



Insights into Alicante

ROUTE SP 1

Presentation of the route

The route "Insights into Alicante" offers the traveller an urban excursion through the main points of interest in this open-to-the-sea, cosmopolitan and welcoming city.

It is a circular relaxing and pleasant route with clear and simple explanations, so that the traveller can acquire general knowledge and enjoy the walk. The total route length is 7.5 kilometres, on flat surfaces, with 141-meter difference in level; it takes about three hours. The route offers the chance to enjoy Alicante's heritage in all its various aspects: physical, architectural, cultural, natural and historical.

Although the route can be done at any time of the year, it deserves to be noted that around the festivities Las Hogueras de San Juan [Saint John's Bonfires] —in the second and third week of June— the hustle and bustle in the city can make it relatively difficult to visit it calmly. These festivities —declared of National Tourist Interest because of their attractiveness and uniqueness— are definitely worth enjoying, though.



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Waypoint	Luceros Square
	<p>When Alicante designed the widening of its urban layout in the mid-19th century, it did not include a square in this location; therefore, before its public use, a circus was installed here several times —and a football pitch was authorized too. Named as Plaza de la Independencia [Independence Day] in 1908 to commemorate the centenary of the May 2nd Uprising against the French Napoleonic troops in Madrid, it subsequently had several names and transformations. “Fuente de Levante,” a work by the Alicante-born sculptor Daniel Bañuls, was erected in 1930. The Hogueras de San Juan firework displays are launched from Luceros Square [literally “Bright Stars Square”]. Different celebrations are held in this sunny place open to the sea breezes through the adjacent avenues, and it also serves as a meeting point for demonstrations. The TRAM (Alicante Tramway) station located underground is the starting point of a tramway (and train) line that runs along the coast between Alicante and Denia.</p>

Train stop	Avenida de La Estación
	<p>On the way to the train station stands the Alicante Provincial Palace, a building in the neo-baroque historicist style which dates to the first third of the 20th century. It hosts the headquarters of Diputación de Alicante [Alicante Provincial Government], the body that coordinates the administration of the towns located in this province. Concerts and cultural activities are held in its gardens and premises. Avenida de la Estación [Station Avenue] was designed as an access road to the Madrid-Alicante railway station, the opening of which took place in 1858. The station’s original neoclassical-style façade was demolished in 1969 and replaced by the current one. The arrival of the railway meant a great step for communications between Alicante and the capital of the country. The route was made by the popularly known as “botijo train” (travellers used to carry a botijo [earthenware pitcher] with water to cool down and withstand the heat during the more-than-20-hour long trip.</p>

Sports facility	Plaza de La Estrella
	<p>Even though rainfall in Alicante is scarce (ca. 300 litres/year), the rain sometimes falls in torrents causing significant floods. Over time, the force of the water has excavated short, steeply sloping riverbeds known as ravines or gullies. Before its construction, this roundabout located on the San Blas Ravine was a crossroads with an exit to Madrid, the traffic there being consequently dense. In the absence of traffic lights, the urban guards who regulated the traffic became typical characters of the urban</p>

scene. The current design made in the late 1980s had as its aim to facilitate mobility and commercial development in the surrounding streets. In its very centre stands the sculpture “Like a Star” (1997), a mobile stainless-steel construction representative of the “kinetic art” works by the renowned local sculptor Eusebio Sempere from which this square gets its name (Star Square).

Waypoint

Avenida de Oscar Esplá



This wide avenue developed in 1969 and named after the Alicante-born musician Oscar Esplá is oriented perpendicularly to the sea and joins Plaza de la Estrella with Plaza de Miguel López. The same as Plaza de la Estrella, Avenida Óscar Esplá is located on the San Blas Ravine; hence why it was one of the roads most strongly hit by the great flood of 1982 which claimed the lives of five people. This avenue was once again remodelled with garden areas and a pavement designed by the sculptor Eusebio Sempere in the 1990s, a rainwater collector being built underground in order to harmonize urban development with the strength of (natural) watercourses and, most importantly, to prevent flooding.

Monument

Casa del Mediterraneo



After the arrival of the Madrid-Alicante train, the next railway challenge consisted in connecting Andalusia with France via the Mediterranean coast, an old project which remains uncompleted to date. Nevertheless, Benalúa Station acted as the destination for freight trains arriving from the south in 1884. After years of abandonment, the station was restored and converted into the headquarters of Casa del Mediterraneo [Mediterranean House], an institution that works to promote the common identity of Mediterranean Arc peoples. Lacking the hustle and bustle that would have accompanied the frantic activity of a station, this spot currently stands out as one of the most peaceful and attractive along the city’s seafront.

Park

Parque de Canalejas



We are now walking across the oldest park in Alicante designed in 1886 on the demolished bastion of San Carlos and the adjacent beach. Before being turned into a park, the area served as an open-air warehouse to store the thousands of barrels of wine that waited to be exported from the port. The park is dedicated to José Canalejas, President of the Spanish Government between 1910 and 1912. As a deputy for Alicante, Canalejas defended not only the expansion of its port but also the development of



the city's infrastructures and its modernisation. The sculpture at the end of the park shows the people of Alicante's recognition towards this politician and his work. Open to the sea breeze, the park is sheltered from the sun and the intense summer heat under the shade of large leafy trees, among which the century-old protected *Ficus macrophylla* —with a height of over 20 meters and a 6-meter at the base— deserves a special mention. The statues of "El niño flautista" [The flute-playing player child] or the two lions were donated by Manuel Pritz, son of the Swedish businessman Hugo Pritz, who settled down in Alicante in 1870. Parallel to the park and close to the sea is the old fish market (1921), built in the modernist style with Maghreb elements. Decades ago, the locals used to buy their fish directly from the fishermen here. The building was repurposed in 1992 to become an exhibition and cultural events hall.

Waypoint

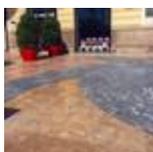
Explanada de España



Explanada de España [Esplanade of Spain] was built on the old seafront and the land reclaimed from the sea after the demolition of the (city) wall in the second half of the 19th century. Since its opening, this promenade has been the most frequented in Alicante by residents and visitors alike. In addition to having the most select cafés and being the bourgeoisie's favourite gathering place, the best-known stately buildings in the city stand along the Explanada too. Among such buildings is the Casa Carbonell, owned by a businessman who made cloth for French military uniforms during the First World War and amassed a considerable fortune. According to legend, Carbonell arrived in Alicante sweating and covered in dust after the long journey from his hometown (Alcoy). When he approached the "Palas" hotel (the current Chamber of Commerce) to spend the night, he was denied access, which made him decided to erect a building that could outshine the hotel. What cannot be denied is that, while the bourgeoisie was fighting for its social recognition, this businessman had the opportunity to buy the best plot of land on the seafront and build the most emblematic house on the Explanada. Since he lacked an aristocratic coat of arms, Enrique Carbonell turned his initials into a heraldic figure which was placed as a coat of arms above the entrance door to his impressive mansion. The design of the Explanada's pavement and landscaping underwent several modifications over time. Finally, the Portuguese paving of the Rocio Square in Lisbon was taken as an example in 1956. Following that model, a mosaic of 6,600,000 red, ivory cream and blueish black marble tesserae were drawn which evoked the sea waves moving among the palm trees.

Waypoint

Plaza de la Puerta del Mar



Despite maintaining its medieval walls, Alicante reinforced them between 1530 and 1540 and adapted them to the innovations incorporated into the art of war (especially artillery) during the Renaissance period. Ten years later, the city undertook the construction of a second fortified enclosure — the so-called “wall facing the sea”— which ran along the current line of houses located in the Explanada de España. The sea thus reached the foot of the walls. Trade has always been Alicante’s main economic activity, the sea being its outlet. In the 16th century, the traffic of goods and people between the town and the loading dock passed through a gate flanked by two circular towers known as Puerta del Muelle or Puerta del Mar [Dock or Sea Gate]. All traces of that gate, or of the customs office where the imports were declared and the duties, had disappeared in 1858. Some remains of the old Puerta del Mar were discovered a few years ago; they have been marked on the floor today with darker tiles to recall the original layout.

Beach	Paseo de Gómiz
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The first view of the beach appears from Paseo de Gomiz [Gomiz Promenade]. The fishermen and sailors from the suburb would beach their boats there and enter through a small open gate in the wall to return to their homes. It was precisely the gate that gave the beach its name: Playa del Postiguet. Sea baths were not always popular. In the past, doctors only advised them between July 16 and August 15. However, little by little, this practice gained more and more followers because of the therapeutic virtues it entailed. Due to the quality and temperature of the waters, the bathing houses built on columns constituted the typical image of this beach between 1864 and 1960. Nowadays, El Postiguet remains Alicante’s beach par excellence because it is accessible and within walking distance from the city centre. For years, its excellent facilities and environmental conditions have made it worthy of a Blue Flag, the award given by the European Foundation for Environmental Education.

Waypoint	Paseito de Ramiro Square
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Featuring impressive specimens of Ficus nitida and a section of the “city wall facing the sea,” Paseito de Ramiro runs from Puerta del Mar to the foot of Mount Benacantil.

Museum	Gravina Street
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Although some French merchants were already installed in Alicante in the 16th century, their number grew when the Bourbons occupied the Spanish throne. Later on, the French were joined by the English, the Irish and the Genoese, mainly attracted by wine-growing. Although the quality of Alicante wines had been known since ancient times, they had their golden age between the 16th and 18th centuries, when Fondillon became the most expensive wine in Europe. Louis XIV or the Tsars of Russia did not exchange this sweet wine for any other; neither did fictional characters such as the Count of Monte Cristo. The exports of products such as wine, barrels, almonds and raisins contributed to the city's economic take-off and allowed the construction of palaces such as the Conde de Lumiares, now the Gravina Museum of Fine Arts.

Monument

Cervantes Street



Occupying the only block in Cervantes Street stands the Alicante Chamber of Commerce, the public institution that offers support and advice to Alicante entrepreneurs. This emblematic nineteenth-century building, built as the residence of a noble family, was transformed into a hotel at the end of that century. It had several names during its more than 100 years of activity, among which stands out the last one —“El Hotel Palas”. This hotel, whose name is a reference to the luxury hotels that prevailed in the city halfway through the 20th century, closed its doors in 1998.

Monument

Town Hall Square



Back in 1689, Spain was among the powers struggling to halt French expansion into Europe. Two years later, Louis XIV led his navy to Alicante and bombarded the city for days from the port. Despite the French navy's failure to conquer Alicante, the balance was devastating: one third of the population died and ninety per cent of the buildings were destroyed by bombs and/or fire. The numerous impacts of projectiles on the walls of the buildings that remained standing are still visible today. Due to its proximity to the port, one of the buildings that disappeared was the Town Hall, which needed almost a century to complete its renovation in the Baroque style that it shows at present. The creation of the Geographical and Statistical Institute in 1856 had among others the aim of drawing topographic maps. Measuring the altitude of the relief required determining the “0 level,” or expressed differently, the lowest level from which measurements could begin. After years of checks, the elevation was established in the port of Alicante, which made it possible for the first precision levelling (NP1) to be set with a bronze point on the first step of the town hall's red marble staircase.

Waypoint	Plaza de la Santísima Faz
	<p>The side arches of the Town Hall take us to our next stop: Plaza de la Santísima Faz, named after the cloth on which the face of Jesus Christ was printed and which can be seen in the public fountain of this square. This cloth, similar to the Holy Shroud, has been venerated by the people of Alicante ever since 1489. In the Middle Ages, this area formed part of the Muslim medina. Cemeteries, ceramic industries, tanneries for leather work, rubbish dumps and country houses were located here in different stages. And the medieval Christian wall was erected just below the town hall building. Francisco Xavier Balmis, doctor of King Charles IV and director of the expedition that took the smallpox vaccine to the Spanish territories of America and the Philippines between 1803 and 1810, was born in one of the houses in this square. The British director John Irvin shot a scene from his film “The Garden of Eden” —based on a novel by Ernest Hemingway— here. You can taste rice or other typical Alicante dishes in this cosy and quiet square.</p>

Waypoint	Villavieja Street
	<p>Puerta Ferrisa was the main entrance to the Muslim town, Laqant medina, which later became Alicante. The construction was preserved and modified during centuries because it served as the last shelter for the population in the event of an attack until the Renaissance wall was built. Once inside, the axis of the Muslim village was marked by Villavieja Street, which gathered the main services: both the religious and the political power had their headquarters in the aljama [community mosque], on which the current Santa María Church was subsequently erected; the market was organised around the square; the alhóndiga (grain store) occupied Casa de la Asegurada —now home to the Contemporary Art Museum of Alicante (MACA for its initials in Spanish)— and the public baths were held in the hammam next to the temple. Continuing on Villavieja Street, at the entrance to Luzán Street, we can marvel at one of this city’s most iconic images: the rock formation on the south-western slope of Mount Benacantil known as “La Cara del Moro” [The Moor’s Face], because it looks like the face of a man wearing a turban.</p>

Waypoint	Virgen del Socorro Street
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The Muslim wall had a second gate to the east at the end of Villavieja Street which was given the name of Portal Nou in Christian times. That was the place from which the Jewish quarter extended. After the expulsion of its inhabitants in the early 15th century, these lands were occupied by fishermen, who stayed here until a few years ago. On this street stood the Virgen del Socorro chapel, built by the Augustinian monks in the 16th century on top of a tower belonging to the Order of the Temple. The oratory was demolished in the late 1960s to erect the first modern buildings. The beginning of September witnesses Virgen del Socorro's traditional festivities, which are inspired by ancestral celebrations of fishermen, including dances, seafood competitions and games. These festivities — considered the oldest in Alicante— reached its 180th anniversary in 2019. It is worth stopping at the viewpoint to enjoy the splendid sights of the entire bay of Alicante. Using the lift or walking down the stairs, we will go down to 1 Jovellanos Street.

Waypoint

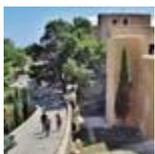
Lift to Santa Bárbara Castle



At the end of the tunnel, the lift up to Santa Bárbara Castle is at our disposal.

Castle

Mount Benacantil



We get out of the lift to visit Santa Bárbara Castle, the fortress located at the top of Mount Benacantil at a height of 169 meters, and the origin of Alicante. The upper level was occupied by the Muslim citadel and the keep, the highest tower in the fortress and the last refuge for the lord of the castle after the other defences had been taken by the enemy. On a lower level stood the old albacar, the enclosure which served as a defence for the town inhabitants, their cattle and their food when the medina was attacked. Due to its location, this castle was a strategic point in the coastal defence system created by Philip II to prevent the population from pirate attacks from the 16th century onwards. Both the King's Bastion and that of the Queen were built at that time too. The second level also contains the buildings dedicated to accommodate troops and the quartermasters, such as the barracks, the guardhouse, the bakery, the pantries, the cisterns and Santa Bárbara chapel. We leave the castle through the Revellín del Bon Repós enclosure, designed in the 18th century. People with reduced mobility can take the lift down and join the route in Labradores Street

- <https://www.alicante.es/es/equipamientos/castillo-santa-barbara>

<p style="text-align: center;">Park</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">La Ereta Park</p>
	<p>We will make the descent from Mount Benacantil through La Ereta Park, a space that revitalized the upper old town neighbourhoods, improved their communication with the rest of the city, offered fantastic views and provided visitors with new spots to enjoy peace and quiet. The integration of Mount Benacantil into the urban space was no easy task due to its steep slope(s) and complicated access.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.alicante.es/sites/default/files/documentos/documentos/itinerario-ambiental-ereta/senderos-ereta.pdf
<p style="text-align: center;">Museum</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Plaza del Puente</p>
	<p>Lack of water has traditionally been the most important problem faced by Alicante. As the nearby springs did not suffice, rainwater soon began to be collected and filtered through Mount Benacantil. The Water Museum allows you to visit some of the cisterns that were excavated inside the mountain throughout history to avoid water shortages for the population. The oldest deposit could have been built during the Muslim period, whereas the most recent ones were commissioned by the Alicante City Council to the engineer Antonio Garrigós in 1863 to alleviate the severe droughts that were devastating the city. These cisterns stopped being used in 1898, when piped water supply reached Alicante. After being emptied of water, the tanks closest to the outside served as homes. These locations served as air raid shelters during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and could hold up to 600 people.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Waypoint</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Toledo Street - Plaza del Carmen</p>
	<p>We leave Plaza del Puente and continue along Toledo Street, in the popular Santa Cruz district, until we reach Plaza del Carmen</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Waypoint</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Álvarez Street</p>
	<p>Once in the Plaza del Carmen, we continue to the end of Álvarez Street.</p>

Waypoint	General Rovira Street
	<p>Álvarez Street links up with General Rovira Street, which we will follow until we reach San Cristóbal Square.</p>

Fountain	San Cristóbal Square
	<p>Wall gates characteristically showed a constant movement of people and goods. In the 16th century, Huerta de Sueca Gate was located here, giving access to the San Antón quarter as well as to the orchards cultivated north of the town. The aforesaid gate ceased to exist between 1810 and 1812, when the last walls of Alicante were built as a defence against the French troops that invaded Spain. Before running water became available at households, there was a public fountain in the middle of this square from which the people living in this got their supplies.</p>

Monument	Labradores Street
	<p>The same as in Gravina Street, a considerable number of palace houses were rebuilt in Labradores Street after the 1690 bombing. These palaces share as common characteristics the large plots in which they are installed, their solid masonry walls and a wide façade development. Their three levels are a reflection of the society that inhabited them: the entrance hall on the ground floor, for coachmen or porters, as well as to give access to the upper floors; the main floor, reserved for gentlemen, with higher ceilings and more ornamented; and the penthouse, with small balconies or only windows, and obviously with more stairs, which provided accommodation for domestic service. Among these eighteenth-century palace-houses stand out: Marqués del Surco (17 Labradores Street), Palacio del Portalet (15), the headquarters of Centro 14 [Municipal Centre of Resources for Youth] (14), Palacio LLorca-Maisonave (11) or Berenguer de Marquina (4) —the oldest one of all.</p>

Religious site	Abbot Penalva Square
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Calle Mayor [Main Street] and Labradores Street constituted two of the main axes around which the first Christian village was structured; hence the decision to build the “new outside church,” as the temple came to be known in the 13th century. Being a seafaring town, Alicante dedicated this church to St. Nicholas and named him its patron, thus joining many other cities and even countries in Europe. Shortly after being awarded the title of Collegiate in 1600, work was undertaken to convert it into an example of the unornamented Baroque style. During the construction, Virgen del Remedio was named patron saint of the city and her image placed above the main door, leaving the image of Saint Nicholas relegated to the Black Door, on one side. Following a tradition that began in those times, Saint Nicholas sets sail from the port of Alicante on December 6th every year to deliver turrón, fruit and toys to Dutch children. San Nicolás de Bari has been one of the two cathedral sites in the Orihuela-Alicante diocese ever since 1959.

Waypoint

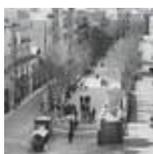
Calle Mayor



King Carlos III, who was also the Mayor of Madrid, designated Calle Mayor as the city’s most important street the capital. From then on, many cities did the same following the king’s proposal. Calle Mayor [Main Street] was the axis that had connected Alicante’s gates since Christian rule in the 13th century. Both the town hall and the fish market, together with a convent and the most important businesses were established on this road.

Waypoint

Rambla de Méndez Núñez



In addition to collecting the waters from Mount Benacantil, the unevenness of this ravine (known as Barranco de la Canicia in ancient times) made it serve as a moat for the wall in 1536. As the population grew, the space within the walls became insufficient and the hygienic conditions inadequate. The rubble from the wall demolition allowed the gully to be partially filled and town development works began in 1812. 1850 witnessed the creation of Paseo de la Reina [Queen’s Promenade] an elevated and closed romantic avenue perpendicular to the coastline, which was dismantled in 1923. The Rambla is currently one of the busiest streets thanks both to commercial activity and to its connection with Explanada de España. At No. 29, we can pay a visit to the Hogueras de San Juan Museum, which tells all the secrets about this city’s most emblematic festivities.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5pEEeDtN7A>

Waypoint	Plaza Portal de Elche
	<p>When the old inhabitants of Alicante wanted to go to Elche, they crossed a small open gate located at the end of Calle Mayor. People concentrated at the exit, and the portal consequently worked as a square, serving as a link between the town and its suburbs. The square was known as Square of Gallows for some time because the scaffold where death penalty was applied was erected there. The use of gallows was finally abolished by law in 1810. In the second half of the 19th century, Plaza del Portal de Elche [Gate of Elche Square] was restructured following a scheme that has survived to the present day: an elevated platform that separates it from the rest of the street radially crossed walkways and lush magnolia vegetation. The modernist-style central kiosk is a replica of the one destroyed in 1975.</p>

Monument	Gabriel Miró Square
	<p>The Alfolí de la Sal [salt warehouse] or Casa del Rey [King's House] stood outside the city walls, in the old Arrabal [Quarter] of San Francisco. The coastline was close to the building at the time, and boats unloaded there the salt from the saltworks of La Mata (in Torrevieja, south of the Alicante province) to store it and then sell it in Europe at a substantial profit. For that reason, this place was known as Plaza de la Barcas [Boat Square] at that time, and also popularly called Plaza del Xanco [Stilt Square], because you had to walk on your heels with stilts to avoid the water spoiling the "espardeñas" [esparto-soled sandals]. In 1850, the King's House became a sinister place for the people of Alicante since, despite its poor condition, it was used as a prison for almost half a century. No wonder its transformation into a cinema and theatre hall was greatly applauded by the locals. The space acquired its current configuration halfway through the nineteenth century, when the wall built in 1810 that kept the space away from the sea was demolished. The design applied resembled that of the Plaza del Portal de Elche, though with an ornamental pond in the centre that celebrated the arrival of water in Alicante in 1898. The fountain was replaced by Vicente Bañuls' sculpture La Aguadora [The Female Water Carrier] in 1918. Since 1920, the Post and Telegraph building has occupied the site where the old salt store used to be.</p>

Waypoint	Castaños Street



It is the busiest pedestrian street in Alicante’s traditional and leisure centre. This street owes its name to General Castaños, a prominent politician during the reigns of Ferdinand VII and Isabella II who also played a key military role in the War of Independence against Napoleon. Among the elegant houses of nineteenth-century bourgeoisie stands out that located at the corner of Gerona Street. This small palace belonged to Arturo Salvetti, Consul of Italy. King Alphonse XIII stayed there when he came to inaugurate the Club de Regatas de Alicante [Alicante Yacht Club] in 1911.

Monument

Ruperto Chapí Square



200 years ago, its distance from the city centre made Plaza del Barranquet [Small Ravine Square], as it was then known, the ideal setting for outdoor performances: the first one, a bullring. Back in the mid-19th century, Alicante’s bourgeoisie lacked a suitable place to cultivate their cultural interests, namely: theatre, music and, of course, opera. The way to solve this problem was taxing the imports of English cod and sugar that entered through the port. Thanks to these taxes, the New Theatre was completed in only 20 months. Its construction meant a recognition of this city’s powerful commercial bourgeoisie —derogatorily referred to as the “aristocracy of cod.” The composer Ruperto Chapí, whose bust presides over the square, founded the (Spanish) General Society of Authors and Writers (SGAE for its initials in Spanish) —the organisation that regulates copyright— in 1893.

Waypoint

Avenida de la Constitución



Following the Avenida de la Constitución we will reach the last point of the route.

Monument

Avenida de Alfonso el Sabio



Avenida de Alfonso el Sabio [Alphonse the Wise Avenue] follows the route of the 1810 wall. The modern city began to grow after the demolition of all its walls in 1860. The space recovered allowed for the development of new public infrastructures like the market, which was moved here from Puerta del Mar. Alicante had 21,000 inhabitants in that period. The market occupied an entire block along the main axis of the new expansion area, which also featured the greatest level of activity. The building, completed in 1921, followed the hygienist rules of the time: two brick structures on



which a metal structure extended, brick sides and wooden slats on top of them that provided sufficient lighting and ventilation. The decoration used some modernist elements, such as the trencadís tile sign on the main façade. During the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) it was the scene of one of the bloodiest attacks against civilians. On May 25, 1938, a bombing on market day claimed the lives of about 300 people. A plaque on one side of the building commemorates this event. A tour inside the market to enjoy the colour, smell and taste of seafood or other local specialities looks like a grand finale for this route around Alicante Town. At present, this is a meeting place to enjoy the famous Saturday “tardeo” [going out to have a drink in the afternoon/early evening (tarde in Spanish)], during which it is typical to find groups of friends having a “caña” [glass of beer] or any other drink and eating some “tapas” in the surroundings of the market.