

# Torre Vieja

## History

The history of Torre Vieja is to a large extent centered on the nearby salt lakes of La Mata and Torre Vieja. The salt lakes traditionally belonged to the crown and served as royal hunting grounds. Hunting licenses and concessions were granted to allies of the king. The middle of the thirteenth century saw the first crown licenses granted to the residents of the nearby town of Orihuela to harvest salt. In an era where salt was a scarce and coveted resource, by the end of the middle ages La Mata became, together with Ibiza, the most important centre of salt production in the kingdom of Aragon.

The salt and the sea are the inseparable elements which have marked the history and determined the present-day reality of Torre Vieja. At the beginning of the last century there was only a watch-tower the old tower and a few

houses. In 1802 the La Mata salt-flat offices moved to the present site, bringing about the rapid urbanisation of the



former Torre Vieja. The proximity of the salt-flats and it being an exporting port both of salt and the horticultural produce of La Vega Baja led to the growth of port and town, which gained its independence from Orihuela in 1820.

Today it produces about a million tons of salt, mostly exported, making it the prime European salt-producer. The International Competition of Habaneras and Choirs, of International Tourist interest, is held in homage to the people of Torre Vieja who traded with Cuba, the former Span-

ish colony and homeland of the Habaneras which the sailors sang on their return. Salt and sea are the two inseparable elements that have marked the history and determined the present-day circumstances of Torre Vieja.

At the start of the 19th century in the town's current location there was only a watchtower, an old tower and a handful of houses. In 1802 the administration of the Mata salt-flats transferred to its current location and brought about the rapid urbanization of Torre Vieja. The proximity to the



salt-flats and its position as a port exporting salt, fruit and vegetables pro-

duced in the Vega Baja of the Segura River resulted in the rapid development of the port and the city. It gained its independence from Orihuela in 1820.

Torre Vieja is surrounded by two large natural salt-water lagoons, which form the well-known "Salterns of Torre Vieja". It is situated on the Costa Blanca, approximately one hour drive South from Benidorm and 40 minutes from Alicante airport.

It is an ideal location for a summer or winter sun holiday with an average of 320 days sunshine each year. It is said to be good for sufferers of arthritis, asthma and rheumatism. The area is regarded by the World Health Organisation as having the healthiest climate in Europe.



## Buildings

The arrival of the Moors in the eight century saw the introduction of Islamic architecture in Spain. The style is typified by intricate decorative work, emblematic horseshoe arches, geometric patterns, calligraphy and the extensive use of tiles and mosaic. The graceful style exerted an influence on Spanish architecture right down to

the present day. The Caliphate Style was



brought over to Spain from the Middle East. It was employed during the

reign of the Caliphate of Cordoba, which ended in the eleventh century.

The Maghreb style developed in Morocco and was introduced into Spain in the twelfth century with the



arrival of the Almora-vids. It is epitomised by the Giralda minaret, which once stood in the Great Mosque of Seville.

