

SCRIPT OF THE ROUTE - MONFORTE DEL CID

MP3 PROJECT – AUDIO TRACKS

ROUTE OF MONFORTE DEL CID. 0 INTRODUCTION

Welcome to 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 MONFORTE DEL CID. 1 THE TOWN HALL

Monforte is located in the region of the Middle Vinalopó, in the province of Alicante, just 20 km from the capital of the province. The area of the municipality reaches 79.23 square meters and maintains a population of over 8,000.

Its original name was Nompot, and then became Monfort (fortified mountain). In the eighteenth century with the arrival of the Bourbons, Castilian (Spanish) became the official language, so Monfort becomes Monforte. And it will be in 1916 when "El Cid" is added to distinguish it from other Spanish towns with the same name. The new term was chosen by popular acclaim and taken from the mountain of the same name in the vicinity.

We are in the Town Hall Square, the central point of the Christian area. The town hall was originally a commercial market warehouse, typical of the fourteenth century Mediterranean area. It still conserves the original façade with three arches in ashlar masonry from the sixteenth century. Today this building houses the town hall, built in 1703. The Monforte Municipal Shield stands out on the façade which dates back to the fourteenth century with the golden fleece collar granted by Philip V in 1706, during the war of succession, along with the title of Royal, Loyal and Faithful Village.

We continue our visit to the Square of San Pascual along the street to the left of the steps. Once there, press number 2.

ROUTE OF MONFORTE DEL CID. 2 SAINT PASCUAL 'S CHAPEL

We are in the Square of San Pascual, named after the chapel that we can find here with the same name as the square.

The hermitage of San Pascual dates from the eighteenth century and was built over the house where the Saint lived in the municipality while being a shepherd, whose history is reflected in a tile on the façade. The house was donated by the Escorcía family in 1721 to the village of Monforte with the objective of building a chapel and a hospital in honor of the saint.

One thing to note is that in the whole area of the old town centre, the facades of the houses retain religious tiling of great artistic value of the *Manises* School, belonging to the XVIII-XX centuries. These form a total set of 65 pieces, with the most recurrent theme being San Pascual and the *Purísima*. This predominance of tiles is due to the time of the reconquest, when Christians imposed the Catholic religion on the inhabitants of the town, christianising the population and making clear that the Christian religion was the one for the municipality.

We continue our visit approaching the arch we can see at the end of the square. Once there, press number three.

ROUTE OF MONFORTE DEL CID. 3 THE MORERIA OR MOORISH ARCH

The Morería Arch is integrated within the old town centre of Monforte del Cid and housed the entrance to the Old Moorish quarter, separating it from the Christian quarter. The Morería was established in 1459 at the initiative of King Alfonso V, and received a large number of Muslim settlers fleeing from the pressure of noblemen. The arch was restored in 2004. The place is also popularly known as "la cochera del curica" (the priest's garage) because in the eighteenth century the Bishop Juan Elías Gómez de Teherán established here his episcopal residence. Gómez de Teherán had many links with the municipality of Monforte del Cid, where he died in 1758, so much so that his desire was that both his will and two parts of his body, his tongue and entrails, were to remain in the town and are preserved in the Church of Our Lady of the Snow (Iglesia de Ntra. Sra. de las Nieves).

We invite you to walk the streets, where you can observe the traditional buildings with ground and first floors; streets such as La Morería, La Cruz or Hernán Cortés will take you back to the time when time passed slowly, where you will find a panel painting of the image of Christ or where you can see how the streets were formerly named with commemorative tiles.

We continue our tour through the old town to the Church of Our Lady of the Snow. Once there, press number 4.

ROUTE OF MONFORTE DEL CID. 4 IGLESIA DE NTRA. SRA. DE LAS NIEVES (CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF THE SNOW)

From the courtyard of the Church of Our Lady of the Snow you can see how our town forms part of the valley carved out by the river Vinalopó, surrounded by mountains: the Sierra del Cid, the confluence of the municipal districts of Castalla, Petrer and Monforte del Cid, the Sierra de las Aguilas, which separates us from the municipal districts of Agost and Alicante, the Pedrera and the Tabayá, serving as a separation with the municipality of the neighboring city of Elche.

The church is built on a hill, site of the old mosque or castle, and was declared a site of cultural interest. Standing out is its bell tower, dating back to the XIV-XVI centuries, being part of the previous construction. The Church has its origin between 1510 and 1517, but received several modifications to its original construction, especially in the

eighteenth century. The first modification was made between 1710 and 1712, affecting the remodeling of the body of the nave where the main entrance is now. Towards 1777 the sacristy, the presbytery and the gates are finished, as well as the two domes of the crossing and the *camarín* of the Immaculate Conception. The High Altar is of note, with an image of Nuestra Señora de las Nieves in the background, and two side reliefs depicting The Annunciation and Visitation by the sculptor Jose Puçol. The Purísima Chapel is of interest too, where the Patroness of Monforte del Cid is found, who on the day of her festival, coinciding with the festival of Moors and Christians, is adorned with flowers forming a beautiful picture.

In this church, on the ninth of January 1713, the Spanish wise man Jorge Juan y Santacilia was baptised, born on January 5 of that year, and descendent of two illustrious families. His father, Don Bernado Juan y Canicia, from who he was orphaned at the age of three, was from Alicante, and his mother, Doña Violante Santacilia y Soler, belonged to a prominent family in Elche. On the death of his parents, his paternal uncles became the guardians of the young Jorge Juan. This was of great importance as they provided him with an education consistent with their lineage. In 1726, following a review of "purity of blood" (lineage test required for admission to religious orders) he was accepted for membership to the Order of St. John of Jerusalem (Order of Malta), becoming page of the Grand Master Don Antonio Manuel Villena. It is worth mentioning what the record states about Jorge Juan on his origin, "that I come from the University of Monforte". In 1734 he formed part of the Franco-Spanish expedition with the mission of measuring the length of a degree of a meridian arc near Ecuador, in the Viceroyalty of Peru, along with another celebrated scientist and marine scientist, Antonio de Ulloa. In 1749 he travelled to London on a secret mission to obtain information on the British naval construction methods of shipbuilding, and on his return in 1750 he was appointed Captain of Navío. He died on the 21st of June 1773 in Madrid, at the age of 60, and was buried on the 22nd at the Church of San Martín. Today his body rests in the Pantheon of Illustrious Sailors of San Fernando, Cádiz.

We continue our tour through the old town to reach Ibero, the History Museum of the town of Monforte del Cid. Once there, press number five.

ROUTE OF MONFORTE DEL CID. 5 IBERO, HISTORY MUSEUM

The privileged location of Monforte del Cid, being at a crossroads and part of the Vinalopó natural corridor linking the Mediterranean coast with the Castilian plateau, is what has marked its antiquity. This is confirmed by the remains of ancient civilizations, like Iberian or Roman found in the municipality.

The remnants of these civilizations can be found in Ibero, the History Museum of the town, situated in the house of the former mayor of the nineteenth century, Don Bonifacio Amorós, giving name to the square.

On the ground and first floors we can find a large quantity of relevant materials from two Roman villas, one from the rural area known as Agualeja or Waleja, located on the left bank of the river Vinalopó, and the other from the rural area of Los Baños, by the access road to the town from Aspe. These are large country houses inhabited between I and V century AD, whose owners, retired Roman centurions, exploited the fertile

terraces of the river Vinalopó. Another relevant piece we can see is a funerary inscription that dates from the first century AD, which refers to a 28 year old woman, with a name of Greek origin who was buried in a necropolis next to the villas that mark the course of the river. But undoubtedly the most representative exhibits of the town are two Iberian sculptures that were found in February 1974 and recently, in November 2006, on the Camino del Río. They are zoomorphic figures of sandstone carved in the round, representing a bull resting on its haunches. The original location of these sculptural pieces would occupy the top section of a pillar-stele style burial monument, built around the year 500 BC, so that we have here the remains of a large necropolis in the southern zone.

On the second floor, there is a room dedicated to the discoverer of the Iberian bull, Ginés Ruíz Nicolás, where temporary and itinerant exhibitions are located.

We invite you to find out!

After the visit of the Ibero and depending on the route you want to follow you need to press the relevant number. If you are visiting the Chapel of San Roque, press number six. If you visit the Parque de la Cruz, press number seven. If you visit the Glorieta, press number eight.

ROUTE OF MONFORTE DEL CID. 6 CHAPEL OF SAN ROQUE

According to popular tradition the chapel of San Roque was founded around 1510, the year of the Great Plague that afflicted so much of Spain. By a special and solemn vote from the town hall, the image of the Glorious Saint Sebastian the Martyr was added in 1648, also a powerful *Advocate of the plague*. Since then, with great popular religious devotion from neighborhood residents and the people of Monforte, the Fiestas of San Roque are celebrated, culminating on the day of the Saint, the 16th of August. The hermitage of San Roque was rehabilitated in 2005.

The chapel is located on one of the hills on which the town rests, the two most important being the Church and this Chapel of San Roque, respectively.

Very near this chapel, at the beginning of the Avenida de la Constitución, during the fiestas of the Moors and Christians, held in honor of the *Purísima* from 5 to December 9, *The Embassies* are held. The origin of these festivities is found in the Middle Ages but the Board of the *Purísima* was granted in 1729, the Moors and Christians being celebrated since the 2nd half of the eighteenth century in her honor. It should be noted the great number of participants, both men and women participate equally since the early twentieth century. The acts which stand out are the General Parade of *Comparsas*, the Offering to the Patroness and the Embassies. The Fiestas of Moors and Christians of Monforte del Cid are declared as Fiestas of Provincial Tourist Interest.

Depending on the route you want to continue you must press the relevant number. If you visit the Parque de la Cruz, press number seven. If you are visiting the Glorieta, press number eight.

ROUTE OF MONFORTE DEL CID. 7 PARQUE DE LA CRUZ

Stone crosses, symbols of faith or of conquest, were introduced by the romans to mark the beginning of their roads or highways, being used by King James I as a sign of conquest. This cross, originally located at one of the entrances to the town, stood at a crossroads, so that the location would respond to the indication of the town boundaries. Today it stands in the middle of a park of the same name, in order to incorporate this heritage into the urban area because its function as a boundary marker has disappeared. Another cross to be found in the town, although its origin is not a boundary marker, is located in Calle La Cruz, Monforte's emblematic street because since 1766 it has received this denomination even though there are few historical references to it. In this respect we can say that the denomination of this street has remained unchanged over time, appearing as such since the eighteenth century even though during the Second Republic, specifically in the year 1933, the name of the street was changed from La Cruz to the teachers' names D. Joaquín and D. Pascual Orozco Sánchez, although this denomination did not last long.

Depending on the route you want to continue you need to press the relevant number. If you are visiting the Ermita de San Roque, press number six. If you are visiting the Glorieta, press number eight.

ROUTE OF MONFORTE DEL CID. 8 THE GLORIETA

We are in the Glorieta, central point of the municipality and a place where you can walk, play and enjoy pleasant temperatures all year round. Having an average temperature of 20c along with average rainfall, Monforte enjoys an excellent microclimate for the development of its main crop, bagged table grapes with Vinalopo denomination of origin.

With the remodeling of the Parque de la Glorieta, a washing area and a watering trough were installed with slabs from the eighteenth century recovered from the "Vuelta de la Mina", recreating the one that was located there and that supplied water to the population, as well as serving as laundry room to the women of Monforte, which can be seen on one of its sides.

Monforte del Cid also has an *Azud* (small dam) named "del Vinalopó", fruit of its Arabic past. The dam is for irrigation, an irrigation system that created fertile orchards. It is located on the river Vinalopó and served to dam the water from the river to be used for marginal irrigation, taking advantage of rising water levels caused by rain.

We invite you to enjoy our local products such as bagged table grapes with denomination of origin Vinalopó, aniseed spirits and liqueurs, our typical pastries, succulent dishes such as paella rice with rabbit and snails or monforte meatballs.

Depending on the route you want to continue you need to press the relevant number. If you are visiting the Chapel of San Roque, press number six. If you visit the Parque de la Cruz, press number seven.

Translated by Jacoba Urgell and Peter Loblely