NEWS LESSON

What Makes a View Worth Thousands of Euros?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What would you pay for a perfect view of a special event?
2. Would you rather be close to the action or comfortable nearby?
3. When can an event start to feel more for visitors than local people?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**civic**	☐	A	real and true, not copied
2	**hospitality**	☐	B	connected with a town or city and its people
3	**exclusivity**	☐	C	groups of men who share a religion or purpose
4	**inheritance**	☐	D	be noticed or felt
5	**brotherhoods**	☐	E	keep something going over time
6	**authentic**	☐	F	hotels, restaurants and other businesses that look after guests
7	**sustain**	☐	G	something valuable passed down from earlier generations
8	**register**	☐	H	the quality of being only for a few rich or special people

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

A central balcony can cost around €6,000 for Holy Week, and up to €9,000 with services. The view has not improved; more people are competing for it.

1 A balcony above Seville's Holy Week processions can offer a remarkable view, and an equally remarkable bill. Reports in March 2026 put central balcony rentals at about €6,000 for the week, with some packages approaching €9,000. The processions take place in public streets. The best place to watch may be privately priced.

2 Holy Week combines religious devotion, civic identity and centuries-old tradition, and the processions attract enormous crowds. The supply of balconies overlooking the central route is fixed and cannot be expanded, so property owners and hospitality businesses can sell comfort, exclusivity and an unusually close view of ceremonies that most spectators watch from packed streets.

3 What the going rate reveals, in other words, is scarcity rather than quality. The balcony itself has not improved; the number of people competing for it has risen. This is the familiar logic of any tourist city in which demand grows faster than the physical space available to accommodate it.

4 The cultural implications are less straightforward. A festival shaped by local religious brotherhoods now operates within a tourism economy where scarcity creates opportunities for profit. Residents may regard the ceremonies as a shared inheritance, while commercial operators see demand for a service that can legitimately be bought and sold.

5 Defenders of the market point out that the streets remain publicly accessible and that balcony owners are entitled to control private space. Critics respond that formal access is not always the same as meaningful access. If the finest vantage points are increasingly cashed in on by owners and taken by wealthy visitors, local participants may feel that a familiar tradition is being quietly repackaged for outsiders.

6 There is no simple division between authentic culture and commercial activity. Festivals have long supported hotels, restaurants and small businesses, and tourist spending can help sustain a local economy that sustains the festival in turn. The concern arises when financial incentives begin to shape how an event is experienced, discussed or organised, rather than merely supporting something that already exists.

7 Nor is the pressure purely financial. A balcony let to visitors is one that a local family may no longer watch from, and that loss could register socially long before it appears in any economic account of the week. Traditions are maintained largely by habit, and habits are fragile when the places that housed them change hands each spring.

8 Timing complicates the picture further. Once a tradition is valuable, pressure to protect its commercial appeal could give way to decisions no participant asked for: routes adjusted for visibility, schedules arranged around visitors, atmosphere managed rather than allowed to happen. Such changes are a concern, not something documented here, and none has to occur, but each step could look reasonable on its own.

9 Seville's balconies therefore offer a revealing example of a wider tension. Cultural traditions are powerful partly because they bring communities together, yet their very popularity can turn access into a scarce commodity and squeeze out the people for whom the occasion means most. The question is not whether an owner may charge for a view, but whether an increasingly commercial setting changes the meaning of what spectators have come to see.

Sources: Europa Press. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The writer implies that the high price of a balcony reflects competition for places rather than a better view. (T) (F) (NG)
2. The final paragraph says owners should not be allowed to charge for a view. (T) (F) (NG)
3. Most balcony owners are hospitality businesses rather than families. (T) (F) (NG)
4. The writer suggests that the social cost of letting balconies to visitors may be noticed before the financial one. (T) (F) (NG)
5. The writer argues that tourist spending is always harmful to a festival. (T) (F) (NG)

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

accommodate **authenticity** **commodity** **fragile** **incentives** **prestige** **repackaged** **scarcity**

1. Oil is traded on world markets like any other _____ .
2. The _____ of affordable housing in the city has pushed rents up year after year.
3. The old stadium could not _____ the crowds that came for the final.
4. Tax _____ encouraged the company to build its new headquarters in the region.
5. Trust between neighbours is _____ and can disappear after a single dispute.
6. The old folk song was _____ as a pop hit and sold millions.

6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. The merger could have serious _____ for thousands of employees. **(IMPLY)**
2. The court ruled that the land had been _____ acquired. **(LEGITIMATE)**
3. A token apology is not a _____ response to a serious complaint. **(MEAN)**
4. Her _____ to the cause lasted for more than fifty years. **(DEVOTE)**
5. Smartphones have become _____ central to how we organise our daily lives. **(INCREASE)**

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Match each word to its job: some introduce a noun phrase (notwithstanding, hence), some a contrast after a semicolon (conversely), and some add a result or a concession (thereby, albeit).

albeit	conversely	hence	hitherto	notwithstanding	thereby	whereby

1. The festival remains free to attend, _____ with a lot of waiting.
2. _____ the rising prices, many residents still return to the same streets each year.
3. Space is strictly limited; _____ the steep rise in prices.
4. Many owners prefer fixed contracts; _____ , others negotiate each year.
5. Owners can set the price themselves, _____ keeping the benefit within a small group.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. What should remain open to everyone during a major local celebration?
2. Does renting out a balcony change a neighbourhood tradition?
3. Would you choose a free crowded view or a quiet expensive one?

9 Role-play: who gets the balcony?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the balcony owner

A travel company wants to rent your balcony for Holy Week at a very high price. A neighbour's family has watched from it for years. Listen to the neighbour, then decide: sell it to the company, keep it for the family, or find a compromise.

Student B · the neighbour

Your family has always watched the processions from your neighbour's balcony. Ask to use it again this year. Explain why it matters to you and offer something in return.

Useful phrases

I was hoping to ask you a favour.
We've always watched from here.
I'd love to say yes, but it's a lot of money.
What if we shared the week?
I'm afraid I can't do that.
Could we find a compromise?

Afterwards, tell the class: who got the balcony, and was it a fair decision?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 B · 2 F · 3 H · 4 G · 5 C · 6 A · 7 E · 8 D

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 NG · 4 T · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 commodity · 2 scarcity · 3 accommodate · 4 incentives · 5 fragile · 6 repackaged

6 Word forms

1 implications · 2 legitimately · 3 meaningful · 4 devotion · 5 increasingly

7 Language focus

1 albeit · 2 Notwithstanding · 3 hence · 4 conversely · 5 thereby

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