



Pedagogical Information

Las Ventas Tour

Contents

I- The Bullring

II-The Bullfighter

III- The Bullfight

IV- The Bull

V- The President

VI- The Infirmary



Discover the Monumental Las Ventas Bullring

The Bullring

1- What is the capacity of the arena?

The current capacity of the Las Ventas bullring is 23,798 spectators. Las Ventas is the 3rd largest bullring in the World after Mexico and Valencia (Venezuela).

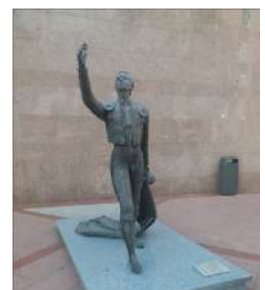
2- Who are the statues dedicated to?

- a. **Jose Cubero Sanchez “El Yiyo”**, one of the last bullfighters to be killed in a bullfight in Spain (Colmenar Viejo, Madrid).

- b. **Alexander Flemming**. It may surprise many to see Alexander Flemming outside a bullring, but bullfighters have a lot to thank the inventor of penicillin for. Before the discovery of penicillin bullfighters had to fight infections as well as bulls. The horns of the bull produced two types of risks and on many occasions, even if the goring itself didn't cause fatal damage, the infection that came after it did.

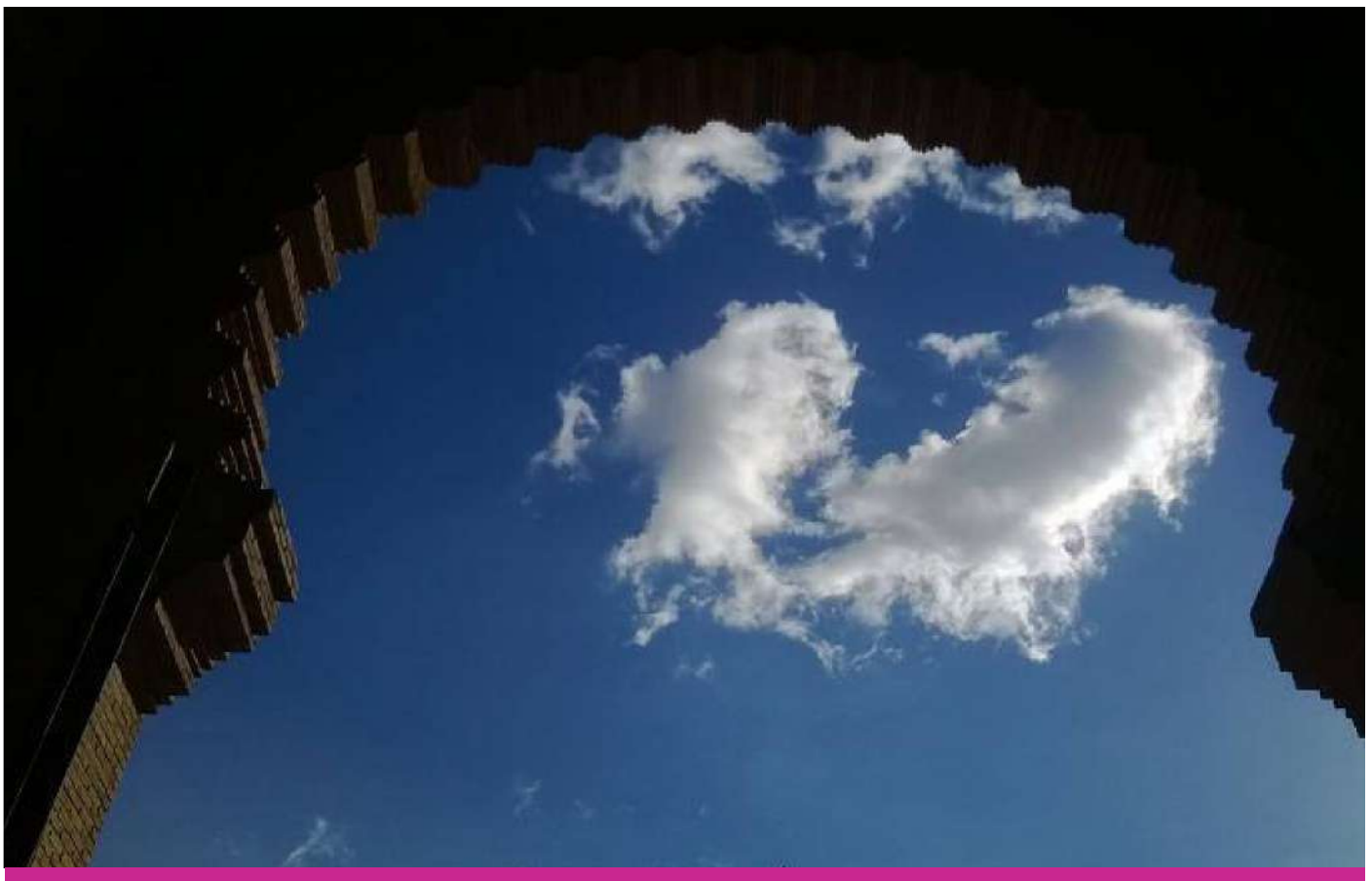


- c. **Luis Miguel Dominguin**. A tribute to the Madrid bullfighter who was carried out of the main gate of the bullring on 5 occasions.



- d. **Antonio Bienvenida**. One of the greatest bullfighters of his era. Bienvenida was from Madrid and was the bullfighter who fought the most in Las Ventas during his era.





3- Who was the architect?

José Espeliu, one of the most famous architects of his era. (interestingly, a friend of Joselito, original inventor of the idea for the monumental bullring) Unfortunately, Espeliu passed away before the ring was completed and the work was passed on to another distinguished architect: Manuel Munoz Monasterio, designer of the Santiago Barnabeu, stadium of the Real Madrid football team.

4-Since when have bullfights taken place in the bullring?

The first bullfight to take place in the bullring was on the 17 of June of 1931. Amongst the many curious things that have happened in Las Ventas is the pause in activity throughout the civil war, during which the arena was used as a large orchard.

5-What is the architectural style of the bullring?

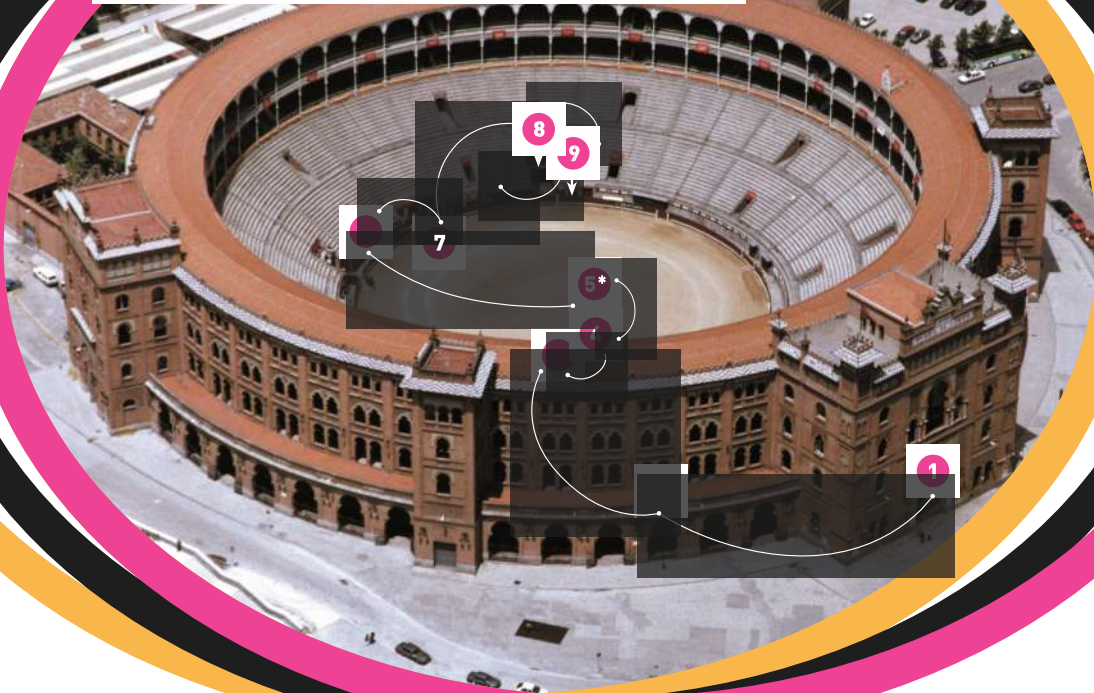
The bullring is of neo-mudejar style, with a brick façade that is adorned with glazed ceramic decorations. The structure is supported by a metal frame which also holds up the stands.

6-What is the significance of the coats of arms in the bullring?

The coat of arms of each Spanish province can be found around the bullring, interestingly, the province of Cordoba appears twice. Of the current set of provinces, only the African provinces of Ceuta and Melilla are missing, which at the time were only under Spanish protection.

7-Why does the band not play?

In Las Ventas, unlike in all other bullrings, the band does not play music whilst a bullfighter is putting on a good performance, this is due to an interesting occurrence in the so called "Victory Bullfight", the first bullfight in the ring after the civil war had ended.



During Marcial Lalanda's performance with the first bull of the afternoon, the crowd pleaded for the band to play a *pasodoble* -composed in honour of the bullfighter- to harmonize his *faena*. On the contrary, Domingo Ortega's *faena*, which was so exceptional that he was almost given a tail for it, was not harmonized with music. The tension between the fans of both bullfighters became so heated that the president of the bullfight made the inevitable decision that there would be no more music. Since then, this has become a tradition in the Madrid bullring.

8-How is the bullring organized?

This bullring has 4 levels: **low stands, high stands, terraces and balconies.**

The stands are split into 3 different sections called *tendidos*, these are divided into three main zones:

Shade (1.2.9 and 10)

Sun (4.5.6 and 7)

Sun and shade (3 and 8)

9- The main gate of Las Ventas

To be carried out of the main gate (Puerta Grande) of any bullring is the best reward a bullfighter can receive for his performance. In Madrid, the main gate is opened when a bullfighter cuts 2 ears during the bullfight, trophies which are awarded on public demand by the president of the bullfight after a good performance.

To the left of the gate you can find a plaque commemorating all of the bullfighter who have been carried out of the gate. further to the left, there is another plaque in memory of **Antonio Bienvenida**, the bullfighter who has fought the most in Las Ventas.



Bullfighters

10- Which bullfighters have been carried out of the main gate?

The bullfighter who has been carried out of the main gate on the most occasions is **Santiago Martin "El Viti"**, who was carried out on 14 occasions. He is followed by:

Paco Camino with 12

Antonio Bienvenida with 11

Andrés Vazquez with 10

11- At what age do you start bullfighting?

Children can start training at the bullfighting school from 9 to 10 years of age. They start their prefinal career once they are 16.

12- Where do bullfighters train?

In specialized bullfighting schools. The Madrid bullfighting school trains about 50 new students every year who will eventually become bullfighters.

13- Are there female bullfighters?

Yes, the first woman to perform in Las Ventas was Juanita Cruz, in 1936. Currently, only two women have opened the main gate in Las Ventas; one of them is the famous bullfighter Cristina Sanchez.



14- How much does a bullfighter earn?

The amount a bullfighter gets paid depends on his popularity, as well as the capacity of the bullring he is performing in. However, a bullfighter's wages aren't all for him as the wages for his team come out of his salary.

15- Are there foreign bullfighters?

Yes, they are very common in countries that have adopted bullfighting culture: Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela and France are currently generating lots of bullfighting talent.

Over the years, there have been bullfighters of many different nationalities, possibly one of the most interesting cases is that of Taira Nono, the only active Japanese bullfighter.

16- Why is the bullfighters costume referred to as *suit of lights*?

The suit used by the bullfighters during a bullfight is

referred to as the suit of lights, its name comes from the sparkling light produced by the sequins that cover it.

17-Who is in the bullfighter's team?

The cuadrilla is the team of assistant bullfighters, both on foot and on horseback, who help to fight the bull under the orders of the bullfighter himself. It is made up of *picadors* and *banderilleros*.

18-What is the *alternative*?

The *alternative* is the ceremony in which a novice bullfighter becomes a *matador de toros* -fully professional bullfighter

19- What does the ceremony consist of?

The most senior matador on the bill, head of the line-up, hands over the fighting of the first bull to the new bullfighter and, as bullfighting godfather, hands over the "tools": sword and cape.

The alternative can be taken in any bullring around the world, however, it is important to confirm it in 4 important bullrings: The Las Ventas bullring in Madrid, the bullring of Nimes (France), the monumental bullring of Mexico D.F and/or the Santamaria bullring in Bogota (Colombia). This ceremony is the doctorate of a bullfighter and he will be known as a *maestro* from then on.

20-Has anyone died in Las Ventas?

Yes, 1 bullfighter, 3 *banderilleros* and a carpenter after a tragic accident in which a bull leaped into the ringside walkway, yet there have been lots of bullfighters have been injured over the years in Las Ventas. Its for this reason that the role of the infirmary and the medical staff is so important. Their jobs will be explained in more detail later.

21- How many bullfighters participate in a bullfight?

There are generally 3 bullfighters in a bullfight who face six bulls. Two bulls for each bullfighter.





The Bullfight

22-How long does a bullfight last?

There is no exact duration for a bullfight. The event will usually take between 2 and 2 ½ hours.

23- When does the bullfighting season start in Spain?

The season starts in February and goes on until mid-October.

24- Are all bullfights the same?

No, there are different types of bullfights.

-Corrida de toros: in which professional bullfighters face 4 to 5-year-old bulls.

-Novillada with picadors: in which semi-professional bullfighters perform with 3 to 4-year-old bulls.

-Novilladas without picadors: in which semi-professional bullfighters perform with 2 to 3-year-old bulls without the use of picadors.

-Rejoneo: in which professional and semi-professional bullfighters perform on horseback. Bulls of different ages can be used in these bullfights.

25- What is a novillada?

A novillada is a bullfight in which younger bulls are

fought by novice bullfighters who have not yet taken their *alternativa*.

26- How can a bullfight be suspended?

Very bad weather conditions or if all the bullfighters on the line up are injured. In the San Isidro fair of 2014, for example, a bullfight was suspended after all 3 bullfighters who participated were injured. The bullfighters were David Mora, Antonio Nazaré and Saúl Jiménez Fortes. Nonetheless, the suspension of a bullfight is a very infrequent occurrence, the last time something like this happened was in 1979. On this occasion. In this instance Pedro Fernández, Paco Alcalde y José Ortega were injured.

27- What is the *paseílo*?

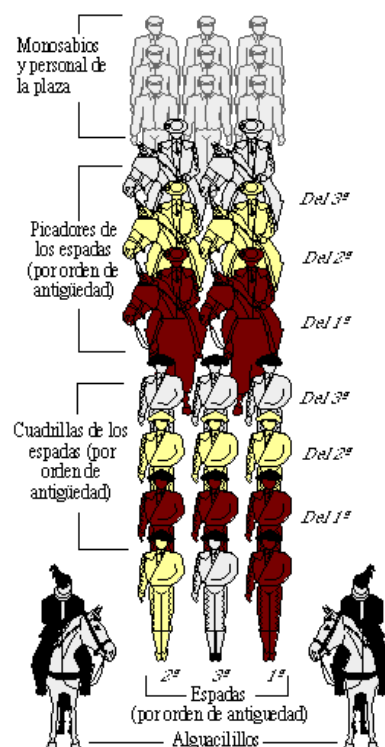
The *paseílo* is the opening parade of the bullfight and it is an essential part of the event in which the participation of all the protagonists is indispensable.

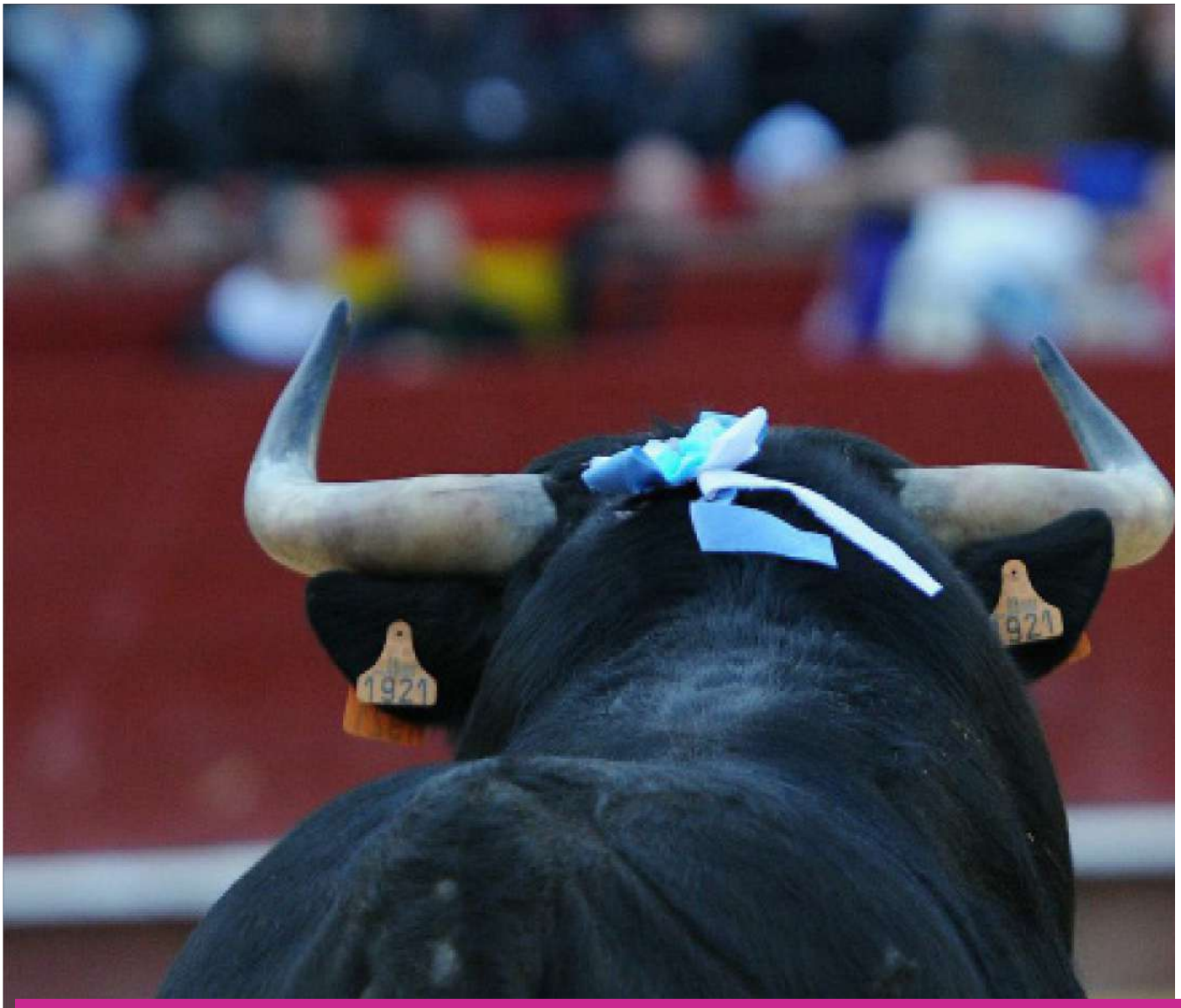
29- How are the protagonists arranged in the *paseílo*?

At the front of the parade are the *alguacilillos*, who would traditionally be responsible for cleaning out the ring. Now they are responsible enforcing out the orders of the president in the ring, handing trophies to the bullfighter and passing the keys of the bull gate to the person who opens it at the end of the *paseílo*.

The first in the line are the bullfighters. Their positioning follows their seniority depending on when they took their *alternativa*. The first bullfighter to take their *alternativa* is positioned to the right, the second most experienced stands to the left and the youngest bullfighter stands in-between them.

Next come the cuadrillas (bullfighters' teams) of banderilleros. The way they position themselves also depends on the seniority of the bullfighter they are working for. Then come the picadors, each bullfighter was 2 (one for each bull). The picadors are always accompanied by the *monosabios* who care for the horses and assist the picadors whilst they work.





The Bull

29-How much does a bull weigh?

In Madrid, the bullfighting legislation states that a bull should weigh no less than 460 kilos and no more than 700.

30-How do bulls live before the bullfight?

They live out in the freedom of the *dehesa* -vast natural pastures rich in Mediterranean flora and fauna. This makes them a very privileged species.

31-What is a fighting bull?

Toro de lidia or *toro bravo* refers to the male of a bovine species that has been developed through selective breeding for its use in bullfighting events. The fighting bull is an indigenous breed from the Iberian Peninsula and is known for its fierce, temperamental character, referred to as "bravura", for which they are selected for breeding, as well as physical attributes such as large forward pointing horns and highly developed locomotive system.

This breed would be extinct if it wasn't for bullfighting.

32- At what age do bulls go to the ring?

Most bulls are sent to the ring between 5 and 6 years of age.

33- How much does a fighting bull cost?

Depending on the popularity of the breeder and the condition of the bull, they can cost anything between 3,000 and 18,000 euros.

34- Does the bull always die?

No, it is possible for a bull to receive an *indulto*, where it is sent back to the ranch to live the rest of its life in peace.

35- When can a bull receive an *indulto*?

When the animal has displayed extraordinary qualities for the bullfight and formidable aggression. It must not be forgotten that respect and admiration for this animal are fundamental in the bullfight.

36- Which is the only bull to receive an *indulto* in Madrid?

His name was *Velador*, he is the only bull to receive an *indulto* in Madrid and was fought by Ortega Cano. This, however, has happened to many other bulls in bullfights around the world.

37- What happens to a bull after an *indulto*?

When a bull receives an *indulto*, as well as receiving the best care on the ranch, he spends the rest of his life with the cows as a breeding stud.

38- What happens to bulls killed in the ring?

The meat is used for a wide variety of traditional Spanish dishes. As fighting bulls live on open natural pastures, eating natural food and exercising, their meat is of high quality.



Photo: Velador and Ortega Cano

39- What happens to the bullfighter if the bull receives an *indulto*?

This is one of the greatest things that can happen to a bullfighter, as a good bull will usually let him put on a fantastic performance. The bullfighter is usually awarded trophies and leaves through the main gate, however, in the case of *Velador*, people were so focused on what had happened to the bull that Ortega Cano received no awards.

40- Who makes the final decision?

The president, who has maximum authority at the bullfight.





LA PRESIDENCIA

41- Who is the president?

The president has the highest authority in the bullring and is responsible for making sure that bullfighting legislation is followed and for making sure that the bullfight runs correctly. In Madrid the president is a police inspector and he is accompanied by a veterinary advisor and an artistic advisor, who is usually a retired bullfighter.

42- When can a bullfighter receive an ear?

-The first ear, according to bullfighting legislation, is awarded when the majority of the crowd request it. The awarding of the second trophy (although the crowd demand it) is left entirely to the president's discretion. Sometimes the opinion of the president and that of the audience will not coincide, on these occasions the crowd will make their feelings towards his criteria very apparent.



44-What is the significance of the handkerchiefs?

With the **white handkerchiefs** the president signals the starting of the bullfight, the releasing of each bull, the changing of the acts and the awarding of trophies (ears and tails).

With the **green handkerchief** the president confirms the returning of a bull that is considered inapt for the bullfight to the corals, so that it can be replaced with a spare bull.

With the **blue handkerchief** the president awards the dead bull with a lack around the ring in honour of its good performance in the ring.

The **orange handkerchief** is used to award the bull with an *indulto* for its excellent qualities throughout the fight.

The **red hankechief** is used to signal the use of black banderillas when a bull has shown a lack of aggression and bravery in the first stage, refusing to charge the picador.



LA ENFERMERÍA

45-What happens when a bullfighter gets caught?

They are taken to the infirmary, the coldest part of the bullring but one of the most important. Here, the doctors treat and sometimes save the lives of the bullfighters.

At Las Ventas, the infirmary is made up of two operation theatres, two injury rooms (for very severe and less severe injuries) and a doctor's office.

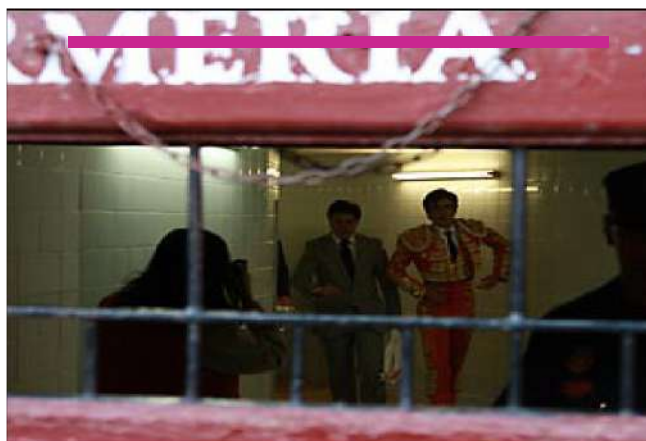


Photo: doctors office.



Información and Reservativos

info@lasventastour.com

687 73 90 32

