

## LA SACA DE LAS YEGUAS ("The Gathering of the Mares")

The "**Saca de las Yeguas**" ("The Gathering of the Mares") is one of the most emblematic traditions of the town of Almonte. Although there are numerous ancient references that tell us about the *Saca de la Yeguas* as an ancestral livestock event, it is not until 1504 when, through the ordinance of the Duke of Medina Sidonia, the event is regularized.

In that ordinance, we find the figure of the **yegüerizo** (local stock breeder) and it is established that the stock (local wild horses) should move from the meadows, swamps and marshes of the Doñana National Park to the town of Almonte, coinciding with the festival of San Pedro.

Thus, for centuries, every June 26, the *yegüerizos* from Almonte go on the search for the wild livestock that have been grazing throughout the year in different lands of the Natural Area of Doñana and lead them to Almonte.

Very early in the morning on June 26, all the stock in the area is gathered at the enclave called "*La Boca del Lobo*" (The Wolf's Mouth) in El Rocío, where the tour will begin. Later when they pass by the Hermitage of the Virgen del Rocío, the *yeguerizos* make their first stop, to be blessed by the priest and pray. After passing through the village of El Rocío, the mares and the new foals led by the *yegüerizos* continue on their way.

After noon, they make a stop at "*Alto de la Gallineta*" (behind "*El Pastorcito*" home), "*Los Olivarejos*" ford, in the "*Rio Seco*" stream and "*Santa María*" bridge, to rest and organize the mares and foals in groups. This is known as the *Sesteo*, that is, the previous preparations for the spectacular entrance in the town of Almonte. We reach the climax when the mares and their new foals are led by the *yegüerizos* through the streets of Almonte. Nature and civilization merge giving us one of the most beautiful, unique and shocking landscapes that we can ever see.

The itinerary ends with the arrival at the *Huerta de la Cañada* livestock site. There, the Livestock Fair of Almonte will begin and several traditional tasks will be held. A few days later, the mares and their foals will be driven again to their lands of origin in the Natural Area of Doñana where they will remain until June of the following year.

Thanks to the work of the National Association of Marismeño Cattle Breeders and their associates, an indigenous breed such as the "*Marismeña*" Mare is preserved, with more than a thousand specimens today.

Both the passage of the mares through El Rocío and the entry and stay of stock in the town of Almonte, attract the attention of hundreds of people every year, becoming a spectacle and unique experience for the senses.

### 25th JUNE

The horse riders, (*yeguerizos*) are organized and distributed in groups through various lands of the Natural Area of Doñana, such as La Marismilla, Las Nuevas, El Rincón, La Vuelta de la Madre, Matasgorda, El Lobo, Las Mogeas or Lucio de las Yeguas, to collect and gather all the mares and foals that graze in the area called 'la Boca del Lobo' in El Rocío all year long.

### 26th JUNE ROUTE TO ALMONTE

10: 00-: Mares and foals are led, grouped in four troops, in front of the Hermitage of El Rocío, where an act of blessing and praying will be carried out as the last troop of trotting mares go past.

1300 \*: Arrival of stock / mares at the *sesteo* site.

18: 30 \*: Departure towards Almonte along "el camino de los Llanos"

19: 30 \*: Arrival of the mares and their foals in Almonte, guided by the yegüerizos through its streets to the livestock enclosure called "Recinto Ganadero Huerta de la Cañada", organized into nine troops.

More information at: [razamarismena.com/sacadelasyeguas/](http://razamarismena.com/sacadelasyeguas/)

## **27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> JUNE: LIVESTOCK COMPETITION**

Traditional tasks at the Huerta de la Cañada Livestock Site.

- Review and morphological evaluation of the royal pattern of the mares and new foals of the Marismeña breed.
- Cattle marking and identification
- La Tusa (cutting of mane, tail, as well as other animal welfare work).
- Market for buying and selling cattle.
- Exhibition of specimens of purebred Marismeño horse and bovine.
- Photo exhibition of traditional uses in Doñana by the Almonte Photographic Association (AFA).
- II Morphological day of the Marismeña mare (day 28 at 12:30 pm)

On the 27th, the entry and exit of animals, whether owned or sold, is prohibited. Right at the livestock enclosure, a canteen with popular prices is available for all audiences, where you can taste the typical cuisine of the area.

## **RETURN TO DOÑANA**

Livestock leaves the "Huerta de la Cañada" livestock enclosure to their original home areas in Doñana, where they will remain until June of the following year.

## **Monument to the Saca de las Yeguas**

In honor of "yegüerizos", or breeders of "Marismeño" cattle in Doñana. It is an artistic sculptural group in cast bronze that commemorates the traditional "Saca de las Yeguas", which local people in Almonte have been holding for longer than 500 years.

The work, by the sculptor Moreno Cutando, from Calatalyud, is made up of bronze sculptures showing a horse rider, a mare and its foal on their way to the town of Almonte, during the 'Saca de las Yeguas', which takes place every June 26th, for the "San Pedro" local fair, a former cattle fair of Almonte.

## **Divine Apparition.- Monument to the "Blessed Apparition of the Virgin".**

Located on the corner of "El Chaparral", the legend of the apparition of the "Virgen del Rocío" witnessed by a hunter at "La Rocina" is beautifully staged with this monument, a fact which is said to have occurred in the fifteenth century.

Bronze sculptures by the local artist Curro Báñez.

[Location: "Plaza del Altozano"]

