

A \tilde{N} O JUBILAR 2024/2025

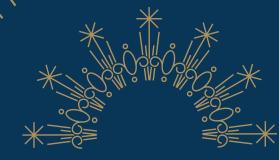
On 1 November 1950, Pope Pius XII proclaimed as a Catholic Church dogma of faith the Assumption of St Mary into heaven in body and soul, a mystery of devotion and hope for millions of believers. However, in Elche, the Assumption of Mary had already been celebrated fervently for more than 500 years with the Misteri d'Elx, a unique gem in the spiritual and cultural heritage of humanity.

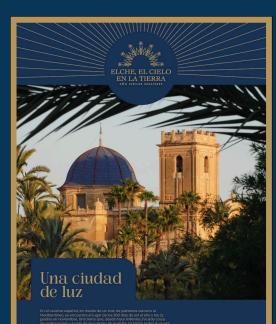
To mark the 75th anniversary of this proclamation, the Holy See has granted the city of Elche a Jubilee Year, which runs from 1 November 2024 to 1 November 2025. Elche City Council has also declared 2025 as Thematic Year of the Assumption of Mary, reaffirming the deep bond between this region and its revered patron saint.

This exhibition is a brief but intense journey through ELCHE and everything that truly makes it HEAVEN ON EARTH: its history, its faith, its traditions and its people's love for the Virgin of the Assumption.

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Excelen ATUNTA — de 11 A city of light

In the Spanish Levante region, in the middle of a sea of palm trees near the Mediterranean, you'll find a place with 300 days of sunshine a year and 22 degrees in November. For millennia it has been a crossroads of civilisations and a meeting point for nations. This is Elche, the Ilici Augusta of Iberians and Romans, one of the oldest cities in Spain.

Crossed by the scarce flow of the Vinalopó River, this two-thousand year old city can boast three World Heritage Sites: the Palmeral de Elche, the Misteri d'Elx and the Museo Escolar de Puçol educational museum.

More than 240,000 inhabitants make this corner of the world a unique place, a modern city proud of its traditions that looks to the future without forgetting the foundations of its glorious past.









Land of entrepreneurs

Two and a half thousand years ago the city's workshops produced the universally known Lady of Elche and were home to a flourishing ceramics industry making Iberian vases that were famous all over Hispania.

For almost two hundred years, Elche has been an international leader in footwear, the driver of its huge industrial, demographic and socio-economic growth. This has always been a land of entrepreneurs, creatives and visionaries.

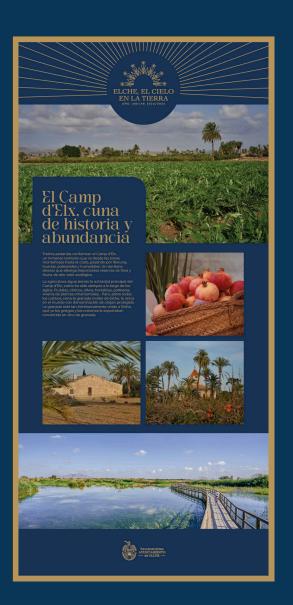
Today, Elche is one of Spain's major industrial cities with a highly diversified economic structure spanning a range of sectors, including industry, agriculture, commerce, services, tourism, hospitality and aerospace.

Its three universities are centres of talent, research and innovation and act as a powerful incubator for highly qualified young people. All this, together with its strategic location in the Mediterranean Arc, have made Elche a very attractive place for companies.



* * * ELCHE, EL CIEL

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Camp d'Elx, a cradle of history and abundance

Camp d'Elx is made up of thirty districts, a vast territory that runs from the mountains down to the coast, passing through plains, orchards, palm groves and wetlands. It's a diverse region that's home to important plant and wildlife reserves of enormous ecological value.

Agriculture is still the main activity in Camp d'Elx and has always been for centuries. Fruit trees, citrus fruits, olive trees, vegetables, palm trees, ornamental plant nurseries... but the crop that outshines them all is the Mollar de Elche pomegranate, the only one in the world with a protected designation of origin (PDO). The pomegranate is so intrinsically linked to Elche that the Greeks and Romans exported it in the form of pomegranate wine.







The eternal Mediterranean

Nations from across the sea sailed the Mediterranean to reach the shores of Elche, following the same route taken by the sun from when it rises in the east to when it sets in the west. In the past they came in search of trade and conquest; today they continue to come to enjoy its sun and climate, its festivals and traditions, its history and culture, its cheerful atmosphere and its lifestyle.

All six of Elche's beaches are among the most beautiful in Spain. The area has nine kilometres of unspoiled coastline, with vast carpets of golden sand, wind-sculpted dunes and extensive pine forests.









The ancient Palm Grove

"We were approaching Elche, we could already see its valley full of fruits and its immense palm grove, the largest and most beautiful in Europe, the most paradisiacal in all of Spain".

A Journey Through Spain, Hans Christian Andersen (1862)

Declared a World Heritage Site in November 2000, the Elche Palm Grove has more than 200,000 beautiful specimens of *Phoenix dactylifera*, the date palm, and without them the city of Elche and its history could not be understood.

The Palm Grove doesn't look the way it does today by chance; in fact it was originally an agricultural plantation, with the palm trees being arranged in a grid pattern.

These palm groves and their irrigation system, which can be traced back to the Al-Andalus era, sheltered other crops and led to the development of irrigated farming in a landscape typical of desert villages where water was more precious than gold.

Nowadays, the palm grove continues to draw water from the Acequia Mayor irrigation network, a system with huge heritage value that runs across the city and branches off to supply different areas.







St Mary's Basilica, where heaven and earth meet

St Mary's Basilica is the place where every August the deepest sadness is interwoven with an outpouring of joy, where death gives way to life in the blink of an eye. This is where mystery and devotion unfold, blending with the Baroque art that only the Levante region was capable of producing.

The church you see today was built between 1672 and 1784 and is where the Misteri d'Elx performances are held every year. Its cobalt blue dome and the bell tower standing more than 40 metres high make an imposing sight amongst more modern buildings, taking centre stage on the city's skyline.

The high rigging system that makes part of the magic of the Misteri d'Elx is installed beneath the dome that bears the Marian monogram.

On the ground, in the transept, stands the *cadafal* or platform, where the earthly part of the drama is performed and underneath which is the lower rigging system, allowing significant scenes like the death of the Virgin to be staged.







Sóc per a Elig

In the cold early morning of 29 December 1370, Francesc Cantó, from a place known as Las Azucenas, was on guard at Tamarit beach to warn the city in the event of an incursion by Barbary pirates. But as dawn broke it wasn't pirates he spotted.

Coming ashore with the waves was a box with the words "Sóc per a Elig" (I am for Elche) written on it. As he opened the box, it was as if a shaft of August sunlight burst out, shattering the winter night. Inside was the image of the Virgin of the Assumption and, at her feet, the *consueta*, a document explaining how to celebrate her *Festa*.

The Virgin of the Assumption was made the patron saint of the town of Elche and the Misteri d'Elx became its main festival and greatest community event.

This is the popular tradition of the Coming of the Virgin to Elche.







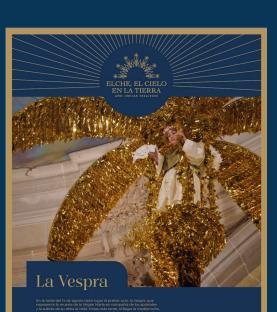
The Misteri d'Elx, a celebration found nowhere else in the world

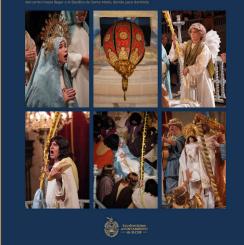
The Festa or Misteri d'Elx is a late medieval religious drama that celebrates the Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin Mary. It's performed every year on 14 and 15 August in St. Mary's Basilica and in the streets of Elche's historic city centre. The day before, on 13 August, is Nit de l'Alba, a huge firework display held as an offering to the Virgin, turning the Elche midnight sky into a bright dawn.

In 1632, Pope Urban VIII granted the people of Elche permission to continue performing the *Festa*, despite the prohibitions put in place by the Council of Trent on celebrations of a festive nature inside churches. In 1931, the Misteri d'Elx was declared a National Monument by the Government of Spain. In 2001, UNESCO recognised it as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.









La Vespra

The first act, Vespra, takes place in the evening on 14 August. This part portrays the death of the Virgin Mary in the company of the apostles and the ascent of her soul to heaven. Hours later, at midnight, the people of Elche hold a vigil for their Virgin on the Nit de la Roà, walking through the city centre streets until they reach St Mary's Basilica, where she lies sleeping.







La Festa

The second act, La Festa, takes place on 15 August. In the morning, the Virgin's funeral procession winds its way through the city's historic streets, accompanied by the fervour of the people of Elche and all those who come from other places to be with Mary in her slumber. Apostles and Jews carry her recumbent body, while barely contained emotion can be seen in everyone's gaze.

The Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin Mary is held at six o'clock in the evening. The whole of Elche watches how she is raised from the depths of the tomb to be crowned by the Holy Trinity. There is an outpouring of joy and applause and cheers flood the atmosphere. These are moments of indescribable supernatural beauty. The Virgin enters heaven, taking with her the love and devotion of her people.



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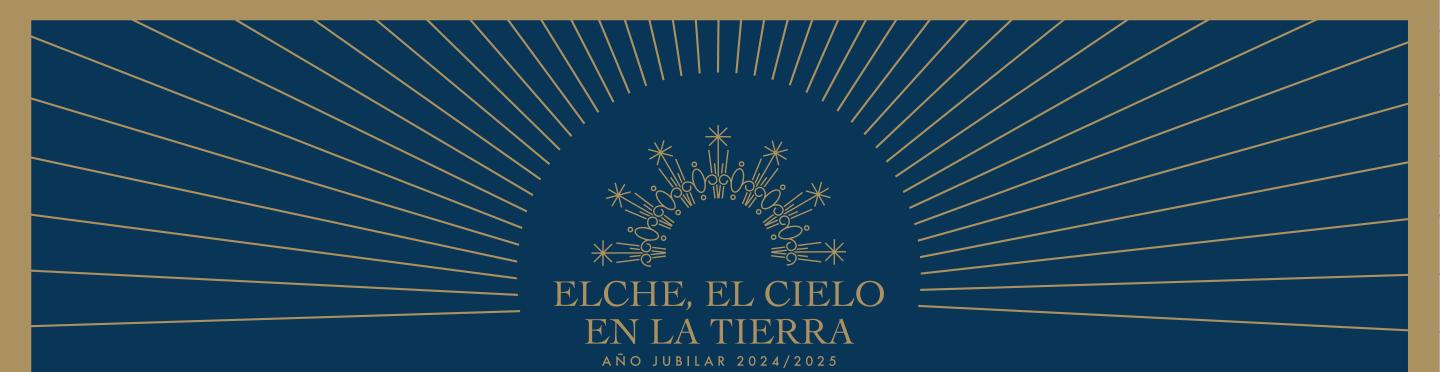


The dogma of the Assumption, a dogma of faith

"(...) for the joy and gladness of the whole Church, with the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul and with ours, we pronounce, declare and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma that the immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul to heavenly glory."

(Proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption by Pius XII. 1 November 1950)





The dogma of the Assumption, a dogma of faith

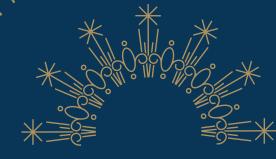
For the Catholic Church, a dogma is an absolute truth that forms the basis of doctrine, a truth that must be believed to be a member of the Church.

Although the dogma of the Assumption was proclaimed in 1950, the belief in Mary's Assumption into heaven was already present in oral tradition dating from the early centuries of Christianity. This is attested to by the Assumptionist apocryphal gospels attributed to John the Theologian (4th century) and to John, Archbishop of Thessalonica (7th century).

The people of Elche had already been celebrating the Assumption of Mary with the Misteri d'Elx for more than 500 years, making this tradition a unique expression of faith and popular culture.

As a perpetual commemoration of the proclamation of the dogma, in addition to the August performances, Elche also stages an extraordinary performance of the *Festa* every 1 November in even-numbered years, with an exceptional performance due to be held in 2025 to mark the 75th anniversary.







A year of jubilation

Elche is celebrating because the woman it has seen over the centuries awaken from her transit, ascend to the heavens and be crowned queen of all things, has now been recognised across the whole world. The same woman who has taken into her heart our prayers, joys and sorrows every August, is now celebrated everywhere on Earth.

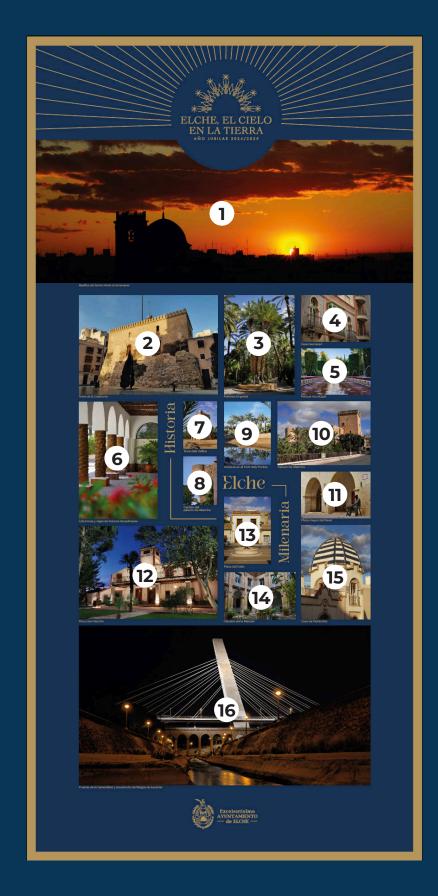
To mark the 75th anniversary of the proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption, the Holy See has granted Elche the celebration of a Jubilee Year, with the centre in St Mary's Basilica. The Jubilee Year began on 1 November 2024 and will come to a close on 1 November 2025.

Elche City Council, by agreement of the Plenary held on 29 July 2024, declared 2025 as the Thematic Year of the Assumption of Mary.





Elche History Millenary



1. St Mary's Basilica at dawn

- 2. Calahorra Tower
- **3.** Imperial Palm Tree
- 4. Neo-nazari house
- 5. Municipal Park
- 6. Pillars and beams made from palm trunks
- 7. Vaïllos Tower
- 8. Turret on Altamira Palace
- 9. Irrigation channel in Hort dels Pontos
- 10. Altamira Palace
- **11.** Main square in the Raval neighbourhood
- 12. Finca San Ramón estate
- 13. Plaza del Gallo
- 14. Cloister of La Merced
- 15. Casa de Ferrández
- **16.** La Generalitat Bridge and Riegos de Levante Aqueduct





Festivals Tradition Culture



1. Pas de la burreta in the Palm

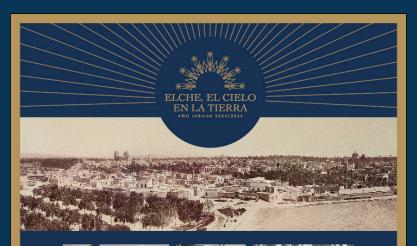


- Sunday procession
- 2. Battle of Flowers
- 3. White palm braid
- **4.** Palm Sunday
- **5.** San Juan festival in the Raval neighbourhood
- 6. Elche AFMYC flag bearer
- 7. Arroz con costra (rice with a crust)
- 8. Nit de la Roà
- **9.** Procession of San Crispin, patron saint of cobblers
- 10. Nit de l'Albà
- **11.** The Aleluyas procession





Through time...



- 1. St Mary's Basilica
- 2. Hort de Baix
- 3. Hort de Vizcarra
- 4. Harvesting dates
- 5. Acequia Mayor irrigation channel and Molí del Real



- 6. View of San Juan Church
- 7. Altamira Palace
- 8. Canalejas Bridge
- 9. Riegos de Levante aqueduct
- 10. View of Altamira Palace from Hort de Baix
- 11. St Mary's Basilica
- 12. Repair work on the Basilica dome
- 13. Santa Teresa Bridge
- 14. Santa Teresa Bridge seen from the riverbed
- 15. Imperial Palm Tree
- 16. View from Paseo de Francos Rodríguez
- 17. Acequia Mayor as it passes Ressemblanc Tower
- 18. Poster for La Vespra, Pedro Ibarra 1928
- 19. Poster for La Festa, Pedro Ibarra 1928
- 20. Consueta for the Misteri d'Elx in 1709
- 21. Poster for the August festival in 1950
- 22. Poster for the August festival in 1944
- 23. Magazine with the first photographs of the Misteri d'Elx, Herbert Vivian 1899

