

THE TRADITIONAL CRAFTWORK

Some important manifestations of traditional craftwork still exist. Originally, they were very close to the needs of the rural society: forge, carving, basketry and leather craftwork. There's also textile craftwork in La Iglesuela del Cid: table linen and thread and cotton bedspreads. They're made in traditional looms of the 18th century. They're the last remains of the wool manufacture that, during the last centuries, thanks to the cattle richness, was very important in the Maestrazgo. On the other side, the production of old potter workshops has been renewed and substituted by artistic and creative pottery, with new designs and techniques.



GASTRONOMY, THE TASTE OF TRADITION



The traditional gastronomy of the region is based in the use of their own products: pork, lamb and wheat bread baked in firewood ovens. It's a simple gastronomy, not difficult to prepare, based in the quality of the products and in the old homemade recipes. The most important products of the region are the ham cured by the clean air of the Maestrazgo, the dried meat of bull, a wide variety of sausages, canned pork in olive oil and marinades of rabbit and partridge, with a garnish of Spanish saffron milk cap. The artisan cheese of sheep's milk is well known from centuries ago, and even Cervantes

already mentioned it in his book "Don Quixote" talking about the excellence of the "Queso de Tronchón". And not less important is the traditional pastry making, including biscuits and buns.

THE MAESTRAZGO



The Maestrazgo is a region located in the province of Teruel, formed by sixteen municipalities within a space of 1.204 km², and 3.700 inhabitants. Today, this vast territory is almost abandoned, but in the past was populated and rich. Its important historical and architectural legacy gives to the region a special identity.

THE MAESTRAZGO, A MOUNTANIOUS LANDSCAPE

The mountainous regions of the Maestrazgo are formed by a complex orography, with singularities and contrasts, so they could be qualified generically as Mediterranean mountains. The Guadalupe river and its tributaries flow between the craggy mountains, where the geological folding and the erosion have formed the well known "Órganos de Montoro" or the "Estrechos del Guadalupe", as well as many abysses and caves, as the extremely beautiful "Grutas de Cristal", in Molinos.



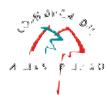
Around Cantavieja, can be found the big "muelas calcáreas", separated by the deep valleys of the rivers. The area of Fortanete-Villarroya de los Pinares shows important folds that create a smoother relief with strong orographic alignments in the zone of contact with the mountains of Gúdar, with heights of more than 1.800 meters.



There's also a rich and varied vegetal landscape, very harmonized thanks to the relief and height. The riverbanks are exuberant in comparison with the calcareous "parameras", where there are plenty of aromatic plants. In medium heights we can find black pine and holm oaks (carrascales and quejigares). This is the habitat of the boar and, in the craggiest relieves, the mountain goat. In the highest areas there's mainly Scots pine, boxwood, creeping "sábina" and, during the autumn, the Spanish saffron milk cap.

THE HISTORICAL LEGACY

During the Prehistory, the mankind arrived leaving the oldest artistic manifestations of the region: cave paintings of the Levantine rock art (between 6000 and 2500 b.C.) in the area of Ladruñán and Castellote, near the Guadalupe river. Other remains of the past show the existence of nucleus of population from the Iberian and Roman periods, which will last until the arrival of Muslims in Spain.



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But the historical specificity of the region was forged during the Middle Ages. At the end of the 12th century and the beginning of the 13th, the Maestrazgo was a frontierland with the Arabic kingdom of Valencia. The Military orders played an important role in this wish of reconquest. The Templars obtained the “encomiendas” (a trust, charge, or feudal fief) of Cantavieja and Castellote, including its villages. On the other side, Fortanete, Villarroya, Pitarque and Sollavientos, that were a part of the “encomienda” of Aliaga, belonged to the Order of San Juan del Hospital. Finally, the Order of Calatrava gained Molinos. After the disappearance of the Templars, at the beginning of the 14th century, their lands passed to the hands of the Order of San Juan and their jurisdiction spread out almost the whole Maestrazgo. During this period castles, fortifications, defensive towers and walls were built, as witnesses of a complicated past.

The legacy of the Middle Ages is the religious gothic architecture, including the gothic churches of Molinos and Castellote. Within the civil architecture, can be seen the

markets, under the porches of the town halls of Cantavieja and La Iglesuela del Cid, the bridges of La Puebla de San Miguel and the one known as Puente Vallés.

Many of our villages have kept this unequivocal medieval atmosphere, of important aesthetic and historical interest. Mirambel is one of the most important villages, with its walls, the five doors with the original access and buildings of high architectural value.

The 16th century and the first decades of the 17th, are a period of splendor for the civil architecture in the Maestrazgo. There are many palaces and manors of the Renaissance, with its facades made of excellent ashlar, many of them showing coats of arms. The most important palaces are located in La Iglesuela del Cid and Mirambel, and the town halls with a market and semi-circular arches, built following the patterns of the Renaissance, already generalized in the whole region.

The baroque religious architecture of the 17th and 18th century is the most important, with a great artistic development in churches with big and slender proportions. An example of this kind of churches are those of Fortanete, Mirambel, La Cuba, La Cañada de Benatanduz and Allepuz, although is the church of Cantavieja the most monumental because is as big as a cathedral.

At the end of the 18th century, in the Maestrazgo there is a change through the neoclassic ideas of the architecture, which is



very clear in the churches of Villarluengo and Pitarque, and some other places of the area.

In the 19th century begins a complicated period in El Maestrazgo, with the arrival of the Carlist troops. This region became a standard of the royalist cause and a bastion of antiliberal views. Ramón Cabrera, also known as the Tiger of the Maestrazgo, was a legend of the period. That's why Pío Baroja in his book “La venta de Mirambel”, defined the Maestrazgo as a “land of warriors”.

THE MASADAS

The masadas are the rural constructions the most representative of the Maestrazgo, and they're the symbol of the traditional ways of living, with their own style of farming in the territory and of adaptation to the difficult life conditions of the region. Even if most of them are not inhabited anymore, they are an important cultural patrimony of our villages, and they help to create a rural landscape where we can clearly discover the close relationship between the mankind and the land.

DRY STONE ARCHITECTURE

The dry stone architecture is another element of the landscape of the region. The Maestrazgo is traversed by kilometers of walls, because is easy to find this material in the area. The huts made in dry stone are the most singular constructions, specially in La Iglesuela del Cid, and they're built without mortar and covered by a vault or a false dome. They are simple and functional constructions, due to the ways of living based in agriculture and cattle farming.

THE TRASHUMANCIA

The traditional cattle farming, mainly with sheep, needed some adaptations to the bioclimatic conditions of the region. The transhumance was the most important them. It existed principally in the highlands, where the summer pastures could be found, and in the Levantine area, during the winter. The paths and cattle pass have crossed the Maestrazgo from many centuries ago, linking the territories of Aragon, Catalonia and Valencia.

