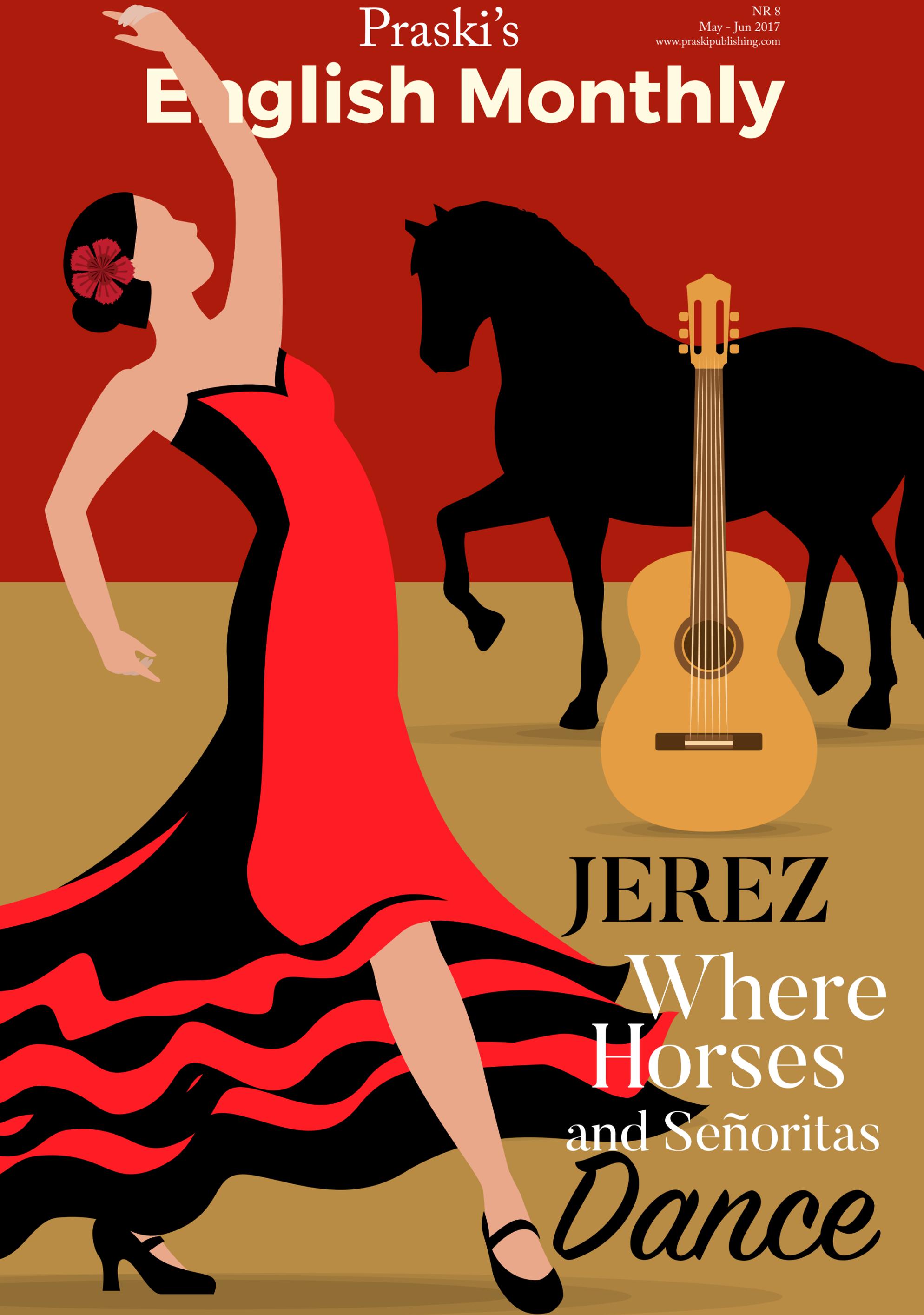


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JEREZ

Where
Horses
and Señoritas

Dance



Cover story

Jerez - Where Horses and Señoritas Dance

The sunny city of Jerez in southern Spain, 20 kilometres from Sanlúcar, is famous for sherry and fiery flamenco dancing but it is also synonymous with horses. The word Jerez is an Arabic name and dates back to when the Moors ruled this part of Spain. Traditionally, in the first week of May the Jerez Horse Show (Feria de Caballo) is held. The date has been changed this year to 13th May.

For a whole week, people will flock to the González Hontario Fairgrounds, which cover a huge space of 52,000 square metres, to see pretty señoritas and beautifully groomed horses carry out choreographed moves. Within the grounds are approximately two hundred casitas. These are private marquees, temporary homes varying in size where you will find groups of friends and horse associations eating, drinking sherry and dancing. Jerez locals will be drinking fino and some even add lemonade to make a rebujito. In Jerez members of the public can view the festivities inside the tents unlike in Seville.

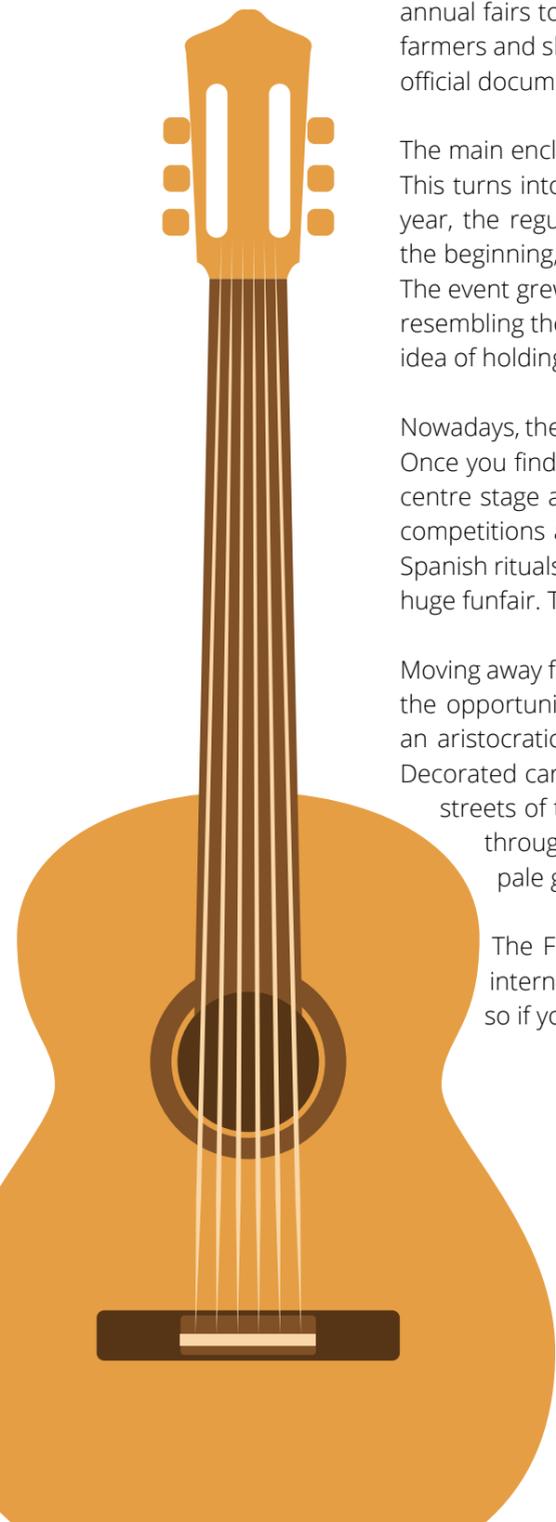
The Jerez Horse Fair can be traced back to when it was a small town in the reign of Alfonso X El Sabo. He was called 'the wise' and as an ongoing celebration of his reconquest of the town, he gave permission for two annual fairs to take place in April and October. By the Middle Ages, the fairs had become commercial with farmers and shepherds bringing their livestock into Jerez. Merchants who participated in the fairs signed an official document in 1481 stating where the major festivals of the town should be held.

The main enclosure (recinto) was opened in 1903 comprising a floor covered in yellow sand called alberto. This turns into a dust storm after a very hot day and when it rains the ground turns into mud. The same year, the regulations permitted individual riders and societies to build their own marquees (casetas). In the beginning, gypsies travelled to Jerez to earn a living by putting on a show with their performing steeds. The event grew in popularity with a children's entertainment park added and other forms of entertainment resembling the present-day horse fair. But it wasn't until 1955 that the Domecq Sherry family proposed the idea of holding a yearly festival to celebrate the horse in Jerez.

Nowadays, the event is huge and people from all over the world come to Jerez to see this spectacular festival. Once you find yourself at the González Hontoria Park what can you expect to see? The horses always take centre stage and you will witness cowboy and classical dressage, skilful displays of carriage driving, riding competitions and games of polo. Flamenco dancers will make an appearance and for those interested in Spanish rituals, bullfighting will be on display. For children and anyone who loves a ride on the fair, there is a huge funfair. There will be copious amounts of food and drink to be consumed in the casitas.

Moving away from the enclosures and park, a stroll through the leafy streets of the city will give most visitors the opportunity to see horses parading elegantly with their riders immaculately dressed. The men have an aristocratic air while the women beside them are dressed in the most lavish flamenco style dresses. Decorated carriages with a flavour of Hungary, Russia and Spain also can be seen trotting on the cobbled streets of the old town. In the evenings, the mood and colours change as strident guitar rhythms float through the air, horses hooves become silent while señoritas' heels stomp and castanets click. The pale golden sherry flows freely as the party grows wilder.

The Feria del Caballo is still very much linked with Andalusia even though it is advertised as an international festival. The horse is an animal that is much loved and respected in this part of Spain – so if you want to feel the equestrian vibe, don't forget to go along to the fair 13-20 May.





Handsome horsemen demonstrate their riding skills



Dressed for the occasion in stunning dresses

Vocabulary

To flock - to go in great number

Groomed - of a horse, having had its coat cleaned and brushed

Fino - a light-coloured, dry sherry

Shepherd - a person who looks after sheep

Steed - a horse being ridden

Dressage - riding and training a horse to perform elegant movements

Copious - great quantities

Leafy - shady from the leaves of trees

Immaculately - in a perfect manner, particularly in relation to tidiness

Air - here: a manner, giving the impression

Cobbled streets - roads made up of small, rounded stones

Strident - in a loud, harsh manner

Equestrian - pertaining to horses

Vibe - atmosphere

Comprehension test

Without referring back to the text, match the typical adjective-noun collocations used in the article.

1	pretty	a	moves
2	groomed	b	document
3	choreographed	c	entertainment park
4	temporary	d	streets
5	official	e	horses
6	cobbled	f	sherry
7	pale golden	g	señoritas
8	children's	h	homes

