



Moratalla, nature and cave art



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Welcome to Moratalla

We welcome you

Moratalla and its surroundings, located in the North-West of the Region of Murcia, offer a wide variety of possibilities by combining leisure and rest together with the enjoyment of traditions, landscapes, sports, culture, nature and rural activities.

Moratalla, with an extension of almost 1000 km squared, is comprised of the following districts that go from Revolcadores to Segura: Cañada de la Cruz, Inazares, Odres, Rogativa, Calar de la Santa, Sabinar, San Juan, Béjar, Benizar, Otos, Mazuza, Casa Requena and Salmerón.



Benizar



Castle of Moratalla & Church view

History

Moratalla, built over ancient remains, emanates a historical atmosphere that one can breathe by having a walk on the narrow streets of its medieval quarter that still preserves its old structure.

It was not until 1245 that the municipality was delimited, and it served as border land until the fall of the last Muslim kingdom in 1492. Visiting the Fortress Castle (Castillo Fortaleza) and climbing its steep hills will, certainly, take us to those remote times in which the inhabitants seek protection behind the walls that defended the town. The view from the Homage Tower above the fields, cattle routes and adjacent mountains are as beautiful as the ascending spiral staircase that joins the Weapons Hall and the Homage Hall.

In the deepest part of the tower a reservoir can be found, essential to face possible sieges over the forti-

fication. Viewed from afar, this town can be seen on the hillside of its protective mountain: St. George's one, in the foothill of the Sierra de los Álamos. The most characteristic visual identity of Moratalla, almost intact over the last centuries, is formed by the impressive Fortress-Castles and the Church of Santa María de la Asunción.

The intricate medieval urbanism of its historic center, the Convent of Saint Francisco and the Hermitage of Saint Anna, its lordly houses and its picturesque parts enrich Moratalla heritage. A pleasant walk in which one can enjoy -in any of the establishments one finds in their path- the traditional *Piti* from Moratalla: our personal version of tapas. Discovering the secrets of this Santiaguista Villa will be a true pleasure for all senses.





Moratalla Old Town

Cultural Heritage

The municipality of Moratalla possesses a great cultural richness and environmental quality that, together with the historical heritage, has artistic and genuine manifestations that have been declared Heritage of Humanity as it is the cave paintings and the rituals of drumming during Holy Week.

Cave Art: the history of Moratalla discloses more than 10,000 years of life, culture and artistic manifestations. A district that holds some of the most stunning cave paintings of the Region of Murcia. The privileged location of Moratalla's territory (its high mountains, valleys, rivers and abundant hunting) favored the establishment of the first settlers in Moratalla -as it is shown in the cave paintings that have been declared **Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.**



Women of La Risca



Cañica del Calar II

Drums of Holy Week: another genuine manifestation is the well-known Festivity of the Drum that, integrated in the National Days of the Exaltation of Drum and Bass Drum (Jornadas Nacionales de Exaltación del Tambor y el Bombo), has been declared as **Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.**

The drumming takes place in Holy Week during Holy Thursday, Holy Friday and Resurrection Sunday and it is characterized by its peculiar and distinctive beat, as well as by the original and colorful tunics the drummers wear during this festivity.



Drummer



Drum Fest

Nature

Ancestral livestock routes lead us to a karstic territory full of chasms, fractures and sinkholes that have shaped at maximum height of the Region of Murcia: the peak of the Bishops. With its more than 2014 meters over the sea, a rugged territory predominates among whose inhabitants one can find the mountain goat, golden eagle and the griffon vulture; and that counts with well preserved ecosystems that promote enormous both faunistic and botanic biodiversity.

Landscapes that become museums: botanic monuments as the Spanish juniper; outdoor art galleries packed with cave paintings with a levantine and schematic style; characterizing the landscape and providing it with the only mountain river of the Region: the Alharabe. Discreet in its source in El Sabinar, it takes shape on its way through the valley, garnishing itself with forest remains and with one of the rare indoors

salines, the ones from the farmhouse of el Salero del Zacatin. It is in the highlands of Moratalla where one can find the bearded vulture flying over the lavender fields in constant search of food.

A magical geology predominates in the landscapes of el Campo de San Juan such as: the Lanchar, the Cuevas de Zaen, the paleokarst of el Rincón de Los Huertos, the Santuario Iberico de la Nariz. All these are places of natural interpretation where to discover elements of national and European geological interest.

The omnipresent nature of Moratalla plays with the seasons and it is here where the landscape turns into a volatile watercolor painting through the seasons: the snow in winter, the green in spring, a golden summer and a coloristic autumn modify the aspect of the cereal-growing and lavender fields in a giant mosaic of unic images.





Spring in Campo San Juan

The heritage from the muslim period lays latent both in some parts of the town as in the remains of the hydraulic infrastructures of the place names: Benizar, Mazuza, Otos...

It is not hard to feel the history in these places since it is still present. As a monumental door, they open up to the history written in its reservoirs, cave paintings, constructions and, on top, Benizar Castle. Near Otos and Mazuza, during the miracle of spring, one can appreciate the spectacular blooming of the almond trees fields, that fill the air with honey scent, and that, together with the vineyard, are of the main products that one can taste in this lovely place.

Salmerón, Segura river, constitutes the most unknown and surprising area of Moratalla 's territory. Its geological and cultural history was shaped between fire and water, during the Superior Miocene, when the area suffered from the volcanism phenomenon

that originated Salmeron Volcano.

Sulfur is also a part of the history given that it was exploited from the Roman age until 1960. This is visible in the ovens that still stand the passing of time, and in the mining neighborhood, Trina, with its rock-cut caves where the road cuts an attractive formation of travesines. And, of course, the wide Segura river that has allowed men to tame its waters: waterwheels, canals and the cultivation of rice fill with colors its fruitful shores.





Alhárabe river



El Lanchar

Remains of gallery forest, exploitations of black poplars, and Las Juntas, which is the point at which one can find its main tributary: Mundo river, complete the beauty and uniqueness of this fluvial ecosystem.

One of the most emblematic places of Moratalla, where its modern history is shaped, is, undoubtedly, Casa de Cristo. It was on the 19th of April of 1943 when the apparition took place that culminated with the construction of this hermitage. Nowadays, it is home to the only Center of interpretation of cave paintings of the Region of Murcia.

The history of Moratalla is also reflected in the remains of the aqueduct from 1535 that was built to provide the population with the water of Fuente de la Umbría. Ascending the defile, one can find the valley of Benamor, where the spring of the river Benamor takes place.



Moratalla Fauna



Fall in Campo de Béjar





La Risca

Festivities

There is a vast variety of festivities in Moratalla and its districts that stand out due to their popular and participatory character where everyone is invited to integrate into the folklore and amusement.

Moratalla starts its main festivity on the 15th of June, Feast of Cristo del Rayo in whose honor they are celebrated. The reason why the festivity starts on this date is because on that same day in 1621, being the Parish Church full of believers, a lightning impacted on the image of Christ and, miraculously, nobody was harmed.

The most remarkable events on this day are the Huertano Parade, the Floral Offering, the Religious Ceremony and the Solemn Procession. However, the main celebration of this event continues during the days from 11th to 17th of July. Although there are several festivities, the core of the festivity revolves around the traditional running of bulls on the streets and the release of wild cattle.



Lane festivity





Lane festivity Patron Saint Cristo del Rayo

Holy Week and Drum Fest

Moratalla shares the Drum Fest with other national cities whose ties have been reinforced in the Jornadas Nacionales de Exaltación del Tambor y el Bombo, that has been declared as **Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO**.

Moratalla is, in addition, the only town in which the drummers cover their face with the conical headwear to play the drum, play in a unique way, and dress with colorful tunics. It is this variety of colors that impacts the visitors the most.

The drum fest takes place on Holy Thursday, Holy Friday and Resurrection Sunday from the first hours of the morning until the nightfall.

The highest concentration of drummers happens between midday and the last hours in the afternoon. They gather in the area of the well-known Farola and its surroundings. Apart from the Drum Fest, one can also enjoy the majestic processions such as: Holy Wednesday, Cristo de la Sangre, Holy Thursday, Prendimiento, Silencio, Holy Friday, the Holy Burial, Resurrection Sunday, and the ceremony of Jesus Christ Appeared, patron saint of the city and the drums.





Religious Pilgrimage

A religious pilgrimage takes place the first Sunday of May, every year, in honor of Jesus Christ Appeared, patron saint of Moratalla, on the occasion of its apparition in 1493. During the pilgrimage, the Patronage of Jesus Christ Appeared and the Virgin of La Rogativa, together with hundred of pilgrims, move the patron saint of Moratalla, Jesus Christ Appeared, from the Parished Church of Nuestra Señora de la Asunción to its hermitage in Casa de Cristo (place where it appeared). During the pilgrimage, it is very common that the pilgrims will offer themselves to carry the religious statues on their shoulders. On the last Sunday of May, a fest to honor the Virgin of La Rogativa is celebrated.

At the end of the pilgrimage, the statue arrives at the town where it will spend the night. The neighbors of the village celebrate the arrival with a welcome party, dancing to the rhythm of the music from the typical *cuadrillas de animeros*.



Arrival of Jesus Christ Appeared and Virgen de la Rogativa to Los Arcos



Jesus Christ Appeared and Virgen de la Rogativa

Calendar or festivities in Moratalla and Municipality

MORATALLA

In Holy Week, religious acts and Drum Fest.

19th of april Festivity to honor Jesus Christ Appeared, patron saint of Moratalla.

15th of june Festivity to honor Cristo del Rayo. This festivity continues from the 11th to the 17th of July.

29th of september Festivity of San Miguel.

MUNICIPALITY

19th of march Otos, festivity to honor the patron saint San José.

During the last sunday of may Rogativa, a pilgrimage takes place in honor of Virgen de la Rogativa.

24th of june C. San Juan, festivity in honor of the saint patron San Juan.

29th of june C. de Béjar, festivity in honor of the patron

saint San Pedro.

From the 31st of july to the 2nd of august Los Odres, festivity to honor the Virgen del Carmen.

At the end of july and beginning of august Salmerón, festivity to honor La Purísima.

Second or third weekend of august Inazares, festivity to honor San Nicolás.

From the 12th to the 15th of august Cañada de la Cruz, festivity to honor Ntra. Sra. de la Asunción.

From the 12th to the 15th of august Calar de la Santa, en festivity to honor.Ntra. Sra. Asunción.

24th of august Sabinar, festivity to honor the patron saint San Bartolomé.

From the 7th to the 12th of october Mazuza, traditional festivities.

From the 3rd to the 8th of decemeber Benizar, festivity to honor the patron saint Santa Bárbara.



NOTE: The dates of the festivities in the districts mentioned above might vary from year to year. They are always celebrated close to the day of their patron saint.



Moratalla Festivity

Gastronomy

Moratalla possesses a rich and varied gastronomy that knows how to make wise use of the seasonal products.

There are several restaurants that offer these characteristic recipes to the visitors, such as: Migas, white beans salad, andrajos, rogiaos, ajoharina, and different types of rice, casseroles or roasts... the tasting of these typical dishes will surprise the visitor.

The different types of rice with Calasparra denomination belong to Moratalla, specifically, from Borbonegro, all the preserves of Moratalla river, and the right edge of Segura river, from the Cenajo dam to Cañaverosa.



Marzipan of Moratalla



Local gastronomy

Toque del tambor de Moratalla



What to visit?

Castles

The town castle, with the elegant homage tower, was built by the muslims over neolithic and iberic remains during the Caliphate period.

The Santiaguistas remodeled it completely in the XIII century. The castle underwent several changes afterwards, such as the one from Diego de Soto at the end of the XV century from which the tower of Magdalena is still preserved. In 1465, the castle was seized by the inhabitants of the town as a response of their discontent with their knight commander, Alfonso de Bozmediano, whom they lynched and hanged over the main door. Nowadays, the castle is restored and serves as headquarters of several cultural events.

Benizar Castle, built over an iberic settlement, was built in the muslim period, although it was remodeled on the XIV century and fortified by the commander Ruy Chacón. It has a watchtower over an elevated pinnacle as a homage tower.

Priego de la Sierra Castle consists of a muslim albacara built before the XI century, and that served as a shelter for the inhabitants and cattle of the town. Surrounding the castle, one can appreciate iberic and roman remains, as well as ancient muslim reservoirs.





Churches

The Parish of Santa Maria de la Asunción. Before 1486, there was a small construction that consisted of a single nave with a wooden roof.

Afterwards, it was expanded to a bigger building that has a roof with three plaster arches. Above the Sacristy, one can appreciate a flamboyant Gothic window. Due to the population increase in the XVI century, the town Council planned the edification of a monumental basilical ground plan that was vaulted above a huge Tuscan pillar, but different experts modified the plan to give it latin cross vibes. Due to the population increase in the XVI century, the town Council planned the edification of a monumental basilical ground plan, vaulted above a huge Tuscan pillar, but different experts modified the plan to give it a latin cross appearance. It is considered as a national monument.

The Convent of San Francisco, former hermitage of San Sebastian. The primitive aspect was slightly modified in the XVIII century. The façade belongs to the Murcian late baroque and it has colonial influence.

Santa Ana hermitage was founded in 1614 by the Santa Ana's brotherhood that was formed in 1607. On the last restoration in 1994, the building underwent several internal reformatations that changed its appearance to adapt the temple to the Vatican directives, basing on the christian symbolism.





Sanctuaries

The sanctuary of la Casa de Cristo was built after the event that happened on the 19th of April of 1493 when, according to the tradition, Jesus Christ appeared to a farmer called Rui Sanchez. The town council adopted Jesus Christ Appeared as the patron saint of the city. The first building (until 1494) was made of mud wall, wooden roof and covered by tiles.

Between the end of the XV century and the beginning of the XVI century, a great chapel and new altar were built. The current aspect of la Casa de Cristo is due to the works carried out at the end of the XX century. It is also to highlight that the old Monasterio Mercedario has been redesigned and redistributed to adequate its space for it to be used as the Centro de Interpretación de Arte Rupestre (Cave Art Interpretation Center), hostelry and a restaurant.

The hermitage of La Rogativa impresses due to its aspect, surrounding, geographical settlement and its location between Pico del Obispo and Revolcadores.





Sanctuary of La Rogativa

Cave Art Interpretation Center

Visiting the cave paintings interpretation center in Casa de Cristo is essential. It is located in a historical spot in Moratalla. The goal of this center is to spread the prehistoric cave arts of the Region de Murcia.

It presents a didactic and modern exhibition supported by graphical, technological and traditional resources, and it is a technical referent for the research, study and preservation of this patrimonial legacy.



Drum Museum

In the Drum Museum and Drummers Association, the visitor will be able to get to know the history of the drums, the tradition, craftwork and detailed information about the customs and drum roll of Holy Week in Moratalla.



Drums

Rural Tourism, Sport & Adventure

Moratalla, surrounded by nature, possesses a wide offer of rural accommodation in the countryside and the mountains, perfectly equipped and with all the necessary amenities to be able to enjoy adventure sports such as hiking, biking, horse riding or simply tasting the most authentic gastronomy of the area. An extensive variety of activities that will make your holidays a unique experience.



Somogil







Strait of Bolvonegro

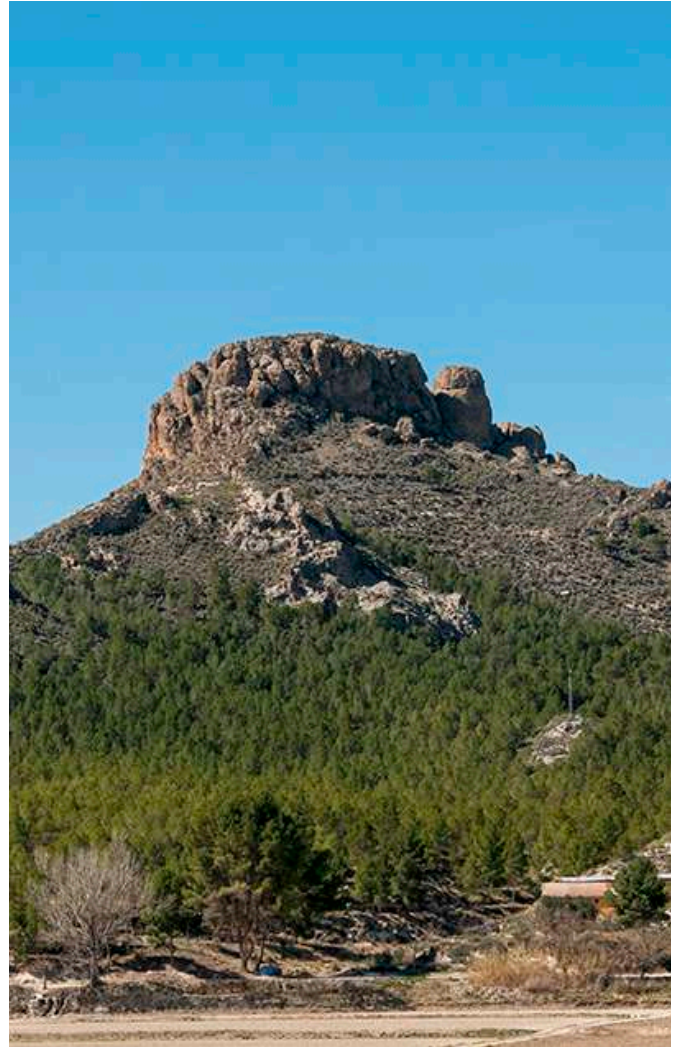
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Salmerón Volcano

Contacts

Town Hall	968 730 001
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Tourism Office	968 730 208
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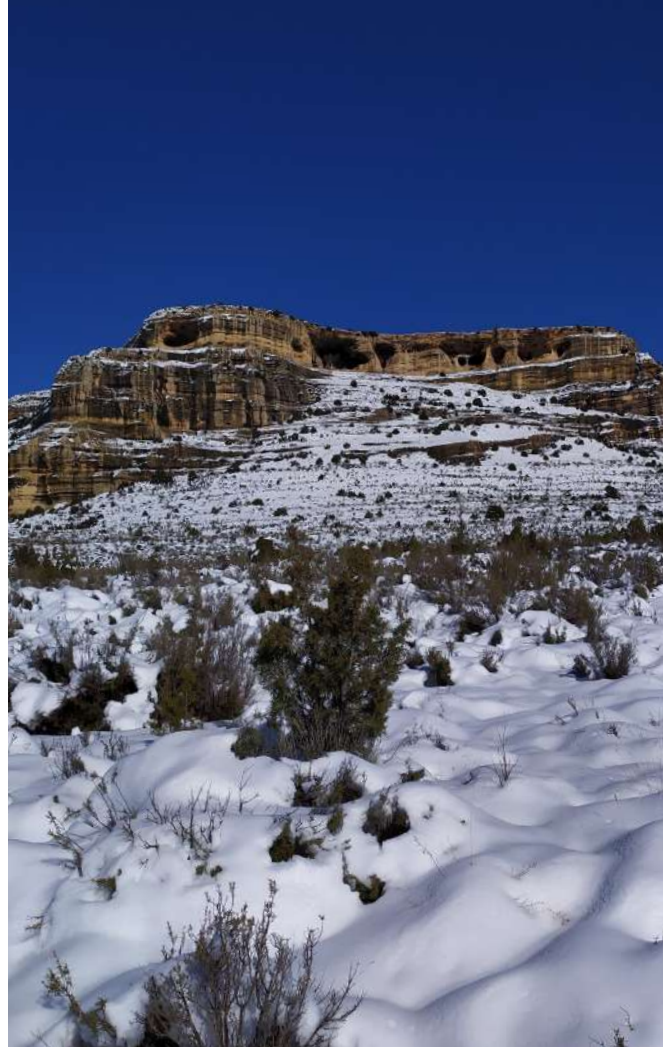
Medical Center	968 706 235
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Local Police	968 730 302
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Civil Guard	968 730 002
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Civil Protection / Firefighters	968 706 775
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Emergency	112
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Winter in Zaén Caves







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