NEWS LESSON

Why a Balcony View Can Cost Thousands



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	**brotherhoods**	☐	A	groups of men who share the same religion or aims
2	**spectators**	☐	B	not the same for everyone, not fair
3	**exclusivity**	☐	C	people who watch an event
4	**uninterrupted**	☐	D	continuous, with nothing in the way
5	**critics**	☐	E	being only for a small, special group of people
6	**commercial**	☐	F	people who say what is wrong with something
7	**extraordinary**	☐	G	very unusual or surprising
8	**unequal**	☐	H	connected with buying and selling to make money

3 Read

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

In March 2026, central balconies along Seville's Holy Week route averaged around €6,000 for the week, with some packages near €9,000.

1 Seville's Holy Week processions are among Spain's most recognisable cultural traditions. Thousands of people fill the streets to watch religious brotherhoods carry elaborate images through the historic centre. Yet in 2026, the headlines about the celebrations focused on something far more commercial: the extraordinary cost of renting a balcony overlooking the route.

2 According to information released by Seville's property administrators in March 2026, the average price for a centrally located balcony during the week had reached around €6,000. Premium positions along the main procession route, especially with food and drink included, could approach €9,000. The figures referred to packages covering the celebrations, not an ordinary ticket for a single procession.

3 The attraction is obvious. The streets become packed with spectators, while a balcony offers a comfortable and uninterrupted view. Owners can earn substantial sums from space that would otherwise be used privately, and the best positions are snapped up well in advance. Businesses can turn the experience into a package aimed at visitors who are willing to pay for convenience and exclusivity.

4 For a visitor who can afford it, the appeal is easy to understand. Holy Week in Seville can mean long waits, blocked streets and very little chance of a clear view, and a balcony removes all of that at a stroke. The price buys certainty as much as comfort.

5 But rising prices have started an argument about the purpose of a public tradition. Holy Week is rooted in local religious communities, and its ceremonies have been handed down through a history much older than the modern tourism industry. Critics fear that commercial competition is pricing local families out of an event that helps define their city.

6 Supporters reply that the processions remain visible from public streets and that privately owned balconies are not public property. Demand is high, space is limited and nobody is obliged to rent a premium position. From that perspective, the prices simply reflect what customers are prepared to pay.

7 It is also worth remembering who the money reaches. Balcony rentals benefit the households and businesses that happen to own property on the right streets, which is a narrow group compared with the many families who take part in the processions themselves. Good fortune in the property market is not the same as a contribution to the tradition.

8 The disagreement is familiar in tourist cities everywhere. Visitors may be willing to spend far more than residents. Access to the most convenient places can then become unequal, and the best of anything can drift out of reach of the people who live there. Seville's expensive balconies ask where to draw the line between making money from culture and making culture less welcoming to the people who sustain it.

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. Seville's property administrators released the figures in March 2026. T F NG
2. Supporters argue that the processions can no longer be seen from the public streets. T F NG
3. The article suggests that balcony owners are a smaller group than the families who take part in the processions. T F NG
4. Hotel prices in Seville rose by the same amount. T F NG
5. The prices in the article are for a ticket to a single procession. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

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

certainty **convenience** **elaborate** **exclusivity** **obliged** **overlooking** **substantial** **sustain**

1. The company made a _____ profit last year, far more than anyone had predicted.
2. The costumes were so _____ that each one took months to sew by hand.
3. Under the new rules, shops are not _____ to stay open on public holidays.
4. Our hotel room has a lovely balcony _____ the old market square.
5. Buying a ticket in advance gives you the _____ that you will get in.
6. Tourism can _____ a small town's economy by bringing in money all year round.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. By the time we reached the street, every balcony _____ . (TAKE)
2. If prices keep rising, local families _____ able to afford a view. (NOT / BE)
3. The processions _____ by thousands of people every year. (WATCH)
4. Critics say the tradition _____ a lot over the last decade. (CHANGE)
5. You _____ to pay if you watch from the street. (NOT / NEED)

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Some linking words are followed by a noun (despite), some join two clauses (whereas, provided) and some start a new sentence (nevertheless, otherwise). Check the logic too.

consequently	despite	nevertheless	otherwise	provided	unless	whereas

1. _____ the high prices, most of the best balconies were booked weeks ahead.
2. Residents often see the procession as a tradition, _____ visitors may see it as a spectacle.
3. Balcony rentals are expensive. _____ , they sell out every year.
4. Visitors can book a balcony _____ they pay the full price in advance.
5. Owners need to rent the space at a fair price. _____ , local families will be pushed out.

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

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 T · 4 NG · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 substantial · 2 elaborate · 3 obliged · 4 overlooking · 5 certainty · 6 sustain

6 Verb forms

1 had been taken · 2 won't be · 3 are watched · 4 has changed · 5 don't need

7 Language focus

1 Despite · 2 whereas · 3 Nevertheless · 4 provided · 5 Otherwise

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