

# PALANQUES

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Relevant cave paintings



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## INFORMATION

Palanques is located on the border between Castellón and Teruel. From this point we can see the village of Palanques on the lower part, the Bergantes valley on the left and an incredible landscape, with the forests and mountains that surround the village. On the left side we find the municipality of Morella, with Torremiró and Santa Creu d'Ortells. In front, the Tormo del Pallar, the Portell del Llop and the Terra Blanca. The archaeological site known as the "Roca Tallà" is located in the westernmost part of the Palanques municipality, bordering the Luco de Bordón municipality in Teruel. It is a road, a historical testimony belonging to the ancient Roman road between Aragon and Valencia and vice versa, which has been very important since ancient times. In the panoramic view we can also see San Joaquín de la Menadella, which also stands out as an archaeological heritage site of great importance, as it was a unique cremation necropolis, used between the 7th and 6th centuries BC. The Coveta Malanit and the Tossalet close this panoramic view on the right-hand side.



## PARISH CHURCH OF LA ASUNCIÓN DE NUESTRA SEÑORA

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This church dates from the 18th century, in the Baroque style. The remains of the small Gothic doorway of the old parish church, dating from the 14th century, can be seen embedded in the wall on the right.

The current parish church is built on top of the original one. Inside there are masonry altarpieces from the beginning of the 19th century, carved by the craftsman Ferrer de Mirambel.

The main altar is presided over by the Virgin of the Assumption. The saints San Abdón and San Senén defend her. To the right and left are the images of the Virgen del Pilar and a fresco of the Virgen de la Balma.

The patron saints of Palanques are San Cosme and San Damián and co-patron saints Abdón and Senén.

## ARABIAN TOWER

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A watchtower from the area that was dismantled to build the bridge over the Bergantes River and whose gate was moved to Morella to be placed in the Ferrisa gate of the castle. Located in the upper part of the cingle, it was used to watch over the territory and communications. It was a rectangular tower, as can still be seen in the markings on the ground.

When Morella became a border area, it was necessary to build numerous towers in the area, solid enough for the Moors or the population to take refuge in them and defend themselves from Christian attacks, as there were frequent incursions, raids, cavalcades and pillages by the Christians. As we have seen, there were two towers in Palanques; the highest one, in addition to guarding the banks of the Bergantes, reached the road that leads through the mountains to Aguaviva, a much-used route without the need to follow the course of the river.

These Palanques towers were visible from each other and must have been coordinated with all the other towers centred in Morella. The numerous towers that were built were lookouts or defensive bastions of Morella, as was, it seems, the Puebla de Alcolea (the “Alcoleya”). “Alcolea” is an Arabic word meaning a small castle.

In all the towers there were “guaytes”, who were the guards, watchmen and their task was to warn those who were in the fields working their land, grazing their livestock or simply passing through it, of the approach of a raid, which was very common at the time, so that they could be alerted and go to the tower or wherever they might be.





## GOTIC DOOR

The current church is built over a primitive one, built by concession of the bishop of Tortosa, D. Berenguer de Prats, on 24th August 1320, at the request of the 60 families of this town.

This primitive church belonged to the so-called “reconquest churches”, typical of this northern area of Castellón.

Access was through this pointed arch doorway, which was much smaller in size. At the top of the door we can still see the hole where the bell and two windows used to be. A flight of steps led up to this point.

## TOWN HALL

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Palanques Town Hall is located at an altitude of 670 metres above sea level, on the left side of the Bergantes valley and at the midday of a gentle rise called “El Romeral”. It has an area of 14.3 km<sup>2</sup> and is one of the smallest villages in the Comunitat Valenciana.

The Palanques Town Hall is located in the centre of the town centre, specifically in the Town Hall square. The building is a large house built in the 19th century, but with remains of elements from the 17th century and with an inscription from 1789.

It is characterised by its unique porch, which support two large semicircular arches, on which the offices of the Palanques Town Hall are located.



## Points of interest

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- 1** City Hall
- 2** City Hall square
- 3** Church of the Assumption
- 4** Remains of an ancient medieval tower
- 5** Bergantes viewpoint
- 6** Cap de la Roca viewpoint
- 7** Font del Chorret - Washing place
- 8** Municipa Pool



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## CAVE PAINTINGS OF CINGLE DE PALANQUES

If you go straight on along the side of the cemetery, you will soon find an iron footbridge with some stairs that go straight down to shelter A of the Cingle de Palanques. They are about 3 minutes' walk away.

The naturalistic cave paintings of the Cingle de Palanques belong to the Neolithic period. They are more than 5000 years old. They are made up of more than 30 figures of various groups of hunters and wild animals.

In shelter A there are two hunting scenes from two different chronological contexts. The first period consists of a group of three adult wild boars, two young wild boars and a group of hunters stalking them. Among the whole pictorial ensemble, several figures stand out: the great hunter, a woman and an enormous wild boar. Some of these figures are unique in all Levantine rock art. As is the image of a hunter in a shooting position, with a snub-nosed viper (*Vipera latastei*) on his arm, which can be found in shelter B.

This second shelter is located to the left of the first and in a lower part of the mountain, but very close to it.



### “THE HUNTER” SHELTER

In the shelter “The hunter” (shelter B), located to the left of A and in a lower part of the mountain, there is a very important and unique figure among the Levantine pictorial ensemble. It is the image of a hunter holding a bow in a shooting position and holding a snake (*Vipera latastei*) in his arm. This painting is of extraordinary importance. Neolithic hunters used to poison the tips of their arrows with the venom of vipers. In this way, when they managed to stick their poisoned tips into the body of the animals, these would gradually fall asleep due to the effect of the poison. Later, they followed their trail and managed to kill them in a faster and more efficient way.



## FONT DEL XORRET

This place is one of the most picturesque corners of Palanques. Surrounded by vegetation, it is dominated by intense green and abundant vegetation in spring and is tinged with brown, yellow and gold in autumn.

In the area there are two fountains, the Font del Xorret and later the Font Vella, washing places, a picnic area and a good place for outdoor leisure and recreation.

## FONT VELLA

The Font del Xorret and the Font Vella are a set of two fountains located in the lower part of the village, in a picturesque setting of great charm. The Font Vella is dated 1627, made of ashlar stone with a semicircular arch and has fresh water all year round.

Water has always been very important in the town and these hydraulic constructions from the 17th century, together with the proximity and influence of the river, demonstrate this.

## CENTURY-OLD CYPRESSES

These two cypresses are over a hundred years old and stand out for their large diameter and size. It is precisely this size that makes them visible from the lower part of the town as well as from the upper part.

The cypress trees are located in the area where the town's "Fossar Vell" used to be. The "Fossar Vell" was the cemetery next to the church. Nowadays it is a meeting place for the neighbours and has been improved and adapted as a recreational area for children to play.

## FLORA AND FAUNA

The rugged relief of Palanques, with its cingle, pine forests, river and different landscapes, makes it an ideal place for various species of animals.

The sky is dominated by griffon vultures, while in the mountains the Hispanic goat and wild boar are the most numerous species. The goats inhabit the mountains, but they are also easy to spot at dusk, when they usually go down to the river to drink.

As for the vegetation, in Palanques we find pine forests, woods with oak, elm, walnut and almond trees, and numerous shrubs and aromatic herbs, such as pennyroyal, the most abundant in this area, lavender, thyme and rosemary. Among all the tree species, the poplars near the river bed stand out. In spring they cause a “snowfall”, turning the river white with their blossom.



## FESTIVITIES AND TRADITIONS

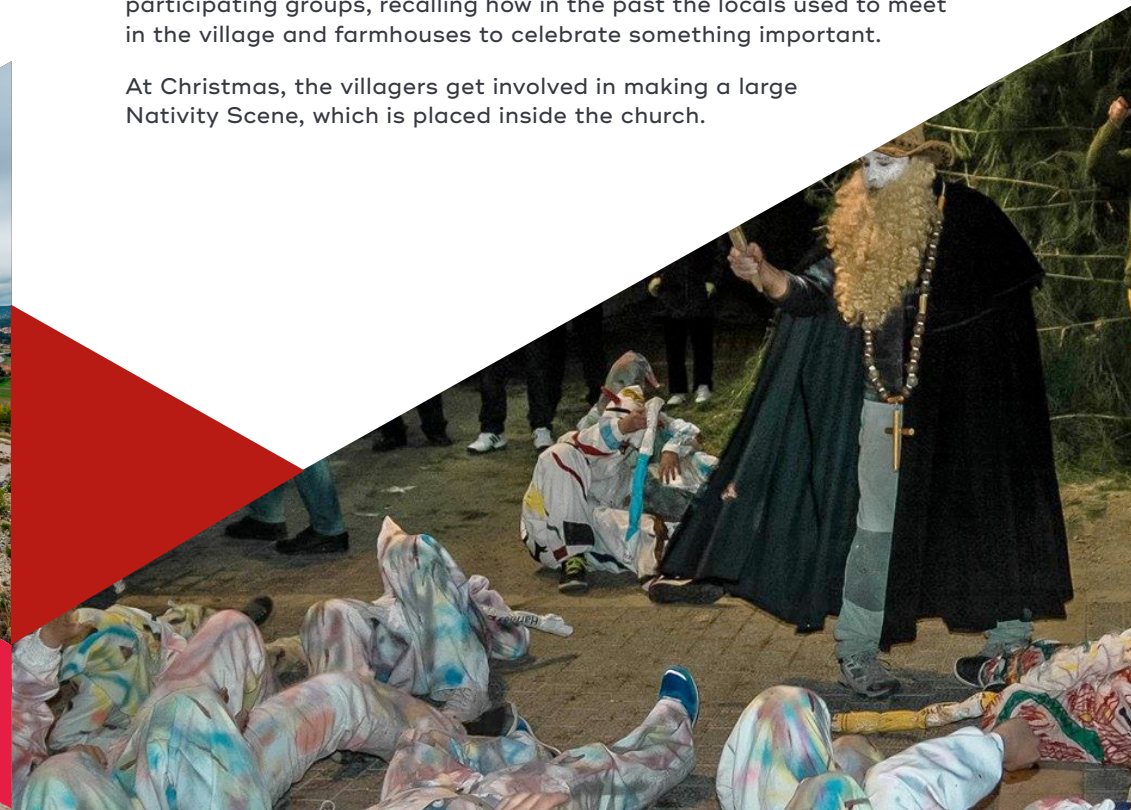
In January, fire takes centre stage in Palanques with the celebration of Sant Antoni. For a whole weekend, the town fills with people and atmosphere. They make “les coquetes”, the typical pasta of the festival; they go out to the mountain to get the “maio” and the “malea”; they build the hut and set it on fire at night, accompanied by the “Diablera”. This festival of medieval origin is deeply rooted in Els Ports and is celebrated in almost all the villages.

Spring is a time for pilgrimages in this land. On 25th April, the villagers go to the Virgen de la Balma and on the Saturday following 11th June, to the hermitage of San Bernabé.

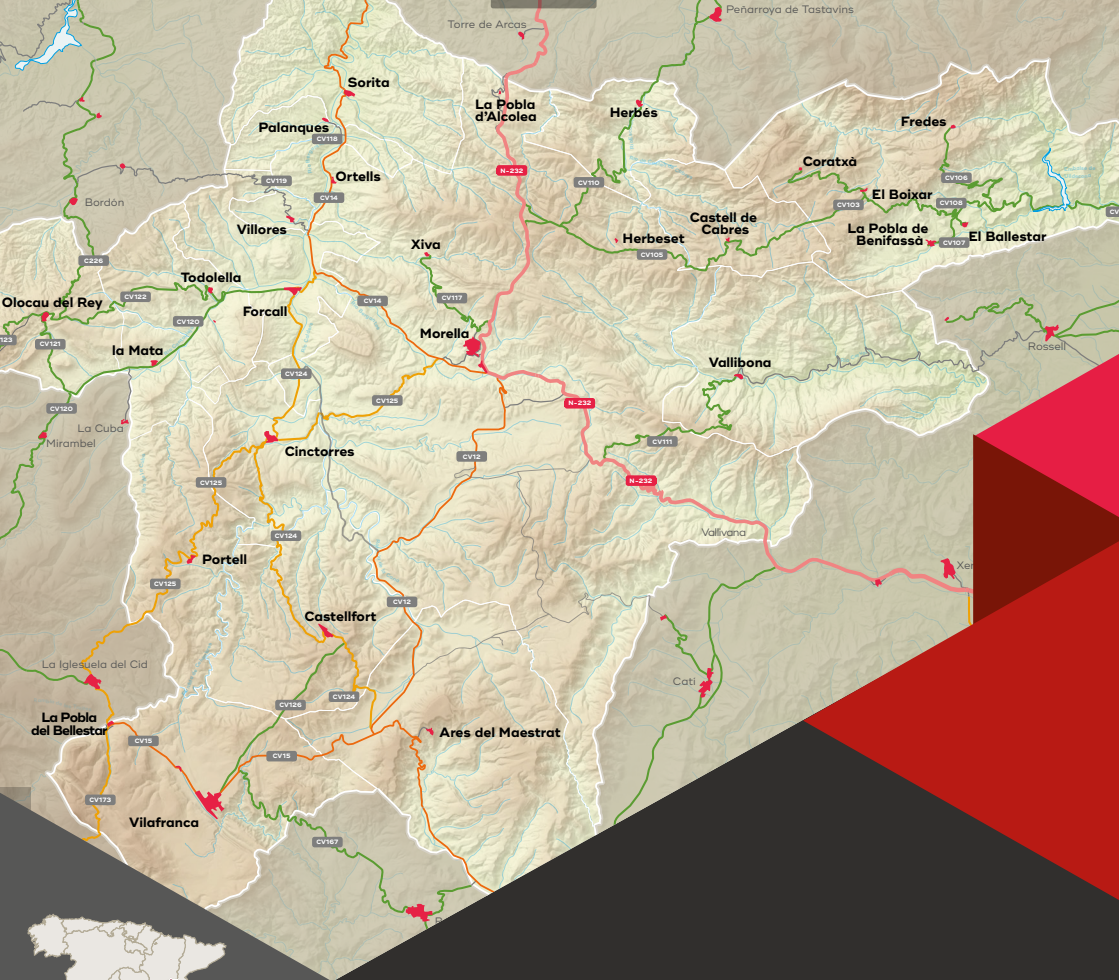
August sees the arrival of the patronal feasts in honour of San Cosme and San Damián. These are the most popular of the year.

In October, the festival of the Bureo and the Corro Dance takes place, which brings together dozens of locals and visitors, who do not want to miss the performance of this typical dance of Palanques and the music of the participating groups, recalling how in the past the locals used to meet in the village and farmhouses to celebrate something important.

At Christmas, the villagers get involved in making a large Nativity Scene, which is placed inside the church.







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