

SCRIPT OF THE ROUTE - ORITO

MP3 PROJECT – AUDIO TRACKS

ROUTE OF ORITO. 0 INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Orito, hamlet of Monforte del Cid. This system using the audio tracks will help you enjoy our town when you visit. Each track number will provide you with information on a particular area or resource. To make the most of the route we recommend getting the brochure *Red de Rutas de Monforte del Cid* (Route Network of Monforte del Cid), which can be obtained from the Tourist Information Centre or downloaded from the website www.monfortedelcid.es

ROUTE OF ORITO. 1 CHAPEL OF THE APPARITION

Our route starts on the road between Monforte and Orito, along a newly created *via crucis* (Way of the Cross) that culminates at the Square of the Sanctuary. Orito is a hamlet in the municipality of Monforte del Cid, only 3.5 km from the town. It is a place of pilgrimage due to the great devotion towards San Pascual Bailón and the Virgin of Orito. This place in the Middle Vinalopó region has always been known for its peace and tranquility, as well as being the traditional summer destination for the people of Monforte and the surrounding areas.

Located in the Avenida de San Pascual, the chapel was built in the seventeenth century to commemorate the miracle of the apparition of the Blessed Sacrament to San Pascual, who was then still a shepherd.

In the surrounding area a ceramic reproduction of the miracle can be seen with the following inscription: "Here, San Pascual with his flock, heard the convent bell ringing for Mass, and while devoutly kneeling towards the Sanctuary, the consecrated body of Jesus appeared to reward his adoring love."

From here, during the *Romería* (Pilgrimage) and *Feria* (Fair) of San Pascual Bailón, on the seventeenth of May, the Saint's image is moved to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Orito and San Pascual, and the day is celebrated with a visit to the Saint's Cave. In 2011 the fiestas were declared "Fiestas of Provincial Tourist Interest of the Region of Valencia" due to its historical interest. It was in fact in 1715 when San Pascual was appointed patron of Monforte and the festive day was established as the 17th of May.

Continuing along the Avenida San Pascual Bailón in the direction to Orito, we pass the old spa. The quality of its mineral waters was recognised and awarded at several medical conferences up to the mid-twentieth century. But disinterest and neglect has deprived us of something that for a long time benefited many people with dermatological problems. Currently steps are being taken for its rehabilitation.

We continue our visit to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of the Virgin of Orito and San Pascual along the Avenida de San Pascual Bailón. Once there, press number 2.

ROUTE OF ORITO. 2 SANCTUARY OF OUR LADY OF THE VIRGIN OF ORITO AND SAN PASCUAL

We arrive at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Orito and San Pascual, built on the ruins of the Chapel of the Nativity, where in 1555 the tiny image of the Virgin of Orito (measuring only 42 millimeters) was discovered. The current church was built in 1600 but by 1562 the first Franciscans arrived with the intention of founding the convent. The following year, the humble shepherd, now venerated as San Pascual Bailón, entered the convent as a friar. The convent building work was completed in 1607. In the Sanctuary you can see the image of the Virgin, various paintings of high pictorial interest, as well as a reproduction *in situ* of the cell in which San Pascual lived. In the center of the nave of the convent there is a staircase that leads to the burial crypt for monks and people of distinguished families.

The convent went through two bad moments. One was the *Confiscations of Mendizábal* and the other was the *leónica* union of the three Franciscan branches. Due to this the Franciscans left the convent and it remained empty until the arrival of the Capuchins, who in 1898 asked to occupy the convent of Orito as it was abandoned.

The Virgin of Orito had to be moved twice. The first time was between 1931 and 1936 due to a fire at the convent when the image was taken to the Civil Guard barracks in Novelda. The second occasion was in 1936 at the outbreak of the Civil War. This time the image was saved inside the leg of a table by the family of D. Cresencio Antolín, resident of Barcelona, until the 10th of October, 1939.

We leave the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Orito and San Pascual and go down the stairs of the forecourt towards the Parque de la Feria and Sundial. Once there, press number three.

ROUTE OF ORITO. 3 PARQUE DE LA FERIA AND THE SUNDIAL

The newly built Parque de la Feria is a space for enjoyment and culture where a gigantic sundial attracts your attention. It is the area where the Feria of San Pascual takes place during the celebration of the day of San Pascual, on the 17th of May. On the occasion of the Romería a very important fair is celebrated, whose antiquity dates back to the seventeenth century. Offering a wide variety of attractions, we can find a large market featuring handicrafts such as the traditional shepherd's staff and culinary wares with typical products of Monforte, like aniseed liqueurs.

Also worth mentioning are the festivities in honor of the Virgin of Orito, held in September. With quite an ancient origin, the fair used to take place in the Plaza del Parador, as the image was transferred to Monforte for the celebrations. This tradition disappeared in the early twentieth century, but now the residents of the hamlet again organise the festivities with popular dances, various leisure activities and traditional processions.

Going around the convent we arrive at the Holy Fountain or Fuente de San Pascual. Once there, press number four.

ROUTE OF ORITO. 4 THE HOLY FOUNTAIN OR FOUNTAIN OF SAN PASCUAL

La Fuente Santa or Fuente de San Pascual is, without doubt, the best documented site on the route. In 1552 it is highlighted in the documents that gave rise to the original Chapel of the Nativity. It was here where it was decided the foundation of Orito that has survived to present times. Popular devotion attributes the spring to a miracle of San Pascual.

Today we can find in the forecourt of the fountain a playground and a sculpture that represents San Pascual.

From here, and ascending into the mountains along the Avenida de la Cueva, we arrive at the Cave of San Pascual, located in the foothills of the Sierra de la Aguilas. This is undoubtedly the most popular place of devotion to the saint.

The cave is accessible by car, but the traditional way is by foot up the steep hill that gives access to the cave. From here you can contemplate a beautiful panoramic view of the Valley of the Medio Vinalopó and the Alicante coast from two viewpoints; one facing Alicante and the other to the Vinalopó Valley, where you can see the various mountain ranges and towns identified from informative ceramic panels.

Once you have ascended to the Cave of San Pascual, press number five.

ROUTE OF ORITO. 5 CAVE OF SAN PASCUAL

The Cave of San Pascual has its origin as a place of prayer. Before this it had served as a refuge for shepherds in inclement weather. It was after the saint's beatification when it took the name of "San Pascual's Cave". Since then, it is visited throughout the year, but especially, every May 17 when the pilgrimage to the Saint is celebrated by thousands of pilgrims who place their offerings for favours received. On the way up to the cave there are several religious ceramic murals that narrate the praise and worship to San Pascual.

A monument to San Pascual was erected in 1996 by popular subscription, near the cave which reproduces the image of the Saint situated inside the cave. The three metre, five ton monument to San Pascual is carved in limestone and placed on a three metre concrete pedestal. In its vicinity can be seen another pedestal with the Cross of Santiago (since the footpath from Alicante to Santiago de Compostela passes by).

On the way up to the Sierra de San Pascual, next to the road, there is a municipal camping area, which has everything the visitor needs to spend a few days of rest and relaxation. Whether hiking or just strolling to the cave of the Saint you can see a magnificent view of the valley. For more information about using the facilities of the camping area you can contact the Town Hall of Monforte del Cid via the phone number 96 562 00 25.

Also on the way up to the cave, just before reaching it, we find the Recreational Area, equipped with tables and benches and a children's playground, perfect for enjoying the

environment that the Cave of San Pascual provides. There is no need for authorisation to use and enjoy this area.

Finally, next to the Church of Our Lady of Orito there is the Orito Center of Interpretation, which is open during the festivity of San Pascual (May 17) and for arranged visits. If you would like more information on visiting this center, press number six.

We hope you enjoy the visit to this unique area and will visit us again soon.

ROUTE OF ORITO. 6 ORITO CENTER OF INTERPRETATION

The Orito Center of Interpretation is a place where visitors are provided with information about the area through panels and texts. You can learn about historical and heritage resources, its festivities, the cultivation of bagged table grapes with the Vinalopo denomination of origin, and medicinal waters, all with the objective of facilitating an understanding of the origins of this hamlet of Monforte.

It is open to the public during the weekend closest to the festival of San Pascual, held each year on the 17th of May. Visits can be arranged for organized groups by previous request to the Tourist Information Centre of Monforte del Cid, in person at the office located at the town hall of Monforte del Cid (Plaza España, 1), or via the phone number 96 562 64 17.

For more information please consult the website: www.monfortedelcid.es

Translated by Jacoba Urgell and Peter Lobley