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A region is its people, its history and its traditions and culture. Therefore, the main value we offer is the people of la Vall de Gallinera involved in the initiative. Travelling with us provides you the opportunity to discover the valley through its people and their day to day life.

ANTONIO “EL GRANAINO” – SHEPHERD

Antonio, originally from Granada, came to the valley with his parents many years ago looking for milder weather and better pasture for their flock. Once in the valley he has settled and he is now running a livestock business with around 700 sheep and goats and a restaurant in the village of Benissivà.

Shepherds have been part of the landscape of the valley since prehistoric times. In the 20th century each flock totalled on average from 50 to 100 animals and mountains were full of corrals where shepherds left their herds at night to come the following morning to take the sheep out for grazing. This trade has strongly influenced in the culture, traditions and gastronomy of the valley though nowadays, Antonio is the only one still making a living from this trade.



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Antonio has spent his whole life looking after his flock and he knows almost one by one his 700 hundred sheep and goats. As he puts it, this trade has changed a lot over the last 30 years, sanitary regulations and economic pressure have had an influence on how the business is run. However, the flock still need to graze every day in the mountains and someone has to look after it, taking us back to the times of silence and relaxation when nomad shepherds knew by heart each corner of the region.

The seasons of the year with ANTONIO

By the hand of Antonio and his two shepherds you will be able to share one day in a shepherd's life.



You will visit their farm in the morning to ensure all lambs are getting their share of dairy milk from their mothers or step mothers, help delivering new born lambs or help them separate the animals for letting aside those about to give birth. Afterwards you will go to the mountain corrals to enjoy spending one morning in the mountains together with the shepherd and your local host looking after the flock. The stroll will lead you into hidden corners of the valley

only known by shepherds that are long established corridors to reach pockets of fresh meadow grazing.

This experience will let you discover some off the trail hidden places, enjoy the peacefulness of the mountains and finally understand the inner philosophy of shepherds and why this trade is not a job but a way of life.

Open days with Antonio will always include, independently of the season, a final tasting of lamb in his restaurant, where you will appreciate the taste of health and freedom of a breeding work well done.

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EVARISTO – A MAN FROM THE VALLEY (SHEPHERD AND FARMER)

Evaristo participates in the initiative as a former shepherd, and a currently conventional farmer of cherry trees and olive trees and as owner of el Pont rural house.

Evaristo is a man in its middle age who has been living in Benissili for his whole life, and whose family is one of the oldest of la Vall de Gallinera. All the family, up to when his mother remembers, is originally from the valley.



By the hand of Evaristo, you will be able to get a grasp of the real day to day life of a common farm worker in la Vall de Gallinera. As a botanical man described in the 18th century for the valley, he is the perfect example on how nothing is wasted in the Valley. Everything has got a use and almost no waste is produced. Sharing an open door event at his place is get to know the art of sheep breeding, conventional farming or ecological farming (depending on the season) whilst enjoying a spectacular view of the valley from his working places up in the top the valley and listening to his amazing knowledge of the history of the valley and his own experiences in it.

The seasons of the year with EVARISTO

One of Evaristo's horses and the view from his place



The day to day of Evaristo is very much related with the year seasons. He can be described as a modern renacentist man, knowledgeable of many different trades that he undertakes for a living. In the **winter season**, he will prune olive and cherry trees, feed his remaining 30 sheep, hens, rabbits and horses, sell firewood and or repair his numerous machinery. During the **spring time**, you will see how he takes care of his

ecological garden and the harvesting of the cherry (from May to June). **Summer season** is the time for a certain type of graft, for harvesting many of the vegetables of the garden and to shear the sheep. Finally, **autumn** will amaze you with the wide arrange of fruits everywhere around. Almonds, figs, blackberries, and many others, inundate the valley in an explosion of

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tastes, smells and colours. During this season, olives and almonds are collected from the tree in one of the most traditional moments of the year.

Open doors with Evaristo will always include, independently of the season, a traditional countryside breakfast and he will share with you one of his famous recipes of paella, “arroz caldoso” or “gazpacho manchego”.

ANTONIO CÍVICO - ORGANIC OLIVE AND CHERRY TREES

Antonio was born and raised in Malaga and after living and working in different parts of Spain he met his wife, Rosa, a woman native from the valley, and they both moved 30 years ago to Benissili, the last village at the top end of the valley. They have made their living out of itinerant sales in different markets of the region and they have the chance nowadays to focus exclusively on their organic olive and cherry trees agriculture initiative in the plots of land of their family.



Though organic agriculture is worldwide spread it is still being introduced in the valley. With Antonio and his family you will be able to understand its basic principles and what are its benefits and challenges ahead. Further, you will share and understand their self management philosophy with their vegetable garden and hens meanwhile admiring some of the oldest olive trees in the valley “if this trees were able to speak they will certainly do it in Arab...”

The seasons of the year with ANTONIO

Winter is the favourite **season** of Toni, a time where you will prune olive and cherry trees, transforming and shaping them. You will also discuss on what products can be used in organic farming for fertilizing the land meanwhile enjoying the blossoming of almond trees in one of the best “offices” of the valley. **Spring time** is the season where cherry trees blossom and everything is being prepared for harvesting the cherries, product from which farmers of the valley made their living nowadays. **Summer time**, is the season where the smell of blossoming olive trees impregnate the whole valley and the season when the

Olive trees over 500 years old



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ecological garden they have produce tomatoes, aubergines, pumpkins and many others tasty vegetables. During **autumn**, you will be able to collect olives and see the whole process of producing the so called “liquid gold” of Spain. This season will let you understand the importance of when to collect, which olives are collected, and the different processes and types of olive oil depending on their quality, taste and smell.

During all seasons the plots of land where he works ooze tranquillity surrounded by centenary olive trees and astonishing views of the nearby mountains.

Open doors day with Toni will always include, independently of the season, a tasting of their own virgin extra olive oil together with bread, cheese and of course, good company!

ALICIA LOZANO – TRADITIONAL PRESERVED FOOD

Alicia is a woman originally from Ciudad Real that moved to the valley more than a decade ago. After working in an herbalist’s shop she took advantage of a European project devoted to promote equality in the labour market for setting up a small business of traditional preserved food in Alpatró.

Preservation of food is ancient to human kind though methods and products vary depending on the raw materials available and the traditions of the different regions. The outcomes are part of our gastronomy, our heritage and even our cultural identify (the French pâté, the Dutch herrings, the Spanish ham...)

In the valley, there were a big array of preserving methods and products that every family made for the conservation of vegetables, meat and other products. Nowadays, this is a tradition that is about to get lost and Alicia is one of the few people in the region professionally keeping the tradition.



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The seasons of the year with ALICIA

Some of the products sold by Alicia



Together with Alicia you will be able to get a grasp of la Gallinera medicinal herbs and preserved traditional products of the four seasons of the year. During the **winter time** you will be able to enjoy, taste and understand how citrus marmalades are produced and the importance of the selection of the fruits and the different processes to make it. Further, it is the time for some of the best edible wild plants traditional recipes such as “coca de dacsá” (a kind of corn crepe stuffed with dandelions, bull’s tongue or

chicory wild and tasty plants). **Spring time** is mainly the cherries season, a time when the valley is blossoming and Alicia is fully working on preserving food. Further, and before blossoming it’s a season where many wild plants can still be collected for cooking “coca de dacsá” or where the chamomile can be found in every corner. Finally, meanwhile **summer** is the quiet season for Alicia perfect for sharing her mountain side paella recipe with you (with a touch of rosemary) or to blend some of the medicinal creams made out of wild plants (like the calendula cream perfect for sun burns or the hipericum cream, **autumn** burst in as the most fruitful season with a wide range of fruits to be preserved in different ways and tastes and when mushrooms can be found in the pine woods surrounding the valley.

Open doors days with Alicia will always include, independently of the season, a tasting of the products cooked together with Alicia.

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TRADITIONAL TRADES CURRENTLY UNDER STUDY

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THOMAS AND KATINKA – THE ART OF BREEDING HORSES



Katinka, is a German woman on her 40's that discovered the valley 26 years ago by sheer chance when she wanted to show her mother another place in the mountainous region of Alicante. When she first saw Benirrama, the village they are currently living in, she felt what is called in German "Heimat": a feeling that she was at home, that she belonged to that place. Together with her husband Thomas and her two children they left everything in Germany

for starting a horse breeding business in the valley.

They believe in an equal and fair relationship with their 68 horses, who they feel as part of their family. Therefore, they run the business in the traditional way of looking after each and every horse establishing an affective relationship with them. Thus, their horses live as a herd with plenty of space to socialize.

Together with Katinka, Thomas and her 3 children (Elias, Jona and Leon) you will be able to become part of their astonishingly big family which includes 68 horses of the Irish cob breed (monumental and very sociable horses with long fancy hair), Dülmener breed (wild German horses domesticated by a duke in the city of Dülmen who are very curious and sociable) and ponies.

The seasons of the year with KATINKA

The seasons of the year do not vary very much with this big family where tasks are always related to take care of the horses by feeding them, looking after any possible illness, talking to them, looking after those that have escaped, repairing the infrastructures, socialize with them,....



Spring time is possibly the season that differs more from the others as it is the mating and births season, when horses have longest hair and they need to comb them almost every day. It is also the season when Katinka and family take advantage to clean up and prepare the farm for the whole season.

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Open doors with Thomas and Katinka will always include, independently of the season, a stroll in the mountains walking up the horses in one of their favourite moments of the day.

FERRAN – BEEKEEPING

Ferran is a 35 years old man living in Benirrama, the first village of the valley when coming from the coast line. Ferran is participating in this initiative opening the doors of the beekeeping business he is running.

Beekeeping has been a traditional trade in the valley since medieval times, with peaks when around 10 people in each village were running hives. Nowadays, we can only find 4 people with hives in the valley. As Ferran puts it, he started the business to have some extra earnings every month but once he started he got addicted to the trade. He feels the bees as his family and he is always taking care that they flourish and become strong and settled hives.



Beekeepers traders are traditionally not willing to share their knowledge on the trade which is transmitted from parents to children with no external influence. Ferran, however, is always willing to share and learn from others new things of his trade.

The seasons of the year with FERRAN



By the hand of Ferran you will be able to understand the different types of hives, the behaviour of bees, the different types of bees and products and uses from a hive (wax, propolis, brood, venom, pollen, royal jelly, and of course, honey). It is especially in **spring time** and **autumn** when bees are more active flying from one flower to another gathering the food they need to stock for winter and summer.

Open doors days with Ferrán will always include, independently of the season, a tasting of the delicious honey and other products from the hives.

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IGNASI MORA – ORGANIC VINEYARDS

Ignasi is a young man from Benissivà currently working in Valencia City in the organic food industry and already setting up an organic agriculture initiative in la Vall de Gallinera with olive trees and vineyards.



Due to current low prices of agriculture products and depopulation, many of the traditional plots of land of the countryside are currently abandoned. The economic crisis and the entrepreneurial ideas of young people are the triggers of initiatives that are slowly spreading out around the valley trying to recover traditional trades though adding new ecological principles still not common in conventional farming.

With Ignasi you will be able to understand the importance, aims and dreams of this new generation of farmers who are recovering traditional trades such as wine production (almost lost in the valley) and olive oil production in his plots of land located in the mountains of the valley.

The seasons of the year with IGNASI

Together with Ignasi and his cousin you will plant, prune and take care of olive trees and vineyards during the **winter season**. Furthermore, during the end of **summer** and beginning of **autumn** you will be able to collect grapes, understanding and enjoying one of the most ancient trades that are being recovered in the valley. The working place of Ignasi are located in the mid of the mountains from where you are going to be able to enjoy from astonishing views and spend a plentiful outdoor day.

Open doors days will always include, independently of the season, a tasting of the organic wines of the valley.

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JOANJO SEGUI – TRADITIONAL DANCING

If you ask any neighbour of the 8 villages about Joanjo they will definitely describe him as man passionate about the valley. He feeds couples of eagles, participates as one of the most active



members of a local non for profit association preserving and promoting the valley, he knows thousands, maybe millions, of stories of the valley, the plants, the animals, the people...From the initiative what we can say is that it is a pleasure to count with someone like him.

Joanjo is a man in his middle age originally from Alpatró, from one of the oldest families of the valley. Born and raised here he participates in the initiative as a local trader, together and thanks to

his partner Silvia, involved in traditional dancing.

The “balls tradicionales” are a folklore rooted in legends, traditions, stories and history of the regions. Though traditional dancing groups disappeared in the valley almost a hundred years ago, Joanjo and Silvia still keep them alive through the Baladre association of Muro de Alcoy (a town nearby the valley).

The seasons of the year with Joanjo and Silvia

Together with their association you will enjoy, dance and get to know one of the most valuable intangible human heritages of the region. The songs, the lyrics, the music, the instruments, the group. All merge together in beautiful dances and songs that tell us ancient traditions such as the traditional dance of nobles (as intricate as possible to avoid the working classes to dance it) and how the working classes transformed it into more enjoyable and easier dances; or the ways our ancestors “celebrated” the death of young children considering that they went back to the source with no trace of evil. Summer, autumn and springtime are the main seasons when almost all small villages and big towns celebrate their festivities with traditional songs and dances. Come with them and enjoy together with your dancing partner!



Open doors days will always include, independently of the season, dancing!!!

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ENRIQUE GASCÓ MOLTE –TRADITIONAL PALM BASKETS

Enrique is a man in his seventies belonging to one of the most ancient families of the valley. He lives in Alpatró, one of the last villages and the top end of la Gallinera.

Enrique, has worked in different traditional trades during his whole life: as farm worker with olive, almond and cherry trees. He has been as well beekeeper of more than 200 hives, and he is still a craftsman producing traditional baskets out of the Mediterranean palm tree.



With Enrique you will discover the ancient art, almost about to disappear, of producing traditional baskets with Mediterranean palm tree. Coming from a time where plastic didn't exist, the people of the valley carried out everything in their palm baskets which if properly crafted can last a lifetime.



The seasons of the year with ENRIQUE

This traditional trade is only done during **summer season**, when the palm tree has been properly collected and dried out.

Through the open doors workshop with Enrique you will understand the importance of recollection and drying, the tools and tricks to weave, the different products that were sold meanwhile

listening to his multiple stories as a beekeeper or the legends of the valley.

Open doors day with Enrique will always imply crafting a traditional palm basket you will take with you as a present.

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