



In 1495, the Council of the city of Murcia announced the festival of Saint Patrick, declaring that “the young men shall join the procession in the habit of Moors, as was their custom”. This tells us that the tradition existed before this date, beginning perhaps with the victory of Christian troops from Murcia over the Muslims of Granada, at the Battle of Alporchones, on Saint Patrick’s Day 1452, which led to that figure being declared the patron saint of Murcia and its kingdom.

The festival of Moors and Christians of Murcia was introduced during the commemorative events to mark the 1,150th anniversary of the founding of Murcia. Two years later, in June 1983, the Festivals Association was created, and that same year, in September, the first processions were held.

The founding groups of this Association numbered five: Mudéjares; Abderraman II; Ib-Arabí; Aben-Mardepix, after the Moorish forces; and Los Caballeros del Temple, after the Christian forces. In that 1983 parade, groups from Abanilla and Orihuela also lent their support.

In the intervening years, other groups have been created, so that the federation is now composed of eight Cábilas and seven Mesnadas.

Although the festive program of Murcia covers eight days, which always precede the September pilgrimage to our Lady of Fuensanta, it might be said that the festive trilogy of Murcia is focused on the Saturday, Sunday and Monday before that pilgrimage.



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MOORS AND CHRISTIANS IN MURCIA



The wish among Castilians and the Catalan-Aragonese to extend their influence as far as the Levant and the southern peninsula was achieved, but only after a number of battles, advances and retreats, joys interspersed with the sorrows brought by raids, abductions, impoverishment and hardship. The high cost they had paid must have been what led the troops of Jaime I and Alfonso X to wish to commemorate, over time, their victories, including the retaking of Murcia, which occurred in 1226.



SATURDAY

This is the Día de la Entrada. During the morning the majority of the groups parade through the different districts of the city, and after nightfall there comes the Great Entrance of the Moors and Christians, when the groups captained by Prince Alfonso of Castile and the Moorish King Aben Hud of Murcia dedicate their best efforts to offering the people of Murcia a spectacle that is part military review and part reenactment of their history; the history that will be presented over the coming two days.



SUNDAY

This is the Día de la Fundación. Once again, during the morning several groups parade through the city. In the afternoon the floral offering is made to Our Lady of Arrixaca, in the church of San Andrés. The main event of the day begins with the roar of harquebuses in a display featuring those ancient firearms. The shots are fired in honour of the founding of the city. Afterwards, the Embajada mora, or founding of Murcia, is celebrated, and this marks the central act of these three days of festivities.

MONDAY

Víspera de la Romería. Once again in the incomparable setting of the Plaza del Cardenal Belluga, a reenactment of the Embajada Cristiana is held, in which King Aben Hud hands over the keys to the city to Prince Alfonso of Castile, in a peaceful act that reflects the city's history.

After this reenactment, all the festive groups form a procession as far as the Campamento Medieval, the setting for most of the festivities, for the celebration of the end of the festival, on the night when the people of Murcia bid farewell to their patroness as she is returned once more to her Sanctuary on the Mount [Santuario del Monte].



MUSEUM

The Museum of the Federation of Associations of Festivals of Moors and Christians, under its president Alfonso Gálvez Pérez, was inaugurated on March 27 2011 by the Mayor of Murcia, Miguel Ángel Cámara Botía.

In this museum visitors will find the costumes worn by each cábilas and mesnadas, standards, the costumes of the Kings and Favourites, the embroidered Lorca cape worn by the Moorish Emissary, as well as an exhibition of pictures and photographs depicting the festivities, produced by local artists.

Opening hours: Monday to Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Address: Cuartel de Artillería, Calle Cartagena.

