

Harro Wine Festival

Description

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Arrival of summer is traditionally celebrated in Spain with a month of fiestas, music and sport. Harro Wine Festival is one such event which is celebrated in June each year in Rioja region and involves a "Batalla de Vino" or the Battle of Wine.

It begins on the night of June 28, when people of all age groups gather on the town's streets for a night of partying. Next day in the morning the town's mayor leads a procession the people on a horseback which marches uphill to the highest point in Harro, where a mass is celebrated at the Hermitage of San Felices de Bilibio. The mayor then erects a purple flag on the hilltop which signifies the commencement of wine festivity and the people to soak each other with thousands of litres of wine. A trucks holding 20,000 gallons of red wine provide ammunition for the fight.

After the war of wine subsides, purple-tinted participants head back to the town center for further celebrations: traditional dances, a bull run featuring small female heifers (which are not killed during the event, in contrast to other bullfights in Spain), a feast, and of course, more drinking.

harro2

As reported by the [Smithsonian magazine](#), the festival has its roots in the region's religious history. When local saint Felices de Bilibio died in the 6th century, people began making pilgrimages into the cliffs to honor him. A hermitage was erected in the 18th century, and soon celebrants were "baptizing" each other in wine to celebrate the event. The modern iteration of the tradition began in 1965, when the pilgrimage was dubbed a "wine battle" and residents of Harro started drenching each other in booze for the sheer joy of it.

Though the battle started as a local tradition but has now become a major tourists attraction for visitors who are eager to participate in the wine-soaked revelry.

Sources " Smithsonian.com, wikipedia