

## La Semana Santa

The Holy Week of Easter is the most important Catholic festival in South America. *La Semana Santa*, also known as Holy Week in English, celebrates the last days of Christ's life, the Crucifixion and Resurrection, as well as the end of Lent. *La Semana Santa* is observed with a range of celebrations, from the most religious to commercial.

### What Happens During la Semana Santa?

Each day has its rituals, processions and parades through the streets with participants on their knees or carrying large wooden crosses. There are masses and religious observations, prayer meetings, and thousands of Catholics showing respect. In many communities, the full Passion Play is enacted from the Last Supper, the Betrayal, the Judgment, the Procession of the 12 Stations of the Cross, the Crucifixion and, finally, the Resurrection. Participants are costumed and play their parts with devotion.

During this week, many schools and offices are closed. You can expect



resort areas to be crowded as people take advantage of the holiday.



### Interesting Traditions by Country:

**Peru** - while it's customary to go to church every day during *La Semana Santa*, some days are especially important. On Holy Thursday, history is incorporated into the celebrations in Cusco as there is a parade to remember an earthquake in 1650. It ends at the Cathedral as it was the one building that survived this damaging earthquake.

**Venezuela** - Things heat up in the capital city of Caracas as it's traditional to burn a statue of a local figure. This is known as 'Burning of Judas' where locals will parade the figure through the streets before meeting together to burn it in a bonfire. In many other regions in Latin America this is done on New Year's as a way to rid the new year of bad energy and move on.

**Colombia** - In Popayan, which is known as the white city, Easter is a time to celebrate art as well as the religious holiday. While there is an annual Easter parade there are also many art exhibits and events celebrating *La Semana Santa*.

**Argentina** - While many people think that chocolate Easter eggs are only a North American tradition that is not true. With 85% of the Argentine population being Roman Catholic, it's common for families to leave the city for the hillside to spend with family. After a big Easter meal, chocolate eggs are exchanged and some families with smaller children will have a chocolate egg hunt.



**Ecuador** - Like in Argentina, it's common for Ecuadorians to travel during Easter and most often it is to the beach. One of the most religious cities in Ecuador is Cuenca and it's common for devoted Catholics to come to the city to celebrate in this colonial town. In addition to the many processions and parades, locals will eat *fanasa*, which is an Easter stew with salted cod, beans and grains. There are 12 grains in the soup to pay tribute to the 12 Apostles, and while *fanasa* exists in many cities in Latin America, it is widely believed that the best *fanasa* exists in Cuenca.

➤ What are three things that happen during la Semana Santa in Latin America?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

➤ What is one unique fact about the celebrations in each of following countries?

Perú - \_\_\_\_\_

Venezuela- \_\_\_\_\_

Colombia- \_\_\_\_\_

Argentina- \_\_\_\_\_

Ecuador- \_\_\_\_\_