

# Sevilla

## The April Feria

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*Spring in Seville has a special atmosphere, adorned with the sweet scent of orange blossom and jasmine, and a frisson of excited anticipation, as the city's two most important events take place - first Semana Santa and then the Spring Fair, the Feria.*





## *Chariots and Horses*

The April Feria, which celebrated its 150th anniversary in 1997 began on March 5th 1847, decreed by Queen Elizabeth II as a 3 day cattle fair. What began as a purely commercial event, over the years has developed into a unique expressions of colour and joy by the people of Seville and those lucky enough to participate in the six days of celebration. The Seville Fair takes place just two weeks after Semana Santa, in a huge area in Los Remedios, to the south-west of the city, next to the river. This is a week of serious dancing, drinking, eating and socialising, with late nights - or all-nighters been the norm. The sheer size of the April Fair's spectacle is extraordinary. From around midday until early evening - especially on Tuesday, the first official day - Sevilla society parades around the fairground in carriages or on horseback.

















## *Sherry, sevillanas, bullfights, flamenco dresses and horses*

For the duration of the fair, the fairgrounds and a vast area on the far bank of the Guadalquivir River are totally covered in rows of casetas. Most of the "Casetas" are private and paid by: families, clubs, associations, or businesses for their members and/or workers. They are also places to invite friends and clients alike and it gives prestige to the sponsors. It is convenient and helpful to know people 'with casetas', so that you have several places to rest, eat and enjoy the atmosphere. The caseta is usually divided in two rooms. The front room, with a 'tablao' in the center or on one side. This tablao is used to dance 'sevillanas', the traditional local flamenco dance. People of all ages come out to dance and show their art. Around the tablao there are numerous tables and chairs. Sometimes, the dance music and singing is recorded and played loudly throughout the day or it may be sung and played live. This usually happens in an expontaneous way, among friends. The back room is usually less noisy and crowded, depending on the time of the day. There is always a bar that serves cold drinks (Jerez and Manzanilla wines plus local beer are typical) and tapas (cured meats such as jamon, caña de lomo, as well as seafood and the traditional Spanish omelette). A very important event is the horse parade that takes place everyday until 6pm in the Feria.



*A very important event in The Fair is the horse parade that takes place everyday until 6pm in the Feria*

Nobody could imagine, without seeing this parade, its sheer extravagance. Women dressed in Sevillian attire, horses, chariots and horsemen wearing short jackets and wide-brimmed hats, historically worn by the men working the land and attending the livestock market to trade. The women in the carriages, or riding with the men on the horses, go dressed in the flamenco dress. From the simplicity of the first fabrics evolved a profusion of frills and colours giving flair and sensual movement to the dresses. The typical style include a low-cut round or square neck dress, tight fitting to the waist then opening out to the skirt, hair buns and flowers in the hair and accessories including earrings, necklaces and a shawl. Bullfighting takes place everyday in the bullring La Real Maestranza, somewhat far from the Feria, in the city center. If the toreros are well-known, it'll be difficult (and expensive) to get tickets. The Feria de Abril is a great time to see what many consider the typical Andalucía: sherry, sevillanas, toros, flamenco dresses and horses. The Feria is not for everyone, and deciding on whether to attend during the night (party time!) or day (horse and parade time!) can significantly change your opinion of the event.



