The â€œPlaza Mayorâ€• of Salamanca

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Spain has famous arcaded squares in its many cities, and they all have something unique and traditional about them, but the Plaza Mayor of Salamanca is one of the most stunning ones in the whole country!

Itâ€™s beautiful Baroque style was dreamed and designed originally to serve as a bull ring by the famous architect Alberto Churriguera, who started constructing it back in 1729. After his death, another architect --Andres Garcia de QuiÃ±ones --followed ChurrigueraÂ´s design and completed it in 1755. The Plaza Mayor was build to become the heart of the city and this is why the most important buildings, like City Hall, Royal Pavillion, Casa Consistorial and Iglesia de San Martin are located there.

On two sides of the square we can see ornate medallions representing important personalities in the Spanish history, like kings, sages, saints, artists, etc. These medallions top each of the 88 arcs of the square.

Fairs, markets, celebrations, and even bull fights were held there for many years, and the Arch of the Bull leads to another covered market close by. Originally the interior was a gardened area complete with flower beds, trees, a music kiosk for concerts and dancing, all of it surrounded by a stone paved road.

The central garden was tore down last century and paved with the actual grey granite stones to make it more functional with modern life.

It was declared a National Monument back in 1935, for its unique harmonic construction, size, decoration, and its rich stone color shaded architecture.

The Plaza mayor nowadays features a number of souvenir shops, restaurants and cafeterias, with many outdoor terraces where people sit to enjoy their coffees, â€œtapasâ€• (Spanish snacks) or beers while they chat with friends or colleagues.

The CafÃ© Novelty of Plaza Mayor

One of the most traditional, special and well known cafÃ© in Spain, is the famous CafÃ© Novelty, the oldest cafÃ© in the city of Salamanca, which sits in the Plaza Mayor and opened its doors in 1905. It soon became a special meeting place for artists, writers, politicians and intellectuals up to this day. Miguel de Unamuno, who was the rector of the University of Salamanca, was also a famous philosopher, poet, and writer, and was amongst CafÃ© NoveltyÂ´s regular patrons. He organized the â€œtertuliaâ€• (literal social gathering) attended frequently by Ortega y Gasset, Francisco Umbral and others. It is said that the Football Club of Salamanca and the Spanish National Radio were founded while sitting at the tables of CafÃ© Novelty in the early 1900s.

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