



La Janda

CULTURAL HERITAGE



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A LAND FILLED WITH A WORLD OF HISTORY



A source of immense wealth Inherited from our ancestors, tangible and intangible heritage are testimony to our existence, to a way of life and way of being. If you take time to explore at our cultural heritage, our vision of the world will illuminate you.

A tangible world filled with artistic monuments, archaeological sites, ethnographic sites, historical landmarks ... and an intangible world filled with knowledge and traditions that emotionally reinforce our sense of community with their own identity just waiting to be discovered.



HISTORY THAT YOU CAN TOUCH

They say that Hercules believed he'd reached the end of the earth when he arrived in Cádiz and they say that he separated the Calpe and Abilia mountain ranges, causing the Gibraltar strait to open beneath his feet. Legend has it that the mysterious Tartessian culture developed in the southwest of Iberia and they say, and this is told by Plato, that there was an island, called Atlantis, with a peculiar circular design in front of Hercules's columns. .

Stories of gods and myths confirm that we were here in the region earlier than we could ever have imagined.



The first primitive dwellers

Where roads meet; opening up a door between Africa and Europe and a window from the stunning Mediterranean out to the vast Atlantic. This location could give us the explanation for the early settlement of La Janda and the richness of its archaeological sites.

The first remains date back to the Neolithic. Children, women and men sheltered in the caves filled with wall paintings that depict the people's faces, the animals, the hunting, the dance ...,all of the life that bustled around these settlements. When we talk about this cave art, generated mainly in the surroundings of La Janda Lagoon, the Tajo de las Figuras Rupestrian Complex (BIC) in Benalup-Casas Viejas is worth mentioning, an exceptional collection of more than 900 post-Palaeolithic paintings where the representations provide a stunning window into history through paintings of birds in the most varied postures. Megalithic art, the original monumental architecture, left its mark on the Dólmenes del Celemín complex also in Benalup-Casas Viejas and in La Laja de los Hierros (BIC), in Alcalá de los Gazules, you'll be able to explore some fascinating cave engravings of a schematic nature .

There are many archaeological sites left behind by the first settlers, scattered throughout our territory that confirm a fertile life here since the beginning of civilization; Gavilán and La Pedriza Cave in Alcalá de los Gazules, Cueva de la Fuente Santa (BIC) and Roca del Reloj in Barbate, Cueva del Cañuelo (BIC) and Cueva del Tajo Amarillo (BIC) in Benalup-Casas Viejas, Cueva de las mujeres (BIC) and Cueva del Toro (BIC) in Medina Sidonia are just a mere few examples of this historical abundance.



Cultural Heritage

Land of fertile cultures ... Phoenicians from of Tiro, dedicated to maritime trade they founded numerous colonies along the Cadiz coast while maintaining intense commercial links with the Tartessian civilization. Tuna fishing and the art of Almadraba became a reality in enclaves like Barbate and Conil de la Frontera from where they exported salted fish and the precious Garum, a sauce made from fish intestines which was in high demand in Rome. Roman domination, won from the Carthaginians, brought with it the territorial organization, multiplied the number of towns creating an important infrastructure; the roman roads that favoured trade and transport. Buildings sprang up; cisterns, aqueducts, hot springs, fishing factories and necropolis began to dot the landscape...





*Those historical towns:
tartessus, phonecian, roman, visigoth*

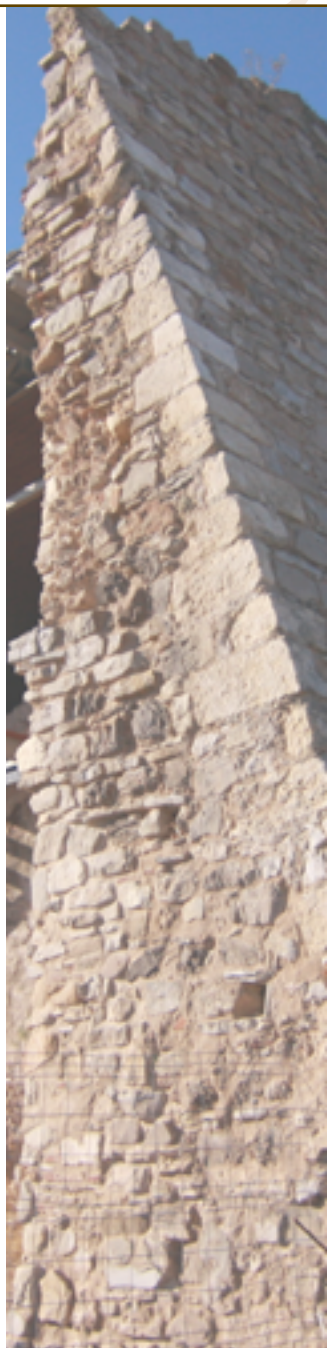


The Roman Archaeological Complex called Asido Caesarina in Medina Sidonia, gives us the chance to observe exemplary sanitation and public supply infrastructures. You'll be able to explore underground galleries and remains of hydraulic constructions that correspond to the sewers and drainage systems of the primitive city. Nearby, the Roman road runs four meters below where locals tread today.



Cultural Heritage

The Visigoths inherited and in many cases transformed roman buildings as is often commonplace in the fusion and changing of cultures in our region, such is the case of the Ermita de los Santos Mártires (BIC) in Medina Sidonia, the former home of a Roman patrician and oldest hermitage Visigoth in Andalusia, dated back to 403 AD and that the Arabs finished by building the upper part of the tower later on.





At the Mesa del Esparragal site, in Alcalá de los Gazules, we find “El Bronce de Lascuta”, a plaque containing a praetorian decree. It is the oldest Latin document found in Spain, dating back to 189 BC and that today is preserved in the Louvre museum in Paris.

We can also explore the Hermitage of San Ambrosio (BIC) in Barbate, 644 AD. This Paleo-Christian basilica like Medina Sidonia, was a Roman villa and the object of Mudejar reforms that made up its entire structure.



In Paterna de Rivera, the discovery of a mosaic from the 2nd century AD, where tritons are represented, and of tombs and coins from Gades, confirm the significant influence of Romans across our region.


In San José del Valle, the Tempul-Gades Aqueduct, 1st century AD, was considered one of the most important construction works in Hispania for its role in transporting water. 75 km of structure linked the Tempul spring with cisterns located in the what is now known as Puertas de Tierra de Cádiz.



Land of borders or El Al-Andalus in La Janda

A historical event marks a before and after in the classification of our cultural heritage and therefore, in the rest of our country: the battle of La Janda or Guadalete. This name is given to the battle that was fought in 711 AD, according to some historians in Barbate or Medina Sidonia and according to others in the vicinity of the Guadalete River, between the Gothic king Rodrigo and the Umayyad Caliphate commanded by Táriq ibn Ziyad. In any case, it marked the end of the Visigoth kingdom and the flowering of the Andalus kingdom.

A deeply urban culture that reshapes our towns with narrow and labyrinthine-like streets between whitewashed houses, military buildings, walls and rock watchtowers found inland. In this newly opened land of borders we see



The Gigonza Castle (BIC) halfway between San José del Valle and Paterna de Rivera can boast being the best preserved fortress in the region. Built on Roman ruins that were perhaps settled looking for medicinal baths from the sulphurous waters of the vicinity.

people coexist in different periods building towers, beacons, bastions and castles.

The Torre de la Morita (BIC) in Benalup-Casas Viejas, built as a Homage Tower between the 12th and 13th centuries, is the last vestige of the Arab defensive fortress that dominated the hill where it was located. The tower was surrounded by four smaller towers of which two are still preserved and can be seen by visitors.

From the old Alcázar de Medina Sidonia we can see the Torre del Homenaje or Torre de Doña Blanca (BIC) as well as three of its main doors; the Arco de la Pastora (BIC), the Arco de Belén (BIC) and the Puerta del Sol (BIC) which together with the walled enclosure gives us an idea of daily life in the Islamic Middle Ages.





On the coastline, El Arco de la Villa (BIC) S. XVI is worth mentioning, forming part of the now disappeared walled enclosure of Conil de la Frontera. The transformed Torre de Guzmán (BIC) in Conil de la Frontera and the Castillo de las Almadrabas castle (BIC) in Zahara de los Atunes trace back their origin to the 13th century, thanks to the concession of the almadrabas for the fishing of tuna from King Sancho IV to Guzmán el Bueno for his courageous defense of the Plaza de Tarifa. The castle served three key roles; fighting piracy, as a residential palace and as a factory where the tuna was salted and prepared.

Andalusi culture, affected the way of organizing nature's most precious asset, water. Public fountains, toilets, tanks and urban and irrigation pipes were built. From that time we conserve numerous structures, for example the great fountain in Medina Sidonia and the Enmedio fountain in Alcalá de los Gazules.



The Castle of Alcalá de los Gazules, (BIC) S. XII and S. XIII, crowning the villa, belongs to the Almohad military style of construction and it was blown up by the French in Spanish War of Independence. The Torre del Homenaje, recently restored, is a historical research centre for the complex it represents.



Watchtowers

The orography of our terrain, exposed to the coastline, gave way to a series of watchtower constructions , built with an observational and defensive soul: the beacons dotted along the coast. Built and renovated during the course of different historical periods and found in different states of conservation, they dot the entire coast, printing a fantastic and romantic landscape..

The towers that dot the shoreline, from Conil de la Frontera to Barbate, which are denominated as BIC, were born with the intention of looking out at the horizon. Watchtowers like Guzmán, Castilnovo, Trafalgar, Meca and Tagus, to name but a few. They invite you to imagine the multicoloured flags that flew in the wind and the fires that were lit to warn of danger, Berber raids, or to fish tuna.





Rise of Christianity

The Modern Age in Spain, associated with the colonisation of America and the surrender of the Nasrid kingdom in 1492 or the subsequent expulsion of the Jews, imposed the submission of the community to a single religious practice. The staggered expulsion of the Moors, which ended in 1614, strengthened this new formula. From here until the beginning of the Contemporary Age, we have preserved diverse cultural heritage.



*Iglesia Santa María la Mayor
La Coronada Church (BIC)
in Medina Sidonia, a Gothic
Renaissance temple from
the 16th century built in
part on the old mosque.
Its altarpiece is a relic and
took 31 years to finish.*



*Hermitage-Sanctuary of
Our Lady of the Saints,
14th century, in Alcalá
de los Gazules, features
simple architecture
and was renovated to
the current layout from
the 18th century.*



The old Monastery of San José del Cuervo (BIC) between Benalup- Casas Viejas and Medina Sidonia from the 18th century, conceived as a monastic residence for the Discalced Carmelites and also used as an inn. The site, close to the Celemín river and found inside the Los Alcornocales National Park, is one of those that takes your breath away.



The Ermita del Mimbral in San José del Valle, S. XVI and S. XVII, found today in a state of ruin and located within the Guadalcaçín reservoir, can only be visited during the dry season. It holds a grave from the Spanish Civil War denominated as Recovery of Historical Memory.

Traces of La Janda's past have ensured that three of our historic centers are registered as Assets of Cultural Interest: Medina Sidonia, Alcalá de los Gazules and Conil de la Frontera.



Industrial heritage

A wealth of industrial heritage linked to a set of remains that have a social, technological, architectural and historical value are reflected in a multitude of buildings, machinery, workshops, factories, furnaces, oil mills, water troughs, waterwheels found in La Janda.

Las Chancas de Conil de la Frontera and Zahara de los Atunes, both denominated as BIC are worth mentioning and were sites in permanent transformation from the 16th to the 18th centuries. These structures were built as a warehouse for boats, fishing tools and processing of fish in general and tuna in particular, and are closely linked to the economic development of La Janda.

The Roman Deposits de la Salada in Alcalá de los Gazules from the 2nd century BC have withstood the passage of time although the protective nymph of the place, the fountain (nymphaeum), is now missing.





HISTORY TO MAKE YOUR IMAGINATION RUN WILD

Intangible heritage is knowledge that we find rooted in everyday life including oral tradition, rituals, social uses, knowledge and techniques linked to traditional crafts. Practices linked to the nature of our environment and to the universe.


La Almadraba or La Levantá

Watch out...! They are already here! Eeeeeh....! To the west!

There are loads of them! Eeeeeh...! - Cornelio the lookout shouted, calculating a leaden shadow advancing in the sea - Beat the drums! To the ready!

Get them! -With cloques, harpoons and spears, impatient on the shore, the men excited about the arrival of a set of tuna- Let the seine out! And shoot! Pull the ropes! Whatever you do, don't let go! -excited, frenzied, confused, flags flying in boats and watchtowers and the masses of tuna staining the Atlantic shore red.

An energetic fight. A spectacle most don't know about.



One spring after another the ritual of the almadrabas catch by La Janda's men, is repeated. Today this ancient fishing gear turned into a Buche trap, with a massive labyrinth of nets for the tuna set up in "La levante".

It was the old cataching technique used by the Phoenicians, Punics, Romans, Arabs and Christians. Each village battled in the same, dealing with the same giant silver fish. So much so that Cornelio, the Roman watchman, transmuted, as Cervantes tells us in his novel La Ilustre Fregona, into Carriazo, a virtuous rogue graduated as an expert catcher. Don't call yourselves rogues if you haven't survived two courses at the tuna fishing academy.



THE ALCORNOCALES

Cork

A task that requires extreme patience, a tree that is stripped every nine years once it is forty and only when the sap runs through its veins. Respect for the natural cycle. Magical balance of corks carried by beasts through the forest. Effort and expertise. Here there is no calendar, here time is kept using local knowledge.

Bellowing

The silence that reigns in our Alcornocales Natural Park is filled with the bellowing of the deer in heat when the summer ends. A beautiful spectacle that autumn offers us in the meadows and forests. The population of these majestic animals in our territory is approximately 35,000 specimens. Come and enjoy a stunning show where the deer, as we call them around here, battle in a relentless fight to mate and protect the females, and thus protect their offspring.

Corking: Peeling cork from the trees

Clack, clack... clack, clack... the rhythmic pounding of the axes stripping the *Quercus suber*, the cork oak. Harmonies interspersed with mule hooves.

Cork, that beautiful tree, was used by ancient peoples as a stopper for amphorae, funeral urns or floats. But it was the wine and its precise stopper, at the end of the 17th century that made it stand out, generating forestry economy and the transmission of a work where the machine barely replaces the hand of man.

Expert teams that know how to work in our rugged terrain have been an ally in the maintenance of our intangible heritage. The foreman, the axes, the harvesters, water carriers, splitters, the weighers and the prompter, the muleteers and mules, the trainees ..., all, in summer time, toil in hard work due to the high temperatures of our "Mediterranean jungle "

Flamenco

Do you know the tarantula dance? Our elders in Paterna de Rivera still remember Vigilia and Moreno, paternal guitarists who back in the 30's intervened as a duo so as not to tire in an archaic ceremonial; they played for hours so that the person affected by the bite of a tarantula would dance until exhaustion, in order to expel the poison through sweat, and thus achieve its cure.

Paterna de Rivera, with a rich oral tradition, has distinguished itself in flamenco singing for being the cradle of La Petenera, that group of dark lyrics and slow manners. For some, its musical form is related to the seventeenth century zarabanda and for all the others, its origin is associated with a mysterious woman, a female juncal, a dark feeling that comes to life through native song of the place, La Petenera, and who lived at the end of the 18th century.

The Cante por Peteneras contest that has been held for almost 50 years is a reference. There are many cantaoras and cantaores who have cultivated this beautiful song, El Perro de Paterna, Niño de la Cava, Medina el viejo, La Niña de los Peines and even La Argentinita recorded with García Lorca his particular tribute to La Petenera with lyrics from the poetry collection Poema del cante jondo.

La Janda hides in its corners the influence of the songs of Los Puertos. Flamenco is cultivated and loved. Who knows if the "Puellae Gaditanae", expert dancers from Cádiz in Roman times, also left for other ports from here?



Braiding the grass

When it comes to ethnographic heritage, even today the people of Janda hold onto this knowledge, vestiges of the traditional use of the dense vegetation of the wetlands; bayuncos, cattails and castanet straw that germinate at the beginning of spring rising to the sky. The harvest in July and August is transformed into the making of seats for chairs, baskets and other industries, the bayunco for packaging of wine bottles and straw castanets to make huts and roofs of farmhouses.

And the domillo, that deep wooden casserole pot that isn't ever found missing from kitchens, even today. In them exquisite simplicity is intimately related to scarcity, to past famines that incited the imagination and that with simple ingredients became authentic delicacies. Even today, locals give the gift of these pots to newly wed couples.





