Hernan Cortes Statue – Spain Medellin



Located in the Extremadura region of Spain, in the province of Badajoz, Medellín is a small but deeply rooted town known as the birthplace of a man who left a significant mark on history. Hernán Cortés, the Spanish conquistador who conquered the Aztec Empire, was born in this town in 1485. Today, the town is home to a magnificent monument statue bearing his name. This statue has become an unmissable stop for history enthusiasts and tourists visiting the region.

Construction and History of the Statue

The idea of erecting a monument to Hernán Cortés in Medellín dates back quite far. The first proposal was put forward in 1845 by Spanish poet Carolina Coronado, and was subsequently supported by the public through a petition in 1858. However, it took decades for the project to be realized. Finally, on 20 February 1889, the project was formalized with a contract signed with sculptor Eduardo Barrón González. The project, with a total cost of 62,772 pesetas, was jointly financed by the Provincial Deputation of Badajoz, the Spanish State, and various municipalities. The bronze casting of the statue was made from metal obtained from cannons, and the casting process was carried out at Federico Masriera's workshop in Barcelona. The model for the statue, however, was designed in Rome.

The five-ton statue and monument ensemble arrived in Medellín by train on 11 November 1890. Transported to the town on more than thirty ox-drawn carts, this monumental structure was placed in its current location on 16 November. The official inauguration ceremony was held on 2 December 1890, the anniversary of Cortés's death, with Raimundo Fernández Villaverde attending as representative of the national government.

Features and Artistic Details of the Statue

The statue consists of a bronze figure of Hernán Cortés mounted on a stone pedestal. Cortés is depicted wearing Burgundian-style battle dress, armor, gauntlets, and spurred riding boots. The figure holds a command staff in his right hand, while with his left he holds the symbol of the Cross and the banner of Spain bearing the castles and lions of Castile. Beneath the figure's feet, Aztec idols are shown being crushed a symbolic expression of the conquest. On each side of the pedestal are lion head reliefs joined by a bar, while the names of the four most important battles of the conquest of Mexico are inscribed on its four faces in bronze plaques: Otumba, Tlaxcala, Tabasco, and Mexico. On the front face of the pedestal, the coat of arms of Medellín and a dedicatory inscription are displayed.

Hernán Cortés Square and Its Surroundings

The statue stands in the Hernán Cortés Square at the center of the town, just a few meters from the site of the house where Cortés was born. The square was created as part of an urban renewal project carried out in the late 19th century under the leadership of the then-mayor Juan Damián de Tena y Moreno. Close to the statue, a simpler commemorative stone marks the exact spot where Cortés's birth house once stood. The town of Medellín, with this monument at its heart, along with its historic castle and Roman-era roots, stands as one of the region's important cultural stops.

A Contested Legacy

Hernán Cortés went down in history as the conquistador who toppled the Aztec Empire and claimed Mexico for the Spanish Crown. For this reason, his name and statue have been the subject of profound controversy over the centuries. In August 2010, the day after a friendly football match between the national teams of Spain and Mexico held to mark the 200th anniversary of Mexican independence, the statue was vandalized with red paint. Those responsible left leaflets nearby describing the statue as a glorification of genocide. This incident is a tangible reflection of the complex debate surrounding Cortés's legacy that continues to this day. Nevertheless, the statue remains both a tourist attraction and an inseparable part of the town's historical identity.

Visitor Information

The Hernán Cortés Statue is located in the town of Medellín, in the province of Badajoz, in the Extremadura region of Spain. It is approximately 70 kilometers from Mérida, the nearest major city. As the square is outdoors, it can be visited year-round; however, spring and autumn are the most pleasant seasons to explore Extremadura. For those wishing to follow in Cortés's footsteps around the historic square, the town's castle is also well worth a visit.

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