

Las Fallas: Fiery & Festive Fun

One of Spain's most exciting festivals is Las Fallas. Las Fallas is a five-day event and it takes over the entire city of Valencia each spring. It has everything a tourist could ask for— art, music, fine food, fireworks— and even fire! Of course, if you prefer peace and quiet, Las Fallas may not be your cup of tea. However, you won't want to miss it if you like to feel the heat on holiday.

On March 15, the first day of the festival, neighborhoods get busy assembling paper-mache puppets, or “fallas.” They are publicly displayed over the following three days and burned on the last. Before that, a competition is held on March 16 to choose the best falla. The winner will escape being burned and be exhibited at the Fallero Museum instead. The next day, women and girls dressed in elegant silk gowns, gather at the Plaza del Ayuntamiento to take part in a pageant. The pageant will decide who will be that year's Fallas Queen.

On March 17, locals also head to the Plaza de la Virgen to offer flowers at the statue of Valencia's patron saint. Over a thousand flowers are laid out at the feet of the fifteen-meter-tall figure, forming a huge cape behind it, and filling the air with the smell of spring. Magnificent fireworks light up the night sky at 1:30 a.m. the next morning, while the evening of March 18 is reserved for a huge parade complete with floats, street performers, and musicians.

All these events lead up to the big final one, known as “la cremà”, held on the last evening. That's when all the fallas, except the winning one, are set on fire. It's certainly quite an experience to see these pretty puppets reduced to ashes, and though doing so in the middle of the city may seem dangerous, firefighters are always on hand to ensure safety.

Besides these exciting activities, there are also neighborhood street parties where you can get your fill of music, firecrackers, and tasty paella each day. So, don't miss out on all the flames, food, and fun!

Infobox

- Las Fallas 法雅節是起源自西班牙瓦倫西亞的一個慶祝春天來臨的節日，一般於每年的 3 月 15 日至 19 日在西班牙和阿根廷等國的 160 個城市舉行。2016 年 11 月 30 日，法雅節被列入聯合國教科文組織人類非物質文化遺產名錄。
- Spain 西班牙。
- Valencia 西班牙第三大城市，第二大海港，位於西班牙東部沿岸地區。
- la cremà（巴倫西亞語「燃燒」）是指在西班牙巴倫西亞社區幾個城鎮的慶祝活動期間，點燃由紙板和木材等材料製成的法雅紀念碑的行為。
- paella 西班牙海鮮燉飯，源於西班牙瓦倫西亞，在當地語言是「鍋」的意思。

Vocabulary

assemble [v.] 組裝	elegant [adj.] 高雅的；優雅的	gown [n.] 女式禮服
cape [n.] 披肩；披風；斗篷	magnificent [adj.] 極好的；壯麗的	reserve [v.] 保留
ash [n.] 灰；灰燼	ensure [v.] 確保；保證	patron [n.] 贊助者
firecracker [n.] 爆竹；鞭炮		

All Smiles at MassKara

In Bacolod, a city in the Philippines, a yearly festival brightens everyone's faces every October. Known as MassKara or the "Festival of Smiles," it takes its name from the joyful masks worn by locals. Because of this festival and the friendliness of the people of Bacolod, the latter has also earned the nickname, "City of Smiles."

The MassKara Festival is an event featuring a parade with floats, giant puppets, and people wearing colorful costumes and masks with iconic smiles. The celebration includes a street party as well with live music, a street dance competition, and a beauty pageant. Naturally, there's also a lot of delectable cuisine, such as "piaya", a sweet flatbread, and "barquillos", akin to eggroll biscuits.

Surprisingly, the MassKara Festival is a relatively recent addition, having begun in the 1980s. At the time, Bacolod was fighting economic challenges, and salt was added to the wound when many locals lost their lives in a tragic ferry accident. The MassKara Festival was conceived to boost the city's morale and inspire smiles. Today, it symbolizes Bacolod's resilience in overcoming adversity.

While the MassKara Festival is a blast, be sure not to overlook Bacolod's other attractions. The Negros Museum displays local art and culture through antique furniture and artifacts. You can also explore the Ruins, which are the remnants of a beautiful house built in the early 1900s by a wealthy sugar baron in memory of his wife. Finally, if you're looking for an escape from the city, make your way to the white sandy beaches and crystal-clear water of nearby Lakawon Island. With this beautiful blend of nature, culture, and delicious food, the City of Smiles can put a smile on any visitor's face!

Infobox

- Bacolod 菲律賓西米沙鄢西內格羅省的首府。
- the Philippines 菲律賓共和國，簡稱菲律賓。
- piaya 是一種來自菲律賓的無酵餅，是用黑糖和水的混合物填充麵團製成。
- barquillos 蛋捲，源自西班牙的甜點，在殖民時期傳播到拉丁美洲與菲律賓等地。
- Lakawon Island 位於巴科洛德市以北 48 公里處，是一座佔地 16 公頃的島嶼，以前是個漁村。

Vocabulary

latter [n.] 後者	float [n.] 花車	competition [n.] 競爭
biscuit [n.] 餅乾；薄薄的小甜餅	ferry [n.] 渡船；渡輪	overcome [v.] 克服
overlook [v.] 忽視；忽略	explore [v.] 探索	escape [n.] 逃避
blend [n.] 混合物	conceive [v.] 設想出	boost [v.] 改善；提高；增強；推動
morale [n.] 士氣	blast [n.] 喧囂的派對	antique [adj.] 古物的；古器的
artifact [n.] 人工製品，手工藝品	remnant [n.] 殘餘（部分）	