibly crafted fallas, while judges and the *falleros* themselves award prizes to the cream of the crop.

What happens on March 19th? When the clock strikes midnight, the Ninots - yes, those elaborate, expensive structures that took months to create - are set ablaze one-by-one in possibly the largest legal pyrotechnic event on earth! The event is not only a one-of-a-kind spectacle, but it also serves as a cleansing activity and a way to say "adios" to the past years events.

Photographs were taken at the 2009 Las Fallas in Dénia... a fun but very late night was had by all!

