

A little history: Valencia and Silk

The Silk Road was the main connection between East and West, connecting China with Europe.

For centuries, this route was the bridge between two worlds. A road along which merchants, priests, scientists, diplomats, soldiers and adventurers traversed, carrying, in addition to silk, goods such as porcelain, iron and tea, which thus reached the West.

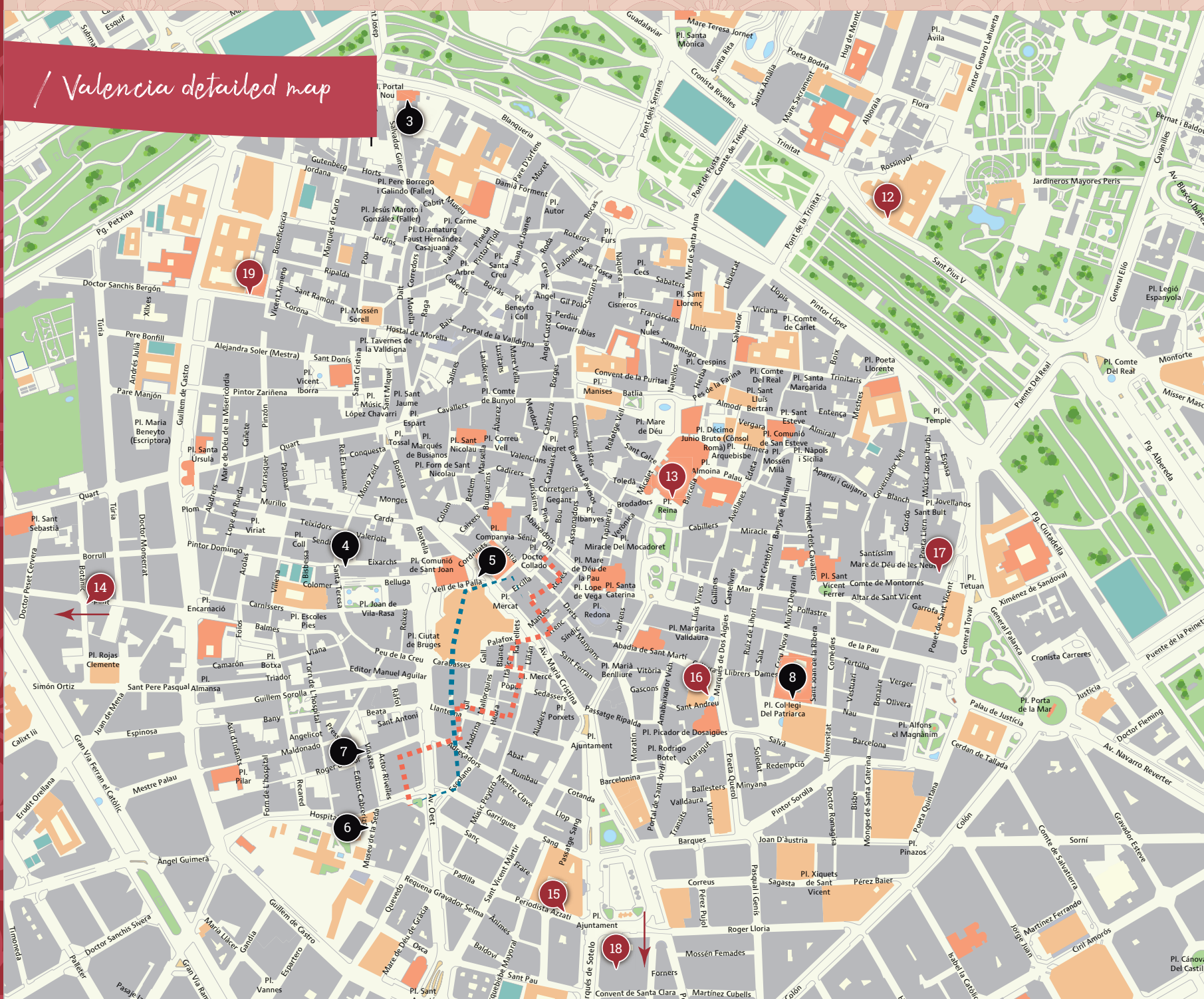
Beyond its commercial side, the route represented a path for the dissemination of ideas and knowledge in the field of culture and science. From very early on, this exchange was carried out in both directions.

After the conquest of Persia by the Muslims in the middle of the 7th century, they came to control the Silk Road, and by later extending their rule over north Africa, they spread both new products and knowledge from the East, which ended up reaching Spain from north Africa. From that time on, silkworm breeding spread throughout the peninsula.

The development of the silk industry meant that in the 17th century, King Charles II raised the rank of the velvet-working guild to professional college, and silk working went from being a minor to a major art (at the same level as sculpture and painting, for example), which gave rise to the emergence of the Colegio del Arte Mayor de la Seda. It was restored and opened to the public in 2016 as the Colegio del Arte Mayor de la Seda Mu-

seum, thanks to the generous intervention and restoration work carried out by the Hortensia Herrero Foundation.

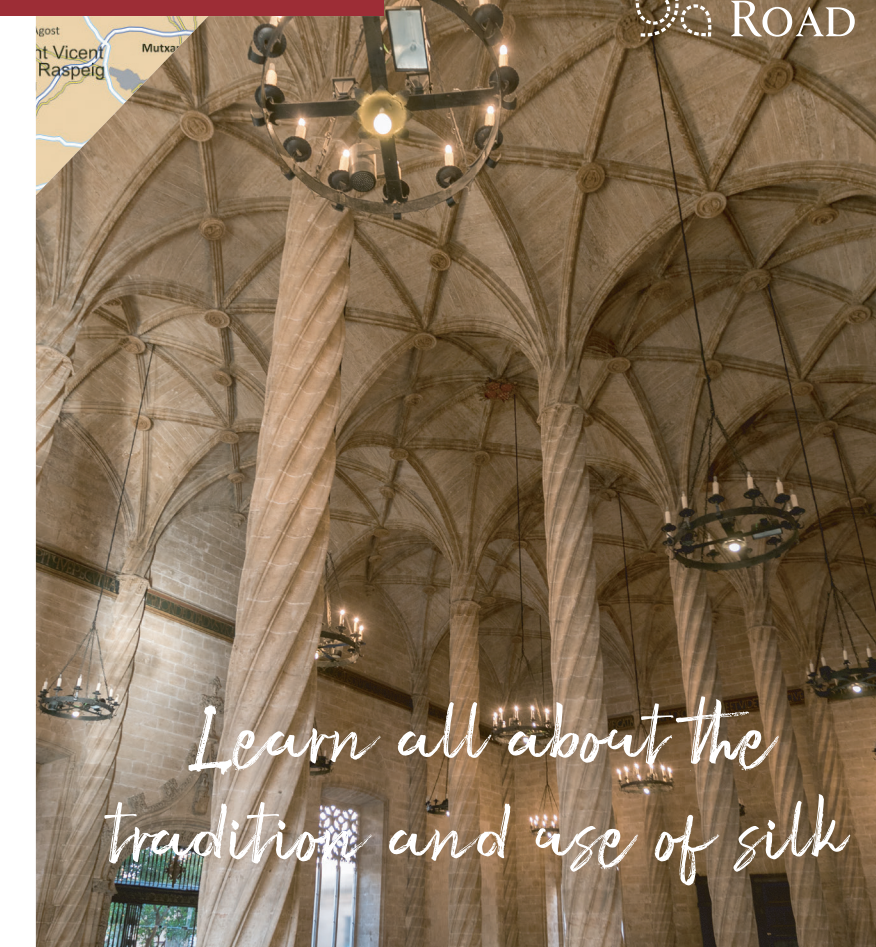
In the 18th century, Valencia became the main silk centre in Spain, especially since production in Toledo began to decline. This was the "golden century" of Valencian silk.



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The Silk Road /map



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MEDITERRANEAN ATTITUDE

The history and production of silk.



/ Key

MUSEUMS

1. Museo del Palmito d'Aldaia (Aldaia)
2. Museu Valencia de la Festa (Algemesi)
3. Municipal Museum of Alzira (Alzira)
4. Hort de Carreres (Carcaixent)
5. Museu d'Etnologia de Castelló (Castelló)
6. Casa Museo Pinazo (Godella)
7. The Moncada Silk Factory (Moncada)
8. Textile Museum (Ontinyent)
9. Museu de la Rajoleria (Paiporta)
10. House-Museum of Silk (Requena)
11. Municipal Museum of Requena (Requena)
12. Valencia Museum of Fine Arts (Valencia)
13. Valencia Diocesan Cathedral Museum (Valencia)
14. Museo de Historia de Valencia (Valencia)
15. Histórico municipal Museum of Valencia (Valencia)
16. Museo Nacional Cerámica y Artes Suntuarias "González Martí" (Valencia)
17. Cervelló Palace Museum (Valencia)
18. Museo Taurino de Valencia (Valencia)
19. Museu Valencia d'Etnologia (Valencia)

PLACES OF INTEREST

1. Casa del Bou (Albalat de la Ribera)
2. Garin Silk Factory (Moncada)
3. Alqueria de Félix (Valencia)
4. Casa-taller José Luis March (Valencia)
5. Lonja de la Seda/Silk Exchange (Valencia)
6. Museo-Colegio del Arte mayor de la Seda de Valencia (Valencia)
7. Palacio de los Tamarit (Valencia)
8. Real Colegio del Corpus Christi de Valencia (Valencia)
9. Vinalesa Silk Factory (Vinalesa)

ROUTES OF SILK

From the Lonja de la Seda to the Colegio de Arte Mayor de la Seda

- Carrer de Pere Compte Mestre
- Plaça del Mercat
- Carrer Vell de la Palla
- Plaça Ciutat de Bruges
- Avinguda de l'Oest
- Carrer de l'Hospital

Through the market

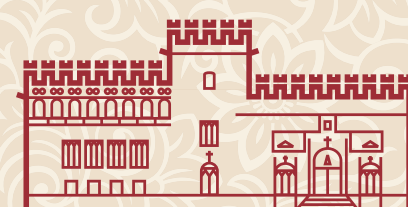
- Carrer de la Lonja (currently the access to La Lonja),
- Carrer d'Ercilla
- Plaça del Mercado
- Carrer Palafox (accessible access to the market)
- Carrer de las Calabazas
- Carrer dels Mallorquins
- Carrer de la Linterna
- Carrer Roger de Flor
- Carrer Vinalea
- Carrer del Hospital



SILK MONUMENTS



Museo Histórico Municipal



Lonja de la Seda



Museo Nacional de Cerámica y Artes Suntuarias González Martí



Museo de la Catedral de Valencia



Museo Valenciano de Etnología



Museo de Bellas Artes San Pío V



Museo de la Semana Santa Marinera



Museo de la Historia de la Ciudad



Museo del Patriarca

/ Key events

Here are some key events where you can appreciate clothing and the use of silk in it.

- Mare de Déu del Lluç fiesta (Alzira)**
Festivities in honour of the patron saint of Alzira in which the traditional Silk Offering is held, when colourful bundles of braided raw silk are given to the Virgin. 12 September.
- The Moti dels Vellutiers bonfire (Valencia)**
Commemoration of the mutiny by silk workers in 1856 and the spinners' strike of 1902. At the end of January.
- Fallas in Valencia (Valencia)**
A major festa in Valencia. On the 15th, the falla monuments are raised (la plantà), and on the 19th, the fallas are ended by burning them (la crema). Highlights include the Flower Offering to the Virgen de los Desamparados, when fallas participants come dressed in regional Valencian clothing.
- La Magdalena festival (Castelló)**
The city's move from Magdalena hill to the coastal plain in 1251 is commemorated. Highlights include the Cabalgata del Prego, the Tornà de la Romeria and Les Gaïates floats. 9 days between February and April, depending on the year.
- Les Fogueres de Sant Joan (Alacant)**
The main fiestas of Alacant city with fireworks and traditional dress in which ephemeral monuments known as fogueres are raised and then burned on Saint John's Eve Between 20 and 24 June.

What is the Silk Road

The Silk Road was a historic network of trade routes that came about from the start of Chinese silk production in the 2nd century BCE and that extended from the Asian continent to the western Mediterranean to become the main connection between East and West.

Silk arrived in the Region of Valencia with the Muslims and its cultivation, manufacture and sale acquired great importance and international prestige.

Since antiquity, silk cloth has been associated with luxury and commercial and cultural exchanges. It was one of the first goods to become international, as the Silk Road itself attests.



THE IMPORTANCE OF SILK FOR VALENCIA CITY

Silk production in Valencia city was one of the main economic activities from the 15th to the 18th centuries. For this reason, there are numerous references to this fabric, from clothing exhibited in the city's museums to paintings of figures portrayed wearing luxurious garments made of this material and old silkworm farm.

In fact, this important legacy lives on in the beautiful fallas clothing.

In the 17th century, up to 3,000 looms produced the luxurious silk that dressed European royalty, the aristocracy, the viceroys of the American continent and the clergy, including the Vatican, and which was also used in liturgical ceremonies.



COLEGIO DEL ARTE MAYOR DE LA SEDA MUSEUM

This was the headquarters of the velvet workers guild in Velluters ("velvet") since 1494 and was originally a Gothic building of which there are still some original features inside, such as the spiral staircase attributed to the school of the master Pere Compte. One of the various restorations turned it in the mid-18th century into the Baroque building it is today.

Inside, stand out features include the hall and main staircase, the assembly hall with its majestic 18th century ceramic flooring representing Fame, and the chapel to worship the patron saint.

It was converted into the Silk Museum in 2016..



MARCH HOUSE-WORKSHOP

After the crisis in the silk sector and the closure of the workshops, the looms in the city gradually disappeared and today only a few remain in museums. Luckily, in the March family of artisans house-workshop in Carmen, a Jacquard silk loom is still preserved in its original location, along with silk-working tools and fabric samples.

Several generations of the same family lived and worked here for much of the 19th century up to the present day, and the female side continued the silk tradition despite the crisis in this industry by producing clothing for the clergy.



EL PALACIO DE TAMARIT

When the silk business took off in the second half of the 15th century, many artisans became wealthy businesspeople, giving rise to a silk-based bourgeoisie. A representation of this social ascent is the Tamarit family, whose mansion is preserved in Velluters.

Although transformed inside, its great architectural value lies in its facades, with outstanding features including its windows and balconies with wrought iron lattices typical of the 18th century and rounded corners to facilitate the transit of carriages.

The building now houses various foundations.



LA LONJA DE LA SEDA

This is the most prominent Gothic building in Valencia city. Located in its historic centre, construction began in 1483 by Pere Compte and Joan Ibarra as the Lonja de los Mercaderes (the Merchants Exchange).

It was conceived as a place of exchange of different goods, including silk. But when this became the predominant and most valuable product for the city, it began to be known as La Lonja de la Seda (the Silk Exchange) from the 18th century. It was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1996 and is, in fact, the first monument with this recognition fundamentally associated with sericulture.

One of its main attractions is the Sala de Contratación, whose eight spiral shaft columns open up like palm trees to form fifteen majestic ribbed vaults 17.4 metres high. Dedicated to commercial transactions, the Taula de Canvis was installed in this hall, the first banking institution in the municipality created in 1407.

Also noteworthy are the Torreón, with three floors, the Orange Tree Patio and the Consulado del Mar pavilion. This institution was created at the beginning of the 16th century to guarantee compliance with maritime legal and commercial regulations. On the upper floor of this pavilion you can see the beautiful panelling from the old 14th century Casa de la Ciudad.



L'ALQUERIA DE FÉLIX

This building from the 16th century located in the urban park of Marxalenes was a home for Valls family workers until a century later when it was converted into a tobacco dryhouse and a silkworm farm. In the chambers or cambras of this warehouse, the silkworm beds or llits de cucs from the beginning of the 19th century are preserved.

Currently, the farmhouse houses a nature classroom, an ethnographic museum of rural Valencian housing, and a permanent exhibition on the history of the building, its environment and the society of the time.



REQUENA

The town of Requena became the fourth biggest silk production centre in the whole of Spain with approximately 600 looms, only behind Valencia, Toledo and Granada. The raw material was brought from Valencia, La Ribera and areas in Albacete, and manufactured and distributed through the ports of Valencia, Sevilla and Cádiz. It was a strategic location for the exchange of products made of this material with Castilla and Andalucía, although a large amount of the fabric from Requena was exported to the American continent.

Requena also has a Colegio del Arte Mayor de la Seda, which is currently the Requena Silk House-Museum. The weavers' guild acquired the building for administrative purposes and it became the headquarters of this important industry and the most valuable witness to the town's silk history. Inside, highlights include the mosaic on the facade, dedicated to the Patron Saint Jerome, the recreation of a traditional home in Requena and the loom.

/The Silk cloth manufacturing process

The manufacture of silk fabric is a highly complex technical process. It goes through several phases.

1/ Harvesting the cocoons and heating them

2/ Winding

The lengths are cleaned and tied to obtain a continuous thread on the spool.

3/ Twisting

The strands are spun multiple times to make them finer and stronger.

5/ Dyeing

7/ Weaving

The resulting braid goes to the final tensioning on the loom where the threads are weaved once they are well tempered. There are two sets on the loom: one along the length, called the warp, and another transverse to it, called the weft. The process consists of intertwining strands of the weft with those of the warp. The way in which this

4/ Washing

Skins are made that are boiled with soapy water to remove the roughness.

6/ The skins

Are transferred to barrels (cane tool where they are wrapped) to make the warp in a wall warping machine.

is done (number of warp threads and how they are intertwined) produces different types of patterns and textures, and, consequently, different types of silk cloth.

/ Some points of interest

What is silk?

Silk is a fibre produced by the *Bombyx mori* caterpillar, commonly known as the silkworm, and is used as a raw material to make high-quality fabrics thanks to certain characteristics that it has: brightness, softness, fineness, resistance, length and good adaptation to dyeing.

Silkworm breeding

The first stage involves breeding and selecting the caterpillars. The cocoons are then produced and harvested. They are then left to dry, and the good quality ones are selected and stored.

Its legendary origin

Oriental tradition tells that in 2698 BCE, the princess Xi-Ling-Shi was drinking tea under the shade of a mulberry tree when a cocoon fell into her cup. As it got wet, the strands were separated and the princess pulled and pulled that very fine fibre and thus accidentally discovered silk thread. She came up with the idea of weaving it, and her husband, Emperor Huang Di, began to teach the court how to breed silkworms.

The patrón saint

The patron saint of the silk artisans' guild is Saint Jerome, the first cardinal to introduce silk into his wardrobe

The importance of women

The work of women was vital in the production of silk and they above all developed the beginning of the process: breeding the silkworms, heating the cocoons and extracting the thread.

Pioneer and inventor

María Inés Pomares was a very important silk-working woman in her time, especially for the invention of a new method of spinning. Instead of spreading the hemp on the distaff, it was tied at the waist to leave both hands free to take the strands, better distribute the yarn to the needle of the wheel and make it easier for it to spin without stopping.

Black silk

Most silk fabrics were dyed black, which was fashionable at the end of the 15th century in Europe among the upper classes, the monarchy and the Church as it symbolised morality, mourning and luxury, as well as an element of social distinction.

/ Gastronomy

The Silk Road introduced Europe to new habits and knowledge in the field of culture, science and gastronomy.

Ingredients that were unknown until then started to appear; rice, oranges, tiger nuts, tea and pasta. Preparation techniques including pickles, yoghurts and stews were introduced and gradually permeated the local diet until they were completely assimilated.

Orange

The Arabs introduced this Chinese citrus fruit from Andalucía and it spread to Murcia and Valencia, where there are records of orange cultivation in the 12th century, although it did not become popular until the 18th century. Orange groves gradually replaced mulberry trees, especially after the sericulture crisis in the 19th century.

Rice

It began to be cultivated in the Region of Valencia in the 8th century. Currently, there is the Arròs de Valencia Protected Designation of Origin for the three traditional Valencian varieties: Bomba, Senia and Bahía. Cullera, Sueca and Valencia have museums dedicated to this basic and highly appreciated ingredient in the regional cuisine.

Horchata

The tiger nut, the main ingredient of horchata, originates from Egypt and reached Valencia thanks to the Silk Road. It is grown in sixteen towns in L'Horta, the only area in Spain where this tuber is produced. More than 5 million kilos of dry tiger nuts are produced in this comarca, the vast majority under designation of origin.