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CONTACT Us

Call:

857-209-8525

Email:

kevin@onebitevegan.com

Website:

www.OneBiteVegan.com

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF SPAIN'S CRUELEST SPORT

By: Ellen Forster



For generations, thousands of tourists have flocked Spain to see the country's famous bullfighting events, along with other cruel ceremonies held across the country in the name of tradition. Find out more about these abhorrent events, how to be a responsible traveler and how to ensure your friends and family don't contribute to this dying industry.

Dating back as far as the Roman times, bullfighting has played a huge role in Spanish culture for generations. Bullfighting as we know it

today originated in the Middle Ages, wherein the Greeks and Romans would organise combats on the back of bulls. Eventually, the matador or bull-fighter would take on the bull on foot in the plaza de toros arena, making for an incredible spectacle, ending in a ceremonial grand finale, wherein the matador plunges the sword between the bull's shoulder blades, in a move known as the estocada, killing the bull in front of the audience's eyes.

Many regions in Spain, including Catalonia, have banned 'bullfighting' to the death as recently

as 2011. However, 'bull dodging' events are still common across the peninsula. The matador will provoke the bull with flags, either on horseback or on foot, as opposed to fighting other bulls like in traditional ceremonies.

Sadly, it's not just bullfighting and 'bull dodging' that the Spanish are known for when it comes to ceremoniously inflicting cruelty on this beautiful breed. You may already be aware of the San

Fermin Festival, held in the city of Pamplona, Navarra each year.

The week-long event welcomes over 1,000,000 people to the city every year and plays host to a variety of traditional and folklorish activities, the cruelest of which is known as the encierro or los toros de san Fermin, or the 'running of the bulls'.





Hundreds of people run in front of six bulls and another six steers down a half-a-mile stretch of narrow street in the centre of Pamplona. A quick YouTube search will bring up dozens of horrific clips of this cruel and torturous event, for both the bulls and the participants alike. Since 1925, 15 people have died in the run and every year several hundreds of people are injured, by both trampling and the bulls themselves.

In recent years, many Spaniards have turned against bullfighting and similar events, recognising it as a cruel and futile sport, whose traditional should be laid to rest. However, events like the encierro or los toros de san Fermin still

attract hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world each year. Sadly, many tourists are still keen to witness, or even take part in, the country's most iconic traditions, without a thought for the abhorrent animal cruelty carried out in their name, with their money.

By being informed and educated tourists, we are able to make intelligent decisions about where our money is spent while we're on vacation. We must make sure our peers are aware of that too, here are some handy links to share with friends and family who may be planning a trip to Spain and could be tempted by this outdated and cruel spectacle: