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# Semana Santa In Seville: Pasos, Costaleros And Nazarenos

Semana Santa



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During seven days Seville transforms itself into an incredible art and music performance. Even though Semana Santa is inspired by Christian facts and religious beliefs, you shouldn't miss this amazing spectacle.

## What Is Semana Santa?

Semana Santa in Spanish is the equivalent of the Holy Week. It's one of the most important events of the city along with the [Feria de Abril](#).

For seven days, starting on Palm Sunday and ending up in Easter, Sunday morning, more than 50,000 people wear traditional robes to parade in one of the 60 *procesiones* that take place.

The origin of these festivities dates back from the 16th century when Sevillanos started to celebrate the passion and death of Christ. In order to confer solemnity to the event, religious *brotherhoods* (*hermandades* and *cofradías*) organized processions.

A procession is a religious parade with a designated route. Each procession has two or three *pasos*, one or two of them representing a scene of the Passion, and the other one an image of the Virgin Mary.

## The *Pasos*

A *paso* resembles a huge, ornate table about 2 m (7 ft) high, with a velvet hem hiding both its legs and the *costaleros* from view. The *pasos* are made of wood, usually covered in precious metals, and are intricately worked and decorated.

This combination of Baroque style and decorations made with lots of flowers (sometimes the same, sometimes different species) and candles are spectacular. On top of it, the candles are only lit by night, transforming the *paso* into an illuminated scene absolutely impressive.



As I said before, there are two kinds of *pasos*: *El Cristo* (Christ) and *La Virgen* (The Virgin).

The *pasos* dedicated to *El Cristo*, which depict scenes from the Passion, are usually floats covered in gold. You will notice different kinds and sizes depending on the number of figures top of it (up to 13 in the case of La Cena, the last supper!).

Some brotherhoods have chosen to represent scenes before Christ's death. These *pasos* are called *misterios* (misteries). And they represent for example the entrance of Jesus to Jerusalem, the trial, the cross given to Jesus, the Judas' kiss, Jesus carrying the cross himself and many more). Others have preferred a *paso* with Christ on the cross (called a *crucificado*

The *pasos* dedicated to *La Virgen* are usually covered in silver, and they represent a very dramatic image of the Virgin Mary, generally in tears. This image is called a *dolorosa* (literally pain). In most of the *pasos* the Virgin Mary is alone although she can be accompanied by an apostle or holding her Son in her arms.

All the *dolorosas* are covered by an ornate canopy or baldachin (*palio*) attached to the structure. The *palio* is supported by six poles (*varales*) on each side.

## The *Costaleros*

The *costaleros* are the most important members of the processions, and without them Semana Santa in Seville would never take place. They carry the *paso* supporting the beams upon their shoulders and necks. And they also lift, move and lower it. The *costaleros* consider it a once in a lifetime honor carrying the *paso* as it's a sign of devotion and penance.

This is usually a task performed by men as the *pasos* often weigh over 2,000 kg (4,400 lbs) and it takes many months of practice before the big day. On average there are 40 *costaleros* per *paso* with each one supporting a weight of around 50 kg (110 lbs) for approximately 8 hours



attached to the *paso*.

As a result, the *costaleros* try to move the *paso* according to the rhythm of the music, giving observer the impression that the figures are literally walking. Each brotherhood has a distinct way to raise and move a *paso*, depending on its traditions, style and philosophy.

## The *Nazarenos*

The *nazarenos* are probably the most famous characters of Semana Santa in Seville. They precede the *pasos* and generally march in silence, sometimes barefoot. They are dressed in habit, wear a cape and hide their face behind a pointed hood (*capirote*).

Colors, forms and details of the habit are distinctive for each brotherhood, and sometimes for different locations within the procession. For instance, the *nazarenos* accompanying the *misericordias* can wear a *capirote* of a different color than the one of the *nazarenos* accompanying the Virgin Mary.

Apart from that, they hold either long wax candles (*cirios*), a pole (*vara*), a standard or a lantern. Usually the *nazarenos* march in pairs, and are grouped behind an insignia.

If you are interested in this fascinating subject, you can keep reading about the *procesiones* and the *brotherhoods*.

And if you plan to spend your holidays enjoying Semana Santa in Seville, have a look at my *tips* and *recommendations*.