

TALAVERA DE LA REINA

# LAS MONDAS

Festivity declared of National Tourist Interest







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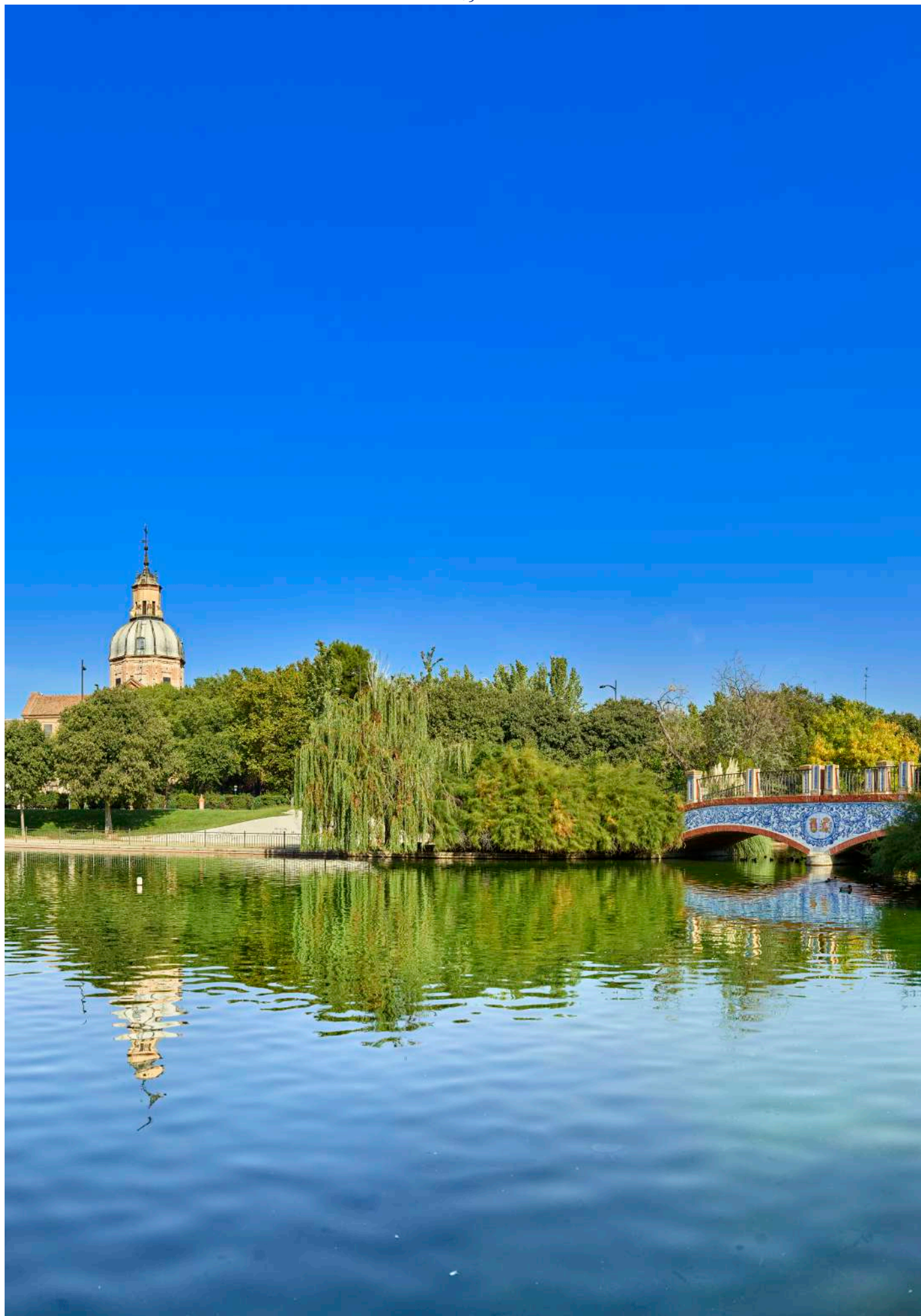
# Talavera de la Reina

## THE CITY

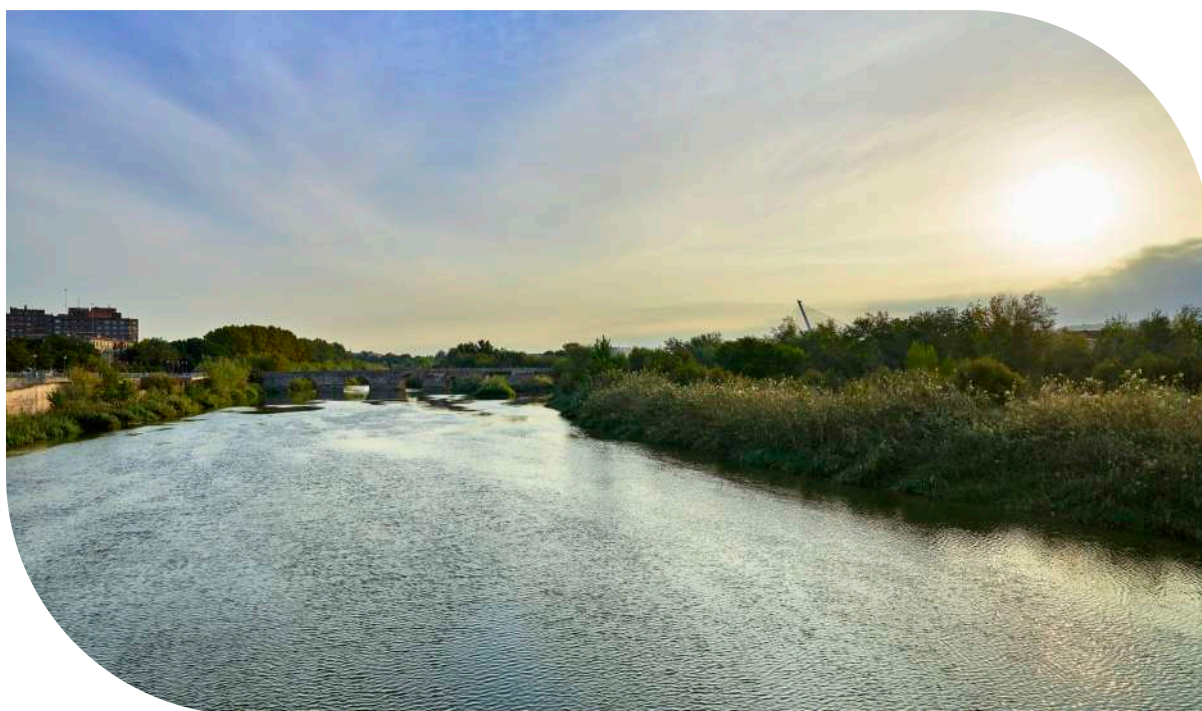
**Talavera de La Reina** is a Spanish city nestled on the banks of the **Tagus River**. An hour from Madrid by car, it's the second biggest city in the province of Toledo, with around 83,000 inhabitants, and the fourth most populated in the Autonomous Community of Castilla-La Mancha. Noted for its impressive monuments and history, testament to the different peoples who have lived and worked the local lands, the city has also received international recognition due to its **pottery, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site** alongside the nearby town of Puente del Arzobispo.

Talavera de la Reina's **business community** is firmly established following years of experience across a variety of sectors, including textiles, agriculture, logistics, and technology. The city has a reputation for offering a **wide range of services and commerce**. It's also a **university city**, offering undergraduate and postgraduate studies.

Talavera de la Reina's **old town**, full of history and bustling with stores, hotels, and restaurants, has become an area with streets full of life, ideal for recreation and relaxation.



## HISTORICAL FOOTNOTES THE TAGUS RIVER



Talavera de la Reina dates to pre-Roman times, when the Vettones populated the area. The city was then known as **Talábriga**.

Archaeological evidence in different parts of the city suggest the Romans already densely inhabited these lands, giving modern Talavera the name of **Caesarobriga**. A strategic point of communication between Emérita Augusta (Mérida) and Caesar Augusta (Zaragoza): cereal fields and vineyards were cultivated, and trade blossomed. Centuries later, the **Visigoths** called the area **Ébora**. In 712, the Muslims took over, and constructed imposing walls, built the fortress, water mills, and irrigation for crops. The **pottery tradition** began to take root around this time.

Like so many other cities belonging to the Toledan taifa (contemporarily known as **Talabayra**), it was reconquered by King Alfonso VI in 1085. The name Talavera was used as early as 1113.

The town grew and became a reference point, particularly for agriculture and cattle raising. King Sancho IV granted the city the privilege of

organising two agricultural fairs each year. These are now known as the Saint Isidore fairs in May, and the fairs in September in honour of Saint Matthew, still held today.

The **Talavera de la Reina Market** has a tradition spanning over 700 years and is one of the oldest in Spain by dint of being a major crossroads in the heart of Spain.

The city of Talavera was one of the wedding gifts that King Alfonso XI gave his wife, Maria of Portugal, in 1328. Since then, it adopted the full name **Talavera de la Reina**, with 'Reina' meaning 'Queen' in Spanish.

Talavera draws its *raison d'être* from the **Tagus River**, which is the longest river in the Iberian Peninsula and bypasses the city en route to Lisbon, where it flows into the Atlantic. Both Talavera de la Reina's past and the present cannot be understood without the waters that breathed life into the city. For centuries, the river was the source of sustenance for fishermen and of hydraulic energy for the mills that produced the flour. Today, the Tagus is an area



for recreation, pleasant strolls, and outdoor life. The river's rich, fertile valley has drawn the local towns into an intimate, cohesive relationship around the river, with Talavera de la Reina as the regional hub.

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# Tradition

Excellence



Culture

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## A STROLL THROUGH THE STREETS OF TALAVERA DE LA REINA

Talavera de la Reina is a city full of **monuments and historical sites**, a legacy of the passing of the centuries and the city's history. The most iconic include the **Basilica of Nuestra Señora del Prado** (also known as the Sistine Chapel of pottery), which now houses the city's patron saint (La Virgen del Prado, or Madonna del Prado), the **Church of Saint Mary Major** featuring Gothic cloisters, and the quintessential medieval walls and towers surrounding parts of the city. **There are also three bridges: the Roman bridge, the iron bridge and the bridge of Castilla-La Mancha**, all of great importance and architectural highlights.

The Rafael Morales Cultural Centre currently houses the remains of a **Roman domus** and two Roman temples, once belonging to Caesarobriga. Other noteworthy monuments include the Church of Saint Catherine, the El Salvador Cultural Centre, the Plaza de San Agustín square, the Ruiz de Luna Pottery Museum, the Plaza del Pan square, the Ethnographic Museum, the Convent of the Barefoot Carmelite Mothers, the Palenque Theatre, and the Victoria Theatre, all fine examples of the city's efforts to enhance its rich historical heritage and provide visitors with a wonderful experience.

Its local festivals include **Las Mondas**, declared of National Tourist Interest.



## AN OPEN-AIR POTTERY MUSEUM



Talavera de la Reina's pottery is a **hallmark**, an inseparable part of the city's culture and history. Declared **Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity** by UNESCO in 2019, the manufacturing, decoration and enamelling procedures are still handcrafted and identical to those practised as early as the 16th century.

It is said that Talavera de la Reina is an "open-air pottery museum" because multiple local workshops house pottery decorating. It's essentially a ubiquitous craft. **The Ruiz de Luna Pottery Museum** features a representative sample of Talavera's earthenware and tile production from the 16th to the 20th centuries. The museum houses a personal collection of the potter **Juan Ruiz de Luna** (1863-1945), comprising valuable pieces and

panels from his own workshops in Nuestra Señora del Prado, open since 1908.

Many of the city's hidden delights are directly linked to Talavera de la Reina's pottery tradition. The Prado Gardens, the Plaza del Pan square, the Alameda Park, and the Murals Route all showcase fine examples of local ceramics.

In Talavera de la Reina, craft workshops open their doors to visitors to share the wonder of pottery. The artists' hands perform a magical daily ritual, breathing life and body into the clay. Stunning creations vibrant with colour, transformed by fire using centuries-old techniques, learned as a rich heritage passed down through the centuries, from generation to generation.



Historical



Craft

## LAS MONDAS DE TALAVERA DE LA REINA, A TRULY UNIQUE FESTIVAL. THE OLDEST FESTIVAL

The Mondas Festival is one of the oldest traditions in the Iberian Peninsula, an **ancient festival** declared of **National Tourist Interest**, where the entire region worships **Our Lady of the Prado**, adorning the streets with the colours of the city and carrying offerings to the Virgin in an impressively majestic procession.

Historians date the festival's origins to an ancient pre-Roman and Roman rite of veneration of the **goddess** of fertility for the fields, which for the Romans would be the goddess **Ceres**. This festive rite was later Christianised and was dedicated to Our Lady of the Prado ('Prado' means 'fields' or 'countryside' in Spanish).

The festival and its different rites have evolved since the Roman times: people's feelings, their devotion, the different religions, etc. have been woven together for almost two millennia.

Ceres was a goddess who personified the earth as an element of nutrition, protector of wine, and olive trees. The cult of Ceres in Talavera de la Reina possibly appeared during the third century AD, when in the Roman Caesarobriga, the rise of agriculture and livestock was noted: bread and fruits deposited in baskets would be offered to Ceres. These baskets took the name Munda Cereris. This gave rise to the term "Mondas". The Latin 'U' became an 'O', although 17th century writings record it as Mundas.

The Visigoths appeared in the region around the year 415. They came and went throughout the Peninsula until 507. Reccared I, son of Liuvigild, took to the throne in 586. When Reccared died in Toledo in December 601, his son Liuva II succeeded him. King **Liuva II donated the image of the Virgen del Prado to Talavera** as a gift for the help that

Talavera gave him against the uprisings of the Arians (Christians who denied the divine nature of Jesus). This led to the temple of Ceres becoming a shrine, and the Christianisation of the festival of Las Mondas: the best weapon to fight Arianism was to promote devotion to Mary, the true Mother of God for Catholics.

For centuries, the Mondas of Talavera de la Reina have served as a vehicle conveying true devotion to the Virgen del Prado and have unified all the towns belonging to the ancient lands held by the city. In modern times, mayors from the region play active roles in the festival, which they feel as their own. The festival has been celebrated in uninterrupted fashion for centuries, although sources have not always provided detailed information.

Dating back to 1450, the council's records of agreements have featured data on purchasing bulls for the Las Mondas festival. On 29 August 1472, Archbishop Alonso Carrillo recognised that the shrine belonged to the council.

**The Bulls and Las Mondas** were closely related: **bullfighting events** held in the different city squares highlighted the important role bulls played in these festivities. Plaza del Pan and Plaza de la Ermita were the focal points for the festival, although other squares dotted around the city played their part. This tradition is no longer practised but is remembered through the traditional 'toro encohetado' (where a man carrying a bull float adorned with fireworks parades around the city).

**The Mondas Sunday procession.** This is the most important formality and the most colourful procession. The event begins with the blessing of bread rolls at morning mass. The procession starts

with a parade featuring the parish chosen for that year, followed by the other parishes.

By 1538, the whole of Talavera de la Reina had started taking part in the festival according to historical sources, everyone harnessing their horse in a vibrantly coloured competition to run with the bulls or be part of the procession. The range of harnesses and colours inspired García Fernando, related to the Archbishop of Granada Fray Hernando de Talavera, to create a Brotherhood of Knights. A statute was drafted, establishing **white and blue** as the colours of the knights' uniform. By extension, these colours became the colours of the Las Mondas festival.

**The Las Mondas de Talavera de la Reina Festival was declared of National Tourist Interest in 2009**, acknowledging its historical, cultural, and social importance as an ancient event still practised today.





# A truly unique festival.



## THE MODERN LAS MONDAS FESTIVAL: BURSTING WITH LIFE

For a whole week, Talavera de la Reina puts on its finest to proudly celebrate its historical festival, with a busy schedule featuring cultural, social, and festive events, involving all residents from local towns and cities, mayors and mayoresses, twinned international cities, and invitees from around Spain.

**Las Mondas** begin on the Sunday following Easter Sunday. For a whole week, a wide range of leisure events, from neighbourhood festivals to bullfights, are held. Highlights include the **Pregón de Mondas** and the **Leño Florido**, as well as the extremely popular **Gran Cortejo de Mondas**.

The procession begins in line with tradition, featuring a standard bearer, sheriff, and sergeant-at-arms on horseback, responsible for knocking at the Noble Gate of the City Hall, and bearing a flag with a blue and white crest. The Knights of the Ancient Nobility precede the Knights of the Brotherhood of the Virgen del Prado.







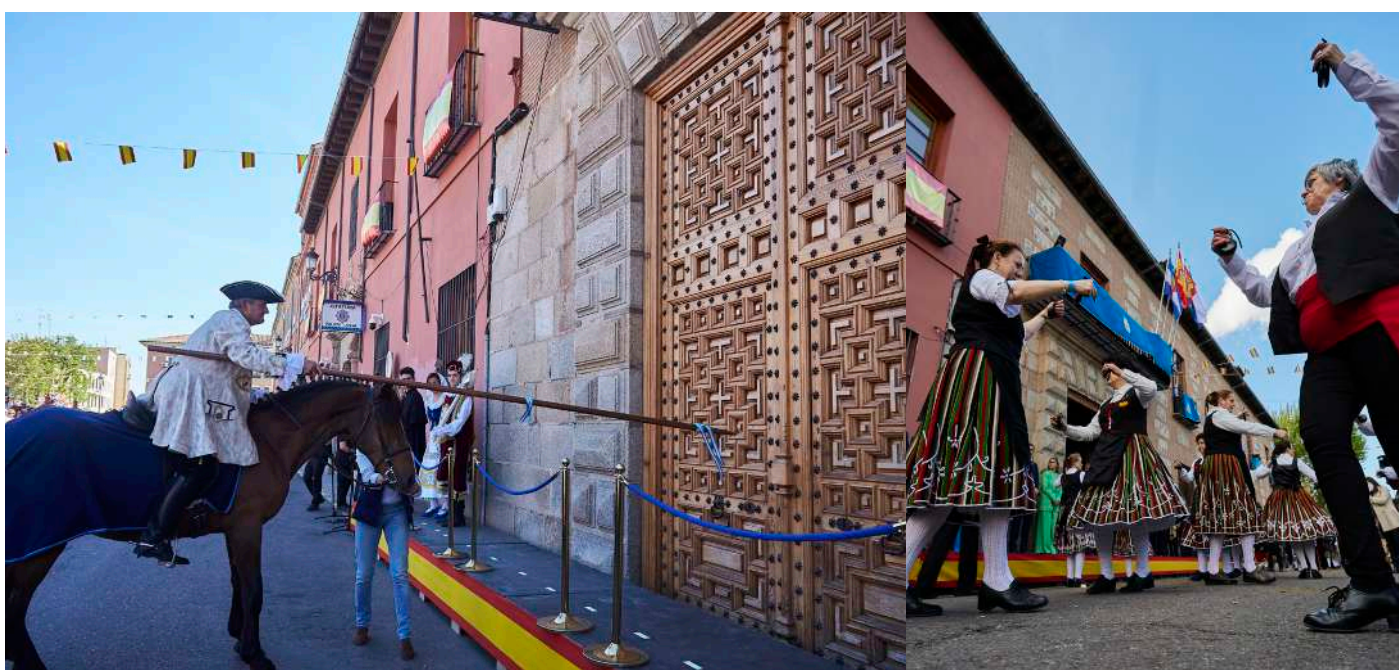
The **Mondas procession** starts at the Plaza del Pan square, from the Noble Gate of the City Hall. Thousands take part, dressed in traditional costumes or recreating the different historical periods of the festival, parading through different parts of the city putting on folklore and traditional dances, and remembering the city's pagan past with offerings to Ceres, festival goes bringing fruits of the earth, flowers, and typical sweets from each village to the Virgin.

The parade also features four stunning floats, each telling the story of Las Mondas: Roman era, Visigothic period, difficult times with the plague, and the creation of the Brotherhood of the Knights of the Virgin of Prado. The first, devoted to the Roman goddess Ceres and the wedding of her daughter Proserpina to Pluto. Secondly, the float

dedicated to the Visigothic period, explains how the temple became a shrine. The following float is the "Days of Pain", remembering when Talavera was devastated by the plague in 1507. The fourth and final float features the Brotherhood of the Virgen del Prado.

The parade ends at the Basilica del Prado with the offering to the Virgin, and an exchange of ceramic walking sticks between the mayors and mayoresses invited to the event. Two rams loaded with thyme and adorned with flags then enter the Basilica, an offering made yearly by the people of Gamonal.

Most local schools take part in the children's Las Mondas procession, recreating the Great Procession: "La Mondilla". This activity grows bigger every year, showing younger generations



the importance of the oldest festival in Talavera de la Reina and ensuring its survival in the future.

Talavera de la Reina's Las Mondas Festival is the finest example of a whole city's **conservation and preservation** of traditions and customs throughout history.

Documented historically since the 15th century, it's **one of the oldest festivals in Spain**, and its origins date back to the Roman cult of Ceres, the goddess of agriculture.

In 1983, the Las Mondas festival was declared of **Regional Tourist Interest** and in 2009, it was declared of **National Tourist Interest**.

40 years after its initial declaration as a festival of special interest, Talavera de la Reina is seeking to achieve the status of Festival of International Tourist Interest, with the support, participation and involvement of all citizens and towns in the region.





# Talavera de la Reina



