

# The birthplace of paella

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The environs of lake Albufera

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### Introduction

The port city of Valencia lies on Spain's south-eastern coast, where the Turia River meets the Mediterranean Sea. It's known for its City of Arts and Sciences, with futuristic structures including a planetarium, an oceanarium and an interactive museum. It has a long and interesting history with many art deco buildings. Valencia also has several beaches. Nearby Albufera Park is a wetlands reserve with a lake and walking trails and it was here I discovered paella was first created

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We stopped above El Palmer and by the waters edge we found a local mending his fuel line on his boat. When he had fixed it he took us out on the

lake through towering rushes to see the nets which were set to trap eels. He offered a running commentary and told us that the word "Albufera" means "small sea", and in Spanish the definition is "salt-water lagoon". Due to years of sandbars increasing and other environmental changes, the once salt-water lagoon was transformed to fresh water by the 1600s.

He pointed out the Christian crosses on the ridges of old

BOAT AMONGST THE RUSHES ON LAKE ALBUFERA

ONE OF THE LAKESIDE HOUSES





thatched cottages and pointed out a good number of water birds as he steered the boat towards the eel factory.

Back on dry land we continued to the town of El Palmar. Its picturesque setting makes it a popular place. We had a difficult time finding a seat in a restaurant but we had to taste paella where it originated. We chose the classic recipe but there were many variants offering different kinds of meat or fish. With a glass of red wine and with the sun setting it made the perfect end to the day.



PAELLA PANS FOR SALE

THE EEL FACTORY

PAELLA

RIVERSIDE RESTAURANT IN EL PALMAR