

SORITA

With the Bergantes making its way through the mountains



**ELS
PORTS**

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HISTORY

As a Muslim town, Zorita was originally part of the Peralta lordship after the Christian conquest in 1233. It was sold to the town of Morella, building its own municipality from 1691 onwards.

Earlier settlements have been identified, such as the discovery of pottery from the Bronze and Iron Age and cave paintings near Mas de Planell, as well as from the Roman period. It was also the scene of intense fighting during the Carlist Wars, being sacked in 1834 by the troops of General Cabrera.

After the Civil War, Zorita suffered an important phenomenon of emigration. The demographic peak was reached at the beginning of the 20th century. There were 1236 inhabitants in 1900. Since then, it has suffered a drastic drop, currently standing at 126 inhabitants (2016).

THE VILLAGE

Sorita is a town located on a hill on the right bank of the Bergantes river, 657m above sea level, on the border of the province of Teruel. Zorita, also known as Maestrat, has an extensive municipal district, very mountainous, with heights such as Sant Marc (1,023m) in the eastern part, and Bernús (916m) in the south, and extensive pine and holm oak forests cover almost all the slopes.

Its rugged nature and the presence of water make Zorita an attractive place for tourism. Originally a Muslim settlement, after the Christian conquest in 1233 it became part of the dominion of the Peralta family. It was sold to the town of Morella, building its own municipality in 1691. Previous settlements have been documented, such as the discovery of Bronze Age ceramics and cave paintings near Mas de Planell, as well as from the Roman period. It was the scene of intense fighting during the Carlist wars, being sacked in 1834 by the troops of General Cabrera.



From the Plaza de la Iglesia we can walk through the irregular and steep streets and admire its solid stone houses with eaves and wooden balconies as befits this beautiful, almost Aragonese, mountain architecture.

In the square, the Parish Church of the Assumption of Our Lady, from the 18th century, has three naves, a transept and a dome in an elegant academic style with interesting frescoes in the apse by Cruella, executed in 1852. In front of it, a beautiful stone pavement carpets the square, which is partially walled.

The rampart extends as far as the castle, an old mansion from the 14th century, the Peralta family's manor house. You can enjoy the walk down to the Town Hall Square and, before coming across the Town Hall building, from the 17th century with its semicircular arch and carved wooden eaves, you can visit an old oven of Muslim origin, the "Forn de Dalt" (Dalt Oven). Upon arrival, do not miss its bridges, a small medieval bridge over the Barranc de la Font ravine and the bridge over the Bergantes river on the old Aragon road.



HISTORICAL HERITAGE

BRIDGES

Small medieval bridge over the Barranc de la font and the bridge over the Bergantes river“



PARISH CHURCH

Mid-18th century with three naves, transept and dome



“FONTS CALENTES”

Hot springs that still sprout next to the Bergantes.

THE TOWN HALL HOUSE

It dates from 1679 and is notable for its semicircular arch“



“PINS ALTS” O “LOS BUENOS MOZOS”

Several large pine trees located in the Barranco de la Mare de Deu ravine



REMAINS OF THE CASTLE

Old manor house with a simple but splendid 14th century façade.



BEANA TOWER AND COLOMER TOWER

Vestiges of the defensive constructions of yesteryear have intervened



“FORN DE DALT”

Ancient oven of Muslim origin.



“EL VILÀ” FARMHOUSE


A farmhouse with history that preserves the “Moli del Vilà.”





LA BALMA

The Sanctuary of the Mare de Deu de la Balma, declared a Historic Artistic Monument in 1979, is located 3km from the town centre, emblematic for its location and devotion, and is set in the rock, on the side of the river Bergantes. The Sanctuary as such was already known in the 14th century, half building, half grotto, located in a natural cavity or shelter, and with a curious 17th century bell tower. Next to it is the Hospedería, of historical importance, built in the 16th century and adapted to the rugged terrain. From here you can walk through the vaulted shelter to the natural cave or cavity where the image of the Virgin is kept, an object of veneration since it was found by a shepherd in the 15th century. A centre of pilgrimage against “els malignes” or demoniacs, it became popular in the 18th century, to request cures that in the past were attributed to demonic possessions, frequently epileptic seizures. To get there from Zorita, crossing the Bergantes, follow the Aragon road along the left bank of this river, and after passing through the Rossell ravine, leave it to follow a shortcut that descends a steep slope until you reach the little chapel of the Virgen de la Balma, erected next to the river at its confluence with the Barranc de la Mare de Deu, which was used by travellers and muleteers who could not ascend to the Sanctuary.



Then begins the ascent of the sacred mountain: where we can find the Covered Cross, one of the most beautiful in the Crown of Aragon, with a dome supported by four pendentives that houses frescoes by Cruella (1860), allegorical of the Virtues, and a few minutes later, under the branches of the corpulent hackberry that shades the fountain, you will find the entrance to the hostelry and the hermitage.

From the entrance to the Sanctuary you can contemplate a beautiful panorama: to the east, with the high peaks of the San Marcos mountain range, covered with pine forests, and to the south and west, the high mountains of Morella, ending in front of Forcall at the Miró and Garumba millstones; a little closer, in the foothills of the Morella mountain range, on a hill isolated by deep ravines, the village of Sorita; and in the background, the meandering flow of the Bergantes.





Interest places

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Town Hall | 6 Pharmacy |
| 2 Bar-Restaurant | 7 Store |
| 3 Castle | 8 Cultural centre |
| 4 Oven | 9 Festival Pavillion |
| 5 Church | 10 Bergantes Tourist Classroom |

SORITA



NATURE

The rural municipality of Zorita has a large number of pine forests, holm oak forests, oak trees and other species native to the Els Ports region. Among the places that stand out for their ecological value is the area of “Los Buenos Mozos”, made up of large pine trees. Strolling along its paths you will find numerous springs such as “Les Fonts Calentes”, thermal waters that still flow next to the Bergantes, or the “Planell”, with medicinal waters, and the “Dels Cabezos”. Extremely mountainous, it has main heights such as Sant Marc (1,023m), Millán (949m) covered with holm oak forests, near terraced slopes with dry stone walls. Different paths and trails overcome these slopes, descending to the different ravines and allowing walkers to enjoy nature in all its splendour, as in the section of the Estrecho del Barranco del Pardo ravine and its deep canyon. Farmhouses and hermitages with history, of the many that the area treasures, such as: the Vilà farmhouse, which conserves the “Molí de Vilà”, where there is still an old textile factory; the “Molí del Xorrador”, located on the border of the three ancient kingdoms of the Crown of Aragon; and the “Molí del Poble”, fed by the waters of the river.

The hermitages of Sant Marc (16th century) at the top of the mountain named after it at an altitude of more than 1,000m, from which you can enjoy stunning views, and the hermitage of Sant Antoni. Wayside crosses and crossroads mark the ancient and important roads that connected Aragon with Valencia. Given its location, Zorita offers a wide range of activities. Its almost 69 km² of extension, its pine forests and ravines, its paths and trails, and the significant slopes that go from the river at 600 m to the Sierra de San Marcos at 1,023 m, are perfect for hiking, climbing, bathing, fishing, mountain biking, and more.

The many activities offered by Zorita are complemented by the existence of a hunting reserve, a trout fishing reserve and signposted trails. One of these trails is the PR-CV-246 which starts at “La Creu dels Espigolars” and ends at the Sanctuary of La Balma; and the other is the PR-CV-230 which goes from “La Creu Coberta” to the “Pico Inferno”.



FESTIVITIES AND TRADITIONS

SANT ANTONI

The Festival of Sant Antoni, typical in the region of “Els Ports” takes place in January, with the traditional bonfire and the distribution of “coquetas”. The “coquetas” are handmade by the women of the village in the old oven of the village.

The festival begins on Thursday, with the cooking of the “coquetas” filled with pumpkin jam and the cutting of the pine trees and undergrowth that will form the hut. In the evening there is a first dinner for the collaborating people consisting of homemade pizzas and baked potatoes with alioli.

On Friday, the firewood is cut to cover the hut, and in the evening a dinner is held for all the inhabitants of the typical village.

On Saturday afternoon the hut is built and in the evening the animals are blessed and returned, the “coquetas” are shared out and finally the hut is burnt by the “dimoniets”.

On Sunday, mass is celebrated in honour of “Sant Antoni” and the festival ends with a popular meal in the square for the whole village.

PILGRIMAGES

Peiró de Sant Pere
April 28th

Sant Antoni de Pàdua
June 23rd

La Balma
1st May

Sant Gregori
12th May



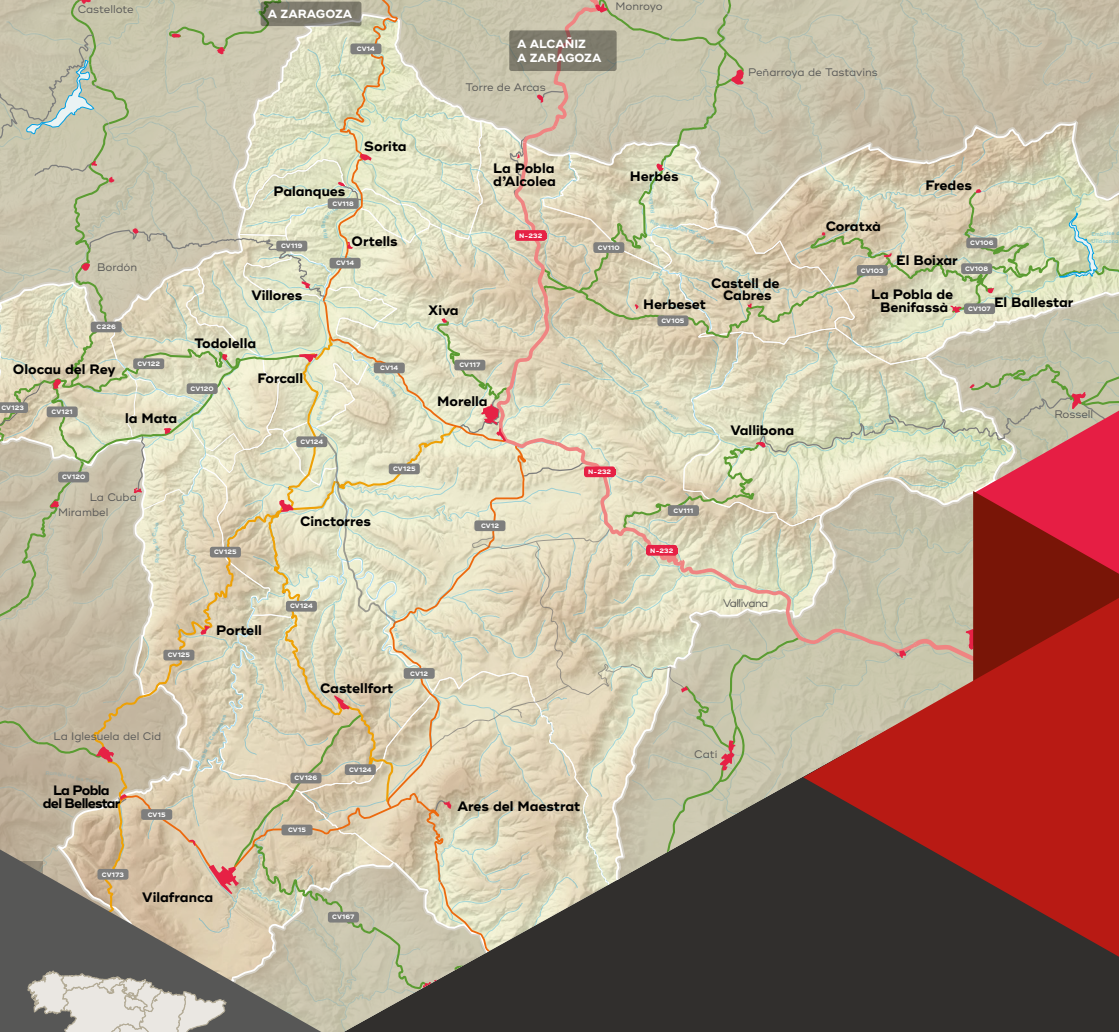
PATRON SAINT FESTIVITIES IN HONOUR OF THE VIRGIN OF LA BALMA

They are held on the weekend closest to the 8th September, the day of our patron saint. They are the most popular and participative festivities of the year, with orchestras, bullfighting, cultural and children’s events...

During the “Entrada”, night procession that takes place on Friday, a series of villagers carry the statue of the Virgin and when they reach “Las Eras de Abajo”, a shepherd welcomes her with a praise. Here, the dances of “Les Llauradores” and “Les Gitanetes y Dansants” form the procession that takes the Virgin to the village church, where another inhabitant recites a praise.

Early on Saturday morning, the procession sets off for La Balma. At the door of the church, an angel reads a praise and then the procession is led by the “dolçainer” and the “tabaleter”, followed by the dance of “Els Negrets”, the dance of “Les Llauradores” and, finally, the dance of “Les Gitanetes”. The statue of the Virgin, carried by the villagers, accompanies the procession.

On arrival at the Covered Cross, the “Dimoni de La Balma” appears, who does not want to miss the procession, dressed in the traditional costume from which snakes, serpents and vermin hang. At this very moment the famous representation of the “Fight between the Angel and the Devil” takes place, and the angel finally wins, allowing the procession to continue to La Balma.



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Ajuntament de Sorita

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Plan de Dinamización y Gobernanza Turística de Els Ports



GENERALITAT
VALENCIANA



TURISME
COMUNITAT VALENCIANA

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