

VALENCIA

ENCOUNTER

MILES RODDIS

Valencia Encounter

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Colour-Coding & Maps

Colour-coding is used for symbols on maps and in the text that they relate to (eg all eating venues on the maps and in the text are given a green knife and fork symbol). Each neighbourhood also gets its own colour, and this is used down the edge of the page and throughout that neighbourhood section.

Shaded yellow areas on the maps denote areas of interest – for their historical significance, their attractive architecture or their great bars and restaurants. We encourage you to head to these areas and just start exploring!

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MILES R ODDIS

Miles and his wife have lived in Valencia's Barrio del Carmen for nearly 20 years. From here, he sallies forth to write for Lonely Planet, mostly about Mediterranean lands. But nothing is so satisfying as interpreting a place you call home to others and sharing its secrets. Because research is a constant, pleasurable task, he can truly say, hand on paunch, that he's dined in nearly every restaurant that features and drunk in just about every bar.



MILES' T HANKS

Thanks, very specially, to Ingrid for her wise insights, smart tip-offs and rigorous proofing. Rosa Ríos gave me some much-appreciated leads on the contemporary art scene in Valencia and Lisa Gingles briefed me on what's what in fashion and shopping. Poppy and Lily cast their experienced clubbing eyes over my drafts and Samantha Hellwege and Jessica Collette described with panache their favourite clubs and pubs. Special thanks too to Jordan Mirchev for his sage advice. Other insights into the club scene came from Christian Pereira, Elena Gómez, plus Robert Dean and his students at the Escuela Oficial de Idiomas, Quart de Poblet. Thanks too to congenial dining companions Carla, Peter, Tim, Diana, Derek and Abu Arturo.

THE PHO TOGRAPHER

Born and raised in Warsaw, Poland, Krzysztof Dydyński discovered pretty early a passion for worldwide travel, which took him on various trips across Europe, Asia and the Americas, and finally to Australia where he now lives. He first visited Valencia more than 30 years ago and regularly returns to Spain. He's witnessed Valencia's spectacular rise from a rather little-known city to a great international travel destination, now almost as famous as its big sisters, Madrid and Barcelona, and a fascinating and ever-changing place for a photographer to work.

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Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia at the Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias (p10)

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THIS IS VALENCIA

Let's put Valencia first. So often compared with the capital, Madrid, or Catalan Barcelona, this lovely city nowadays speaks for herself – yet with a sideways glance at what her big sisters are up to and an occasional thumb of the nose in their direction.

For an increasing number of visitors, Spain's third-largest city is their first choice for a short break. They come to shop in the designer emporia and boutiques, to stroll the historic quarter and to visit the architecturally stunning City of Arts & Sciences complex. And many make sure their program allows time for lazing on Valencia's broad, 3km-long beach, savouring one of the city's more than 300 cloudless days each year. They'll then explore the new marina with its small cluster of chic summertime bars and restaurants, legacy of Valencia's 2007 hosting of the America's Cup sailing races.

The city is an appealing mix of the traditional and ultramodern, buzzing with a Mediterranean energy. After work on Friday, the same young woman may nibble a tapa or two with friends or dine alfresco on a restaurant terrace, then relax in the vast chill-out zone of Tarraza Umbracle before heading down to the discoteca below. After she's grabbed a few hours sleep, you might spot her on her father's arm at a neighbourhood fiesta, wearing full traditional Fallas regalia, her elaborate, embroidered baroque dress billowing with petticoats. Same girl, same city, same sense of style.

Yes, Valencia is very much a party town. Las Fallas, Europe's wildest street party, sets the tone in mid-March. But every weekend the nightlife throbs until beyond dawn. Gastronomically too, Valencia has everything from smart restaurants serving haute cuisine to small family concerns offering hearty, economical fare. What they share is the freshest produce, plucked from the *huerta*, the surrounding fertile agricultural plain. And paella, now known the world over, first simmered over a wood fire here in Valencia...

Top Calle de Caballeros (p36), Barrio del Carmen **Bottom** Traditionally dressed women at Las Fallas (p24) celebrations