

# THE ORCHARD OF ALICANTE AND HIS DEFENSIVE TOWERS: MOTION FOR A TOURIST ROUTE

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The defensive towers of the Orchard of *Alicante* are constructive elements that had a defensive purpose in its origins (between VII – XV centuries). From the 1960s and 1970s, both its landscape and its economic base traditionally based on agriculture have changed. This kind of place has virtually disappeared, because in this area have expanded urban - residential buildings (houses, hospitals, shopping centers, schools and others). Note that in the coastline of the Orchard of Alicante is one of the tourist areas of traditional sun and beach in the province of Alicante such as San Juan and Muchavista Beach (Torres, 1997), which have been occupied mainly by apartment complexes for second homes of Spanish people, so usually by the residents of the city of Alicante and population of the rest of the province and Spain (Vera, 1987) themselves. Many of the towers were demolished during the XX century and some of them, although they are declared as *Bien de Interés Cultural (BIC)* are being advanced deteriorated.

## 2. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of this article is to promote the heritage of the whole Orchard of Alicante and his defensive towers with a proposed tourist route. This route, proposed around the old area of the *Orchard* will incorporate both the towers as other elements associated with them (houses and farms, wineries, chapels, hydraulic engineering system, the landscape of the Orchard and historic roads). To implement this proposal, the first step was to analyze the potential and actual tourist area where the route will be developed. Not only has taken account of the city of Alicante, but also the towns of San Juan, Mutxamel and El Campello by its radius of influence and elements in common with the Orchard, because part of its municipalities are in this place. It is proposed that the route can be made on foot and by bicycle, given the great bike path connections to this place with the city of Alicante and other towns.

The next step was the choice of those towers on its merits and its location were worthy of being part of the route. One factor to consider is that the route will run as far as possible of the urban place, because by this way visitors can know in a more direct way the old place of the Orchard. Then has conducted an analysis of the conservation state of the towers that were incorporated into the route because despite being declared as *Bien de Interés Cultural (BIC)* some of them are in an advanced state of deterioration and the observation of the different associated elements for further tourism promotion. For this reason the *Catálogo de Bienes y Espacios Protegidos de la ciudad de Alicante* was helpful. All this information has been synthesized in a record where has been added information related to the geographic location, chronological, cultural category, applications, proposals for action, and so on.

### 3. THE ORCHARD OF ALICANTE AND HIS DEFENSIVE TOWERS

#### 3.1. Location and historical synthesis of the Orchard of Alicante

The defensive towers are located in geographic place shared by several municipalities in the region of l'Alacanti. These are Alicante (La Albufereta, Cabo de la Huerta, Playa de San Juan, La Condomina and Santa Faz) and the towns of San Juan and Campello. This area occupies about 3,700 ha. bordered on the South by the city of Alicante and the Monnegre River in the North. It has historically been an agricultural area organized around the ancient irrigation system from the Monnegre River (Alberola, 1984). From the sixteenth century, is about to get the golden era of the Orchard, especially through the production and export of certain agricultural products (wine and oil).

With the coming of the XX century, we are witnessing the economic decline of the Orchard due to phylloxera that was the end of wine production. Subsequently, this place will gradually lose its agricultural importance that had had for centuries and will change agricultural use by residential, due to competition for land use, the increase of the cost of water and the poor performance of agriculture. From the 1960s and 1970s the Orchard will become one of the areas with the greatest occupation of urban uses due to the growth of the city of Alicante.

#### 3.2. Features and characteristics of the defensive towers

Despite being simply small buildings are very rich architectural aspects and elements associated with them. Undoubtedly one of the most important peculiarities is the existence of certain graffiti dating from the time of the Berber attacks and who are in the interior walls of the towers (*Torre de las Rejas*). These graffiti represent naval battles between Moors and Christians, for example, armed in Alicante which was prepared for the invasion of Oran in 1732 (Ramon, 2005). It is also important to note that some of the material used for the construction of these towers, sometimes were the remains of the ruins of ancient Iberian settlement of *Lucentum (Tossal Manises)*.

The towers are located near the network of roads that connected both internally the Orchard with the former *Kingdom of Valencia*. These were situated scattered throughout

the Orchard and in villages (San Juan, Mutxamel, Benimagrell and Santa Faz). They were linked to the irrigation system armbands and ditches, because the most of them are near a watering system that allowed the perfect control of starters and main water distribution.

#### 4. MOTION FOR THE TOURIST ROUTE

The number of towers documented in the Orchard of Alicante were forty-three, but today are twenty five. In Alicante there are in La Condomina (twelve towers), in La Albufereta (five towers), in *Santa Faz* (one tower), and the others are located in San Juan (four towers) and in Mutxamel (three towers).

In La Albufereta (Alicante) are located for example *Torre de las Águilas*, *Torre de Santiago*, *Torre del Castellet*, *Torre Ferrer* and *Torre de Sarrió*. All towers are private, except *Torre de Ferrer* and *Torre de Sarrió* which are property of the Government of Alicante. In La Condomina there are the largest number of towers. Stands above the rest *Torre de las Rejas* because it is a restaurant. Furthermore, many of these towers have chapels (*Torre de Boter* and *Torre del Ciprés*). In Santa Faz there is the biggest tower in the area which it is property of the Monastery of this village. The main consideration for this route is the availability for visit the towers because most of them are private buildings. In this case, the visit of these towers will be outside where the people could be seeing the architectural characteristics and the landscape of the Orchard. However, the Government of Alicante could make a pact with the owners of the towers for visit these buildings if the government paid the maintenance.

#### 5. CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, the city of Alicante need diversify his tourist offer for attract news market products and promote news heritages resources. In this case, this proposal that includes heritages resources could be an important factor for improve de tourism of Alicante. The main elements in this route are the defensive towers but also the different buildings: traditional houses, chapels, tanks, the traditional irrigation system, etc., and in general the landscape of the Orchard of Alicante. Many of this towers are in ruins despite of there are considerate as *Bien de Interés Cultural (BIC)*. In this case the Government of Alicante and the owners of these towers should be maintaining in good condition these buildings without big investments and they must listen the opinion of the neighbors of *Alicante* and experts in history and tourism.

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