



## La Vila Joiosa, a sea for encounters

ROUTE SP 3

### Presentation of the route

This route runs through the streets of La Vila Joiosa —capital of the comarca (small region) of La Marina Baixa in Alicante— known by its inhabitants simply as La Vila.

The Marina Baixa is a coastal region isolated by mountains and ravines, a space that has determined the relationships between the inhabitants of La Vila Joiosa and their environment. Contact by land was very limited until the 19th century; however, a great door remained open: the sea.

A sea which made it possible for the great civilizations to arrive, brought luxury objects, took many people away in search of fortune, and presented us with the sweetest songs from overseas.

This tour shows us images associated with the history, culture, art, traditions or botany of La Vila Joiosa where the sea stands out as a constant reference.

The total length route is nearly 7,5 km, with a 48-meter difference in level. The estimated duration of the route is five hours, with a break in the middle to sample the gastronomy. There are proposals for visits which depend on your time and the availability of the place in questions. The estimate corresponds to the time required to do the walk in a relaxed way, to read the information and to enjoy the route with all five senses.


- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrngOYNgQO4>
- <http://villajoyosa.com/museo/historia.php?idioma=Castellano>




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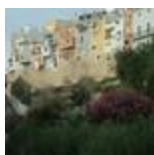
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Waypoint	La Creueta
	<p>We start from the Tram station or La Creueta car park and head towards the city centre. Creueta Square takes its name from a cross that marked a "bivium" or a Roman crossroads and the boundary of the actual Roman city of Allon 2,000 years ago. At that time, the Barranco del Censal to the east and the Amadorio River to the west made the access to the village by land very difficult. The Romans entered through the old Kardo Maximus, the main north-south street leading to the main square of Allon you are walking along now.</p>

Waypoint	Market
	<p>Here was the town's first covered market, later replaced by the current one after 50 years. Among all the stalls especially stands out the one that sells "salazones", i.e. fish preserved in salt. The Licinia Law obliged the Romans to eat salted fish on certain days of the year, which had to do with the ban on eating meat that was imposed during Christian Lent in the Middle Ages. In addition to the traditional types of fish used for salting, such as tuna, conger eel, dogfish or blue whiting, cod was introduced from Iceland and Newfoundland in the 16th century. More than a century ago, the ownership of tuna fishing facilities —known as "almadrabas"— ceased to be a monopoly of the nobility. Some "vileros" [Villajoyosa-born people] bought the main fisheries on the Spanish Mediterranean coast and developed the salted fish industry. As the salted fish industry uses every part of the fish, the range of products is wide. One of the most delicious and expensive products is "mojama", made from the back of the tuna; the salted entrails are known as "budellet"; and the skin of the cod, marketed as rinds, is very affordable. The market canteen will be happy to cook the fresh products that the customer has bought at the stalls when requested.</p>

Bridge	Bridge over the Amadorio River
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The end of isolation by land began with the construction of the bridge over the Amadorio River —one of the three large bridges that were built in the second half of the 19th century on the new route of the Alicante-Valencia road. The arrival of the railway in 1914 completed the land access and was an important source of economic growth for the city. The bridge that was built for the train to cross it can be seen on the north. With the end of the Roman era, the sea became dangerous due to the increased piracy. To protect itself from this threat, La Vila quickly surrounded itself with a defensive wall. On the left river bank stand ca. 200 m of the west part of the Renaissance wall built from 1550 onwards. The houses built on top of the fortification were erected when the pirate attacks decreased and the wall ceased to have any defensive use.

### Waypoint

### Plaza de la Generalitat



"Allon" was one of the four Roman cities in the province of Alicante. The main square of Allon, the Roman forum, was located here 2,000 years ago. After the Romans left, Allon remained abandoned for almost 800 years and its name fell into oblivion. The Muslims did not occupy the coastal lands of La Marina Baja region for fear of pirate attacks. 1244 marked the establishment of the border between the Kingdom of Valencia and the Kingdom of Murcia in the mountains which stand south of La Vila Joiosa. The border area was desert-like, mostly inhospitable for the creation of new towns and surrounded by Muslim villages. This border was reinforced in 1301 with a permanent settlement of Christians on the same hill where Iberians and Romans had lived centuries before. In order to persuade the new dwellers to settle here, the place was given an attractive name "Vilajoiosa", that is to say, happy village.

### Waypoint

### Plaza Castelar



Town design was based on a grid plan —as regular as possible— typical of the new Valencian towns. The buildings were made of masonry, i.e. of stones held together with lime mortar, sand and water. The outer walls were covered with natural colours such as ochre or limonite; doors and windows were framed with lime to prevent insects from entering the house. The houses of farmers and fishermen are distinguished by being narrow and with several floors, the ground floor serving as a warehouse for working tools: nets, oars, ropes, to quote but a few. Pirates from the Nasrid Kingdom of Granada attacked La Vila Joiosa in 1304, before the walls were completed. 200 inhabitants, almost half the population, were made prisoners. The captives, who were taken to the pirate galleys, could be

rescued by their relatives if a ransom was paid. Otherwise, the captives travelled as slaves to Algiers and other places in North Africa.

**Religious site**

**Church Square**



1543 witnessed the destruction of the first church, the medieval walls and a large part of the town by Berber pirates. New walls that integrated the church as part of the defensive structure were built a few years later. The belfry served as a watch tower, the bell toll being used to warn the locals of any potential danger. When the alarm was sounded, children, the elderly and the sick took refuge in the church. The other villagers defended the town from the wall. This Church of "Nuestra Señora de la Asuncion" founded an association of fishermen under the protection of "Santiago el Mayor" in 1704. The fishermen paid a tax for the maintenance of this church in exchange for permission to work on holidays.

**Religious site**

**Chapel of Santa Marta**

The Communion Chapel on the right of the central nave of the church is known as "Capilla de Santa Marta". In July 1538, a Berber fleet which had been sighted near the town's coastline changed its course because of the presence of Christian ships. However, in the early hours of July 29th, the pirates returned and attacked from land and sea with stone rocks of 40kg each. Within the walls, the barely 1,000 residents, supported by 300 harquebusiers and crossbowmen from the nearby villages, resisted 1,500 pirates. The siege lasted until the next morning, when the attackers withdrew after losing many men and running out of ammunition. According to the popular version —narrated in the box on the right— Santa Marta, seeing the danger, appeared on the wall and unleashed such a storm that the pirates fled in fear. The people from La Vila named Santa Marta as the town's patron saint to express their gratitude for her help, and a chapel was dedicated to her at the place where she had appeared. The original oratory was destroyed when the French army blew up the gates and a part of the wall in 1708. The current chapel was built thirty years later. The only remaining original decoration is the statue of the saint. Martha of Bethany is the patron saint of the hotel industry, as well as of the home and of housewives.

**Monument**

**Town Hall and Hospital**





Next to the Town Hall entrance you can see an old coat of arms with the image of Santa Marta. It shows Santa Marta stepping on the "Tarasca", a monstrous dragon that represents evil, and by extension the Berber corsairs. Like the coat of arms, Town Hall arched passage was built in 1703. From the staircase under the Town Hall arches can be seen the old hospital, today's Casa de la Juventud [Youth House] This hospital offered treatment to sick pilgrims arriving by sea from Italy to start doing the "Camino de Santiago" [Road to Santiago].

Waypoint	Castle Square
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The castle from which the towers of the region were controlled and integrated into the coastal defence system designed by order of Felipe II in the 16th century stood in this square. At that time, the entire horizon was visible from the castle, which made it easier to see enemy ships and communicate with the neighbouring towers by means of visual or sound signals. The castle was located outside the walled enclosure, surrounded by a moat and placed by the river to prevent enemy ships from receiving fresh water supplies. Because of its location on the seafront, the castle was destroyed on numerous occasions. The tactile model represents the town in the 17th century after the construction of the new walls and the polygonal defences or bastions on the south, though before the new Santa Marta chapel and the Town Hall arches were built. The castle became totally unusable after the attack of the French troops who had been fighting against the House of Austria and the rest of Europe to take over the Spanish throne since 1701.

Monument	St. Peter's Square
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"La Fonda" —the harbour where ships would anchor for at least 26 centuries— is within sight from here. Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans brought luxury objects to trade with the native Iberians. These merchants ended up settling on the hill next to the river, as attested by numerous archaeological sites and the Vilamuseu exhibits. The same as today, the old harbours had storage and distribution facilities. The Allon warehouses were located under St. Peter's Square and had large ceramic containers which could hold up to 2,000 litres of wine, oil or grain. The fact that San Pedro was the fishermen's patron saint until the 20th century explains why this square was the most emblematic place in the Arrabal de Poniente, the neighbourhood which hosted all the professions related to the sea —e.g. fishermen, net makers, sailors, shipowners, caulkers and salted fish producers, among others The tradition has it that La Vila houses were

painted to identify them from the sea; the origin of this custom remains unclear, though. Although coloured houses were actually common in coastal towns along the Mediterranean, few of them have been preserved to the present day. Anyhow, this square is the ideal place to enjoy the best known image of La Vila Joiosa: its colourful houses

**Waypoint** **Racó de l'Havana**



The Arrabal de Levante stands on the opposite side of the Costera de la Mar. After its designation as a Villa Real [King's/Royal Town] in 1433, La Vila Joiosa and its port obtained a monopoly on exports from La Marina Baixa. The possibility for all Spanish ports to freely trade with America since 1778 made the economy improve. La Vila became the port of Alcoy —Cadiz and Sevilla had played that role until then. Every day the muleteers travelled across the 52 km that separate Alcoy from La Vila, driving manufactures on the backs of up to 1,000 pack animals, the only transport able to travel on the bridle path. This corner, then known as the "Racó de l'Havana", was the location of the "Casinet de la Marina" and of some pensions/guesthouses where traders with businesses in Cuba and elsewhere in Europe, America or the Philippines met. The sea took cigarette paper and textiles from Alcoy and brought cotton from Louisiana, coal from England or wood from Norway. Exotic products such as cocoa or cinnamon landed in La Vila, together with melodies that became its own, such as Cuban habaneras, which still remain alive in the folklore of La Vila Joiosa. The replacement of wooden ships by iron-made ones and the departure of products from Alcoy through the port of Gandía, added to the loss of colonies, led to the decline both of the anchorage and of La Vila's economy in the late nineteenth century. José M. Esquerdo, the Villajoyosa-born politician to whom the statue pays tribute, claimed the need for a modern port at the Spanish Parliament. Habanera "Maria el Roig":

- <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=696174414113789>

**Monument** **Calle del Pal - Costera de la Mar**



From the tower and following the route of the wall southward, we reach Calle del Pal. El Pal was the long, straight place where nets were woven and repaired. A Berber attack which took place in 1543 resulted in the destruction of La Vila's medieval wall. The profits obtained from manufacturing silk thread permitted to build a new enclosure that comprised the church as a part of the walled structure. During Renaissance, the improvements in artillery made it necessary to design more modern and resistant fortification systems. Since this wall did not incorporate the latest advances in military architecture, it ceased to provide

adequate defence in a few years' time. The lack of money from the Generalitat governments meant that the wall was never restored again during the following centuries. Thanks to this, La Vila Joiosa has preserved a unique example of an early Renaissance wall and is considered one of the best preserved historical centres in the Valencian Region.

### Waypoint

### El Mercantil



From its ship-bow-shaped corner, El Mercantil has always stood out as one of the most emblematic buildings in the last century. Several political parties had their headquarters there. It was a casino and also served as a meeting place for sailors as well as dockworkers and, most importantly, the key projects for this city's development were discussed at El Mercantil, including the construction of a modern port. This is also where the most popular drink in La Vila —nardo — was born. Nardo, made with granulated coffee and absinthe and created in the 1930s, was named after a popular song of the time entitled "Los nardos."

### Monument

### Chalet de Centella



1870 was the year when the Lloret and Llinares families joined forces to sell fresh fish in the inland towns of Alicante. The company prospered and was able to establish companies outside the peninsula in the early 20th century. Their business success enabled the Lloret family to commission this magnificent building to the prestigious Alicante-born architect Juan Vidal. The villa has an outstanding garden with exotic species such as bamboo or monkey-puzzle trees/Araucarias —plants of American origin which the family had in fact brought mainly from the Canary Islands. One of the most striking plants is "Monstera deliciosa", known as Adam's rib, skeleton or giant's hands. Monstera develops very large leaves and a bell-shaped flower with an elongated fruit in the centre.

### Museum

### Vilamuseu







Vilamuseu houses an important collection of archaeological, ethnographic and clothing exhibits, among others. This museum has been internationally recognized as a model of accessibility for all kinds of visitors. If we focus on the civilizations that arrived by sea in ancient times, there are some unique objects that you cannot miss: - The Phoenicians (the first great merchants of the Mediterranean) brought exceptional pieces to La Vila, such as the Egyptian New Year's Canteen or the Poble Nou Gold Necklace. - The rituals linked to wine consumption came with







the Greeks. The Crater of Amazons and the Etruscan bronze sieve are good proof of this. - The Bou Ferrer Wreck is a sunken ship whose cargo belonged to Emperor Nero himself. The lead ingots that it carried must have been destined to the construction of his palace —Domus Aurea— in Rome. The exhibition offers you the chance not only to see original exhibits but also to smell them and touch them. The recovery works began in 2006, and it is currently the largest Roman building under excavation. Accessible toilets, breastfeeding room, changing rooms, touch stations.



Waypoint	La Vila's gastronomy
	<p>Every year, La Vila promotes its star cooking products at various events: Seafood Cuisine, Rice Week, Chocolatísima... Of course, the sea is present in most traditional recipes. Among all the sea-based recipes stands out "caldero vilero", the rice dish that fishermen cooked in their boats using the cheapest fish or those that did not look good for sale. A wide variety of fish species can be used in the caldero, namely: greater amberjack, ray, scorpion fish, monkfish, spider fish... The Saint Peter fish is an ugly but tasty fish that you can easily identify. Jesus told the apostle that the first fish he caught in the sea would have a coin in it. When Peter opened the fish's mouth to take out the coin, his fingers were marked on its skin and the fish has been unable to wipe them off ever since.</p>



Beach	La Basseta de l'Oli
  	<p>This spot is called Basseta de l'Oli because, thanks to the protection of the port, the sea is usually as calm as oil on a plate. Because of this calm, this is the favourite place of families when it comes to enjoying the beach. On June 23rd, children and their families go down to the beach in the evening to make wreaths of oleander. When night falls, the crowns are thrown into the water to pay homage to the sailors who lost their lives at sea. This was traditionally the first day of swimming at the beach, and families asked for children's protection throughout the summer.</p>

Mooring point	The port
 	<p>Few harbours in the Alicante province are protected from all winds. "La Fonda", the anchorage of La Vila, was exposed to south and east winds, but its depth, the quality of sea bottoms and the possibility of having water supply made it suitable for anchoring. The anchorage not only served as a base for fishermen and a stopover for Flemish fleets but also as a port</p>



for Corsican ships, manned by sailors, merchants and shipowners from La Vila. In 1910, Dr. Esquerdo obtained recognition for La Vila as a port of refuge, which entailed the construction of artificial breakwaters. But as the works were slow to begin, Jaume Melases, the elected representative of sailors, insisted on the request when King Alfonso XIII visited La Vila the following year. "Your Majesty, we need you to make us a... mullet", he told him in Spanish. The king was very surprised until he was said that both "port" and "mullet" were translated as "moll" in Catalan; the sailor obviously chose the wrong meaning. Despite starting in 1923, works at the port were not completed until 1936.

Waypoint	The nets
 	<p>The first fishing nets were made of esparto grass, a plant fibre that grows in the arid areas of South-Eastern Spain and Northern Africa. In the early 20th century, motor boats needed stronger nets, and hemp replaced esparto grass. The access to hemp fibre along with the large number of hours that had to be spent in the sun to manufacture it led La Vila to develop the net industry. Trawling is a method of fishing used in the Mediterranean since the 14th century, but it was authorized throughout Spain in 1905, which brought about its expansion into the Atlantic and the Bay of Biscay. During First World War, the ropes made in La Vila reached Belgium and Great Britain, its main international commercial competitors. In the 1920s, La Vila became Spain's first fishing-net-making industry, which employed a third of its population, including men, women and children. However, the drought combined with the lack of work pushed many fishermen and net-makers to migrate. Fishermen from La Vila were the first to command a pair of trawlers in 1927. The boats left from the port of Gijón, and exploited, among others, the fishing grounds of Gran Sol. 85% of the hemp nets used by the Spanish fishing fleet were made in La Vila until 1960, when plastic replaced natural fibres.</p>

Waypoint	Shipbuilding
 	<p>La Vila was authorised to set up shipyards to build boats since its foundation. The experienced caulkers and boatmen who worked at the Royal Shipyards —near the river mouth— built large galleys during the 16th century. Shipbuilding reached its height between 1850 and 1870. The great deforestation of the surrounding land largely came as a result of the need for wood both in La Vila's shipbuilding industry and in that of Cartagena (Murcia province). Instead of breaking a bottle of wine at the launch, the tradition in La Vila consisted in throwing two bucketfuls of water to the bow while saying: "Doesn't she have to sail? Then make sure she</p>

gets used to salt water! La Vila shipbuilders installed shipyards in Uruguay, Buenos Aires and Puerto Rico.

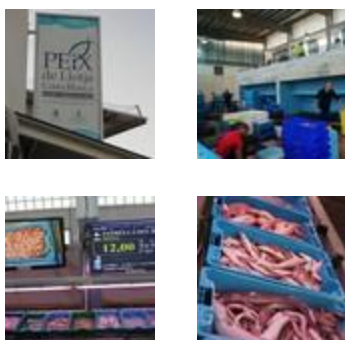
## Waypoint

## Fishing

Fishing has always been a fundamental activity for the inhabitants of Vila Joiosa. The difficult economic conditions of the late 19th and early 20th century forced many workers to move to other coastal regions in Spain, Algeria, Argentina... Currently, the Fishermen's Guild of LaVila Joiosa manages the quality and sales of the fish from the 38 boats belonging to its fleet. Being aware of the delicate situation of the seabed as well as of their responsibility in its conservation, ships have been collecting the waste that falls into their nets and taking it ashore for recycling since 2015.

## Waypoint

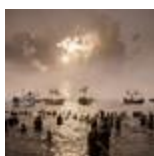
## Fishermen's guild



Two "pósitos" or groups that protected fishermen's interests already existed in the 17th century. Fish selling is restricted to professionals and the facilities are not suited to receive visitors. However, it is worth seeing the atmosphere that is generated with the arrival of boats. The fishermen's guild supplies fish directly to restaurants in Romania, France, Italy or the Netherlands.

## Waypoint

## The Landing



The Moors and Christians Festival commemorates the attack by Berber pirates which took place on 29 July 1538, when Santa Marta protected the town. In addition to the traditional parades of the Moorish and Christian sides, the central act in these festivities is the Landing —declared of International Tourist Interest. On the night of July 28, the boats of Moorish companies are filled with attackers who land on the shore this beach to try to defeat the Christian companies. Following the tradition, the Christians succeed in defeating their enemies with the help provided by the saint. The sound of arquebus shots and the smell of gunpowder are constant until dawn. The Moors and Christians festivities in Villajoyosa have been documented since 1753.

## Monument

## La Barbera dels Aragonés



This sixteenth-century country house was one of the properties owned by the Aragonés family, one of La Vila's most influential and wealthiest families. The sea could be seen from its windows until the 20th century, which explains the presence of numerous drawings of boats engraved on the walls. The tower of this house served to control the surrounding land and sea, which made it possible to warn, first about pirate attacks and then about the arrival of bandits.

## Museum

## The chocolate industry



Many American products arrived in Alicante through French ports until 1778. The ships from Marseilles supplied cocoa, cinnamon and sugar to muleteers and merchants from La Vila at least since 1748. When direct trade with America was authorized, the people from La Vila started to buy the raw materials at the place of origin and to control their production and commercialisation. In the beginning, cocoa was ground in a traditional way on a stone. Chocolate was made to order, with the participation of the family and at the customer's home. The weight corresponding to a pound was different in each place —the Valencian pound weighed 355 g. A chocolate bar weighed one pound and was divided into 12 one-ounce portions (about 30g each). Muleteers transported La Vila's chocolate from 500 km away by donkey or cart until 1920. Until the 1930's, there were more than 30 chocolate workshops in Villajoyosa. Currently three factories are still working. Even today, Vila Joiosa smells of chocolate.