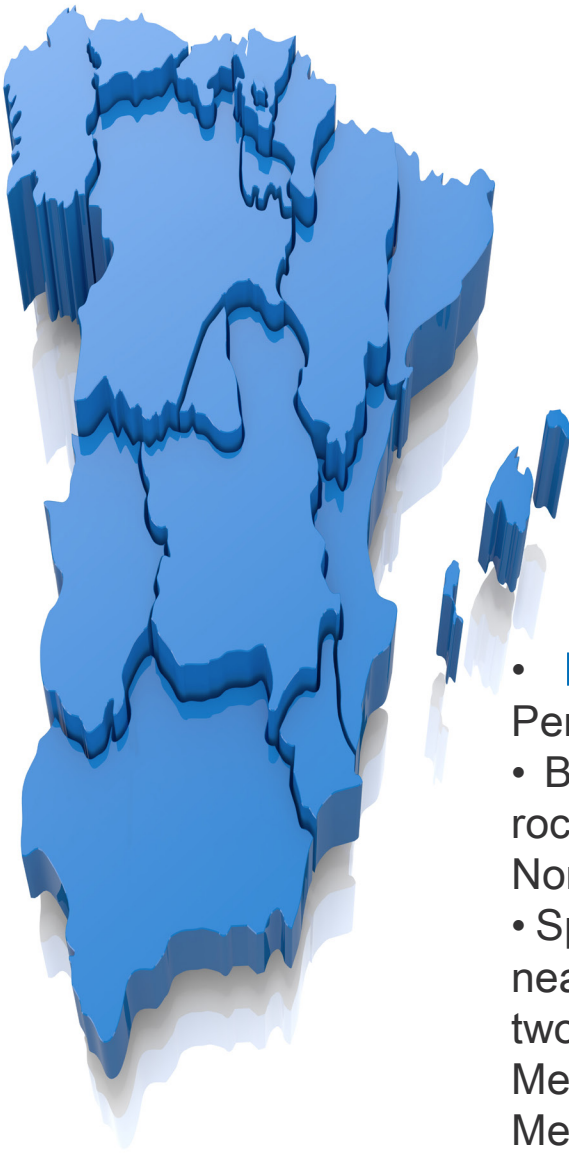




# Spain

## Country profile

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- Area: 504,403 sq.kms
- Population: approximately 47 million
- Producto interior bruto.- 1,311 USD
- Renta per capita.- 28.156,82 USD
- Tasa de desempleo.- 15,2%
- Capital: Madrid

- **Located in** South Wertern Europe.- Iberian Peninsula(occupies about 85% of it)
- Borders Portugal on the West, Gibraltar and Morocco on the South and France and Andorra on the North-east
- Spain includes the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean Sea, the Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean, two autonomous cities in North Africa, Ceuta and Melilla. and a number of uninhabited islands in the Mediterranean. Spain is divided into 19 autonomous communities.

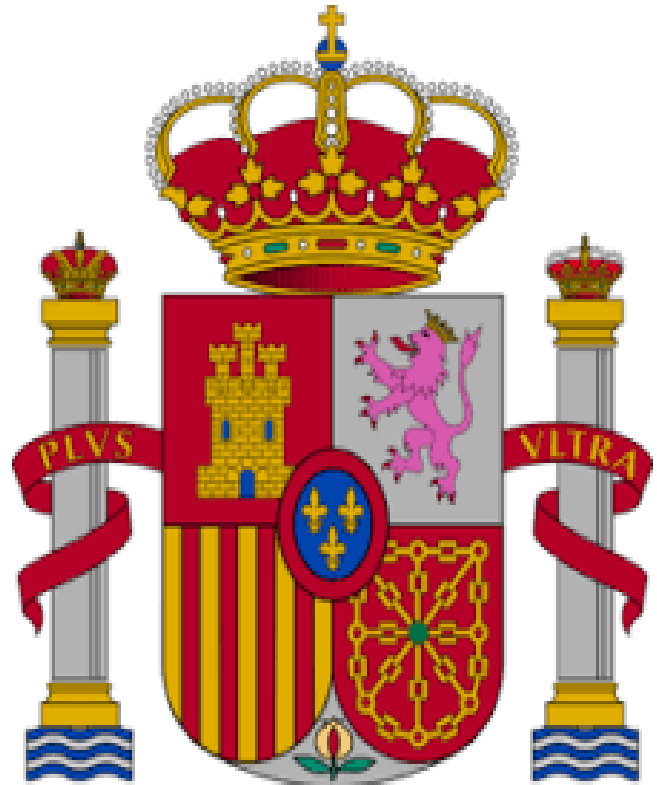


## Spanish symbols.-

The Spanish flag is red, yellow and red. This is the Spanish coat of arms:



The Spanish anthem is also a national symbol.



### Andalusia



# Physical geography of Spain

Spain is quite a mountainous country.

The highest mountain in Spain is the Teide volcano, it is in Tenerife, in Canary Islands. The highest mountain in the peninsula is the Mulhacén in Granada province.



The main mountain ranges are:

- Cordillera Cantábrica
- Sistema Ibérico
- Pyrenees Mountains
- Sistema Central
- Sistemas Béticos
- Sierra Morena

- The longest river in Spain is Tagus river, and the Ebro is the largest.

- Other important rivers in Spain are:

Duero, Guadiana, Guadalquivir, Se-



# Climate

Three main climatic zones:

- The Mediterranean climate:

- dry and warm summers
- dominant in the peninsula

- The Semiarid climate:

- south-eastern quarter of the country
- dry season extends beyond the summer

- The Oceanic climate:

- northern quarter of the country
- winter and summer temperatures are influenced by the ocean, and it has no seasonal drought

Other sub-types can be found: the alpine climate in the Pyrenees and Sierra Nevada, and a typical subtropical climate in the Canary Islands.



# Official languages

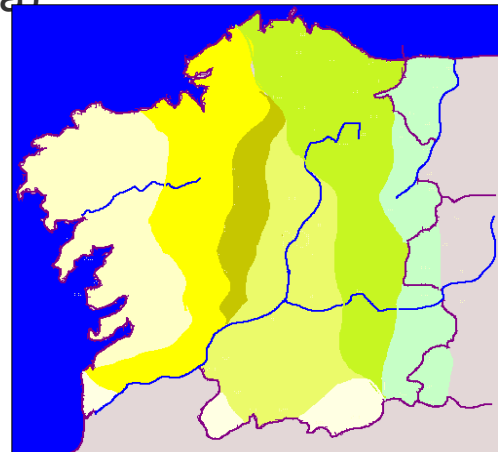


**Catalan** derived from Latin.

It is spoken in Catalonia, Valencia, the Balearic Islands, Andorra, the Eastern Pyrenees and the city of Alghero (Sardinia)

**Galician** derives from Latin.

It is spoken in Galicia and areas of León and Zamora.



**Basque-** It is the only language of the peninsula that does not derive from Latin.

It already existed when the Romans arrived.

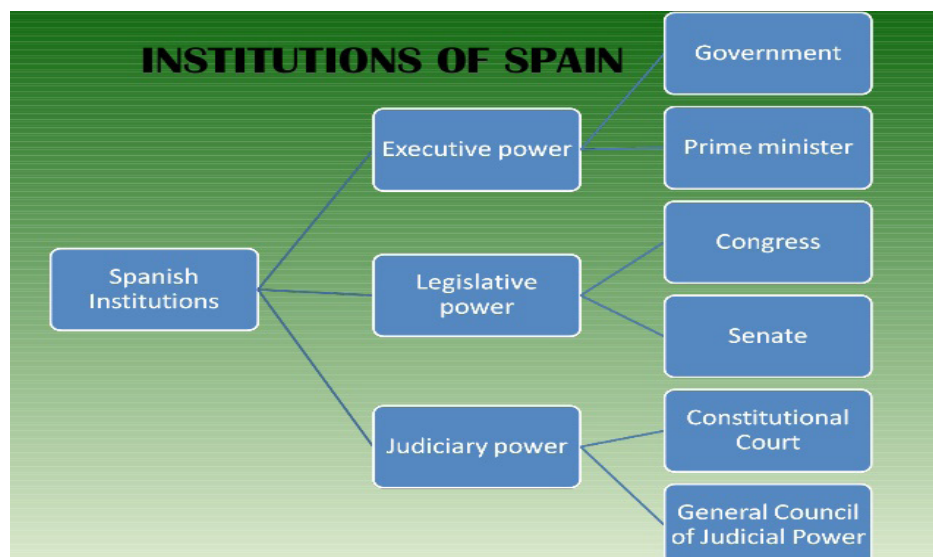
It is spoken in the Basque Country and in areas of Navarre.



# Politics systems

- **Spain is** a constitutional monarchy as determined by the Spanish Constitution of 1978. The constitution was written three years after the death of Francisco Franco in 1975 by King Juan Carlos I, who oversaw Spain's transition from a dictatorship to a parliamentary democracy.

.The monarchy, which is lead by King Felipe VI, is the head of the Spanish state. The King's role is predominantly ceremonial although he is officially required to select the President of Spain and appoint other Spanish ministers. He is also a key ambassador for Spain, representing the country at important events all over the world.



## Culture 1 - Architecture

The most well-known Spanish monuments

- 01.- La Alhambra de Granada
- 01.- The Alhambra of Granada
- 02.- The Giralda of Seville
- 03.- The Holy Family of Barcelona
- 04.- The Mosque of Córdoba
- 05.- Aqueduct of Segovia
- 06.- Roman Theater of Merida
- 07.- Place of Spain of Sevilla
- 08.- Alcazar of Segovia
- 09.- Wall of Ávila
- 10.- Royal Palace of Madrid
- 11.- Monastery of the Escorial
- 12.- Alcazar of Toledo.





# Spanish festival and traditions I

## 1 January: New Year's Day (Año Nuevo).

In Spain, **31 December** is a very special celebration (**celebrar noche vieja**) where the fun and partying go on well into the early hours. If you want to get the year off to a good start, then come and celebrate New Year's Eve in Spain. You will have a great time eating the traditional "lucky grapes"...

In Spain there is one place that is especially famous for this tradition: **Puerta del Sol** Square in Madrid. Thousands of people converge in front of the clock here to see in the New Year, and the square becomes one huge party. The atmosphere is amazing: confetti, music and streamers everywhere; people dressed up with wigs, hats and masks; and above all, everyone is up for a good time.



**Three Kings Day**, or Dia de los Reyes in Spanish, falls on **January 6** every year. It's the day that most children in Spain and other Spanish-speaking countries receive their Christmas presents.

On the eve of January 5, children leave their shoes by the door with hopes that the three kings will leave gifts inside during their overnight visit.

Another essential part of Three Kings Day in Spain is the roscon de los reyes, or kings' cake. The ring-



## Spanish festival and traditions II

The **Day of Andalucía** (Día de Andalucía), also known as Andalucía Day, marks the anniversary of a referendum held on February 28, 1980. A large majority of voters supported this referendum for Andalucía to become an autonomous community in Spain. Many people spend the day quietly with family or close friends. However, some people organize or attend private parties with traditional music, dancing, food and drink. Some municipalities hold communal meals with traditional foods, drinks and entertainment. Local politicians may present people with certificates or medals for service to the community.



**Thursday (Jueves Santo)** (R) – all regions except Catalonia.

La Semana Santa (**Easter**) va precedida por la Cuaresma, que finaliza en la Semana de Pasión donde se celebra la eucaristía en el **Jueves Santo**, se conmemora la Crucifixión de Jesús el **Viernes Santo** y la Resurrección en la Vigilia Pascual durante la noche del Sábado Santo al Domingo de Resur-



## Spanish festival and traditions III

### 1 May: Labour Day/Worker's Day (Día del Trabajo) (N)



Labor Day in Spain, known there as Día del Trabajador or Primero de Mayo, was first celebrated on May 1, 1889.[1] The way in which Spaniards celebrate Primero de Mayo has varied greatly since then, due primarily to the Francoist State, which lasted from 1936 to 1975. After 4 decades of being prohibited, in 1978 the celebration was finally re-legalized and re-instated as a national holiday, and since then every Primero de Mayo has been marked by protests and manifestations all over the country, in which social advances are celebrated and workers' rights are re-vindicated.

### 24 June.- St John's Day (San Juan) (R)

The Feast of San Juan, also called the eve of San Juan or the night of San Juan, is the feast of the birth of San Juan Bautista by Christianity on June 24. Some people link the festival or some of its celebrations in rituals of pagan origin previous or foreign to Christianity (Litha) .1 In European-Mediterranean countries, the realization of bonfires of fire is usually a common element.





## 12 October: Spain's National Day / Columbus Day (N)

**October 12th** is a national holiday across Spain. Officially the Fiesta Nacional, it is also the Día de la Hispanidad – Hispanic Day – that commemorates the day Christopher Columbus discovered the Americas in 1492, and Armed Forces Day.



## 1 November: All Saints' Day (Fiesta de Todos los Santos) (N)

All Saints' Day is a Christian solemnity that takes place on November 1 for Catholic churches of Latin rite, and the first Sunday of Pentecost in the Orthodox Church and the Catholics of the Byzantine rite. It should not be confused with the Commemoration of the Dead Faithful.

On this day the Church celebrates solemn feast for all those deceased who, having overcome purgatory, have been totally sanctified, have obtained the beatific vision and enjoy eternal life in the presence of God. That's why it is the day of «all the saints».

## 6 December: Spanish Constitution Day (Día de la Constitución) (N)

This public holiday is always celebrated on **6 December** and marks the approval of the Spanish constitution by the Spanish people in 1978. The day is seen as the start of the December holidays and a long weekend is normally taken in conjunction with the Feast of the **Immaculate Conception. (8 December).**





## 8 December. The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

celebrates the solemn celebration of belief in the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. The Immaculate Conception is one of the most important Marian feasts in the liturgical calendar of the Roman Catholic Church, and is celebrated worldwide.

**24th December.- Christmas** Eve is called Nochebuena in Spanish (Good-night) and it is the most important family gathering of the year. In the evening people often meet early for a few drinks with friends then return home to enjoy a meal with the family. Most bars and restaurants close in the evening. Prawn starters followed by roast lamb would be a typical meal rounded off with a typically Christmas sweet called turrón which is a nougat made of toasted sweet almonds. Another typical festive sweet is called Polvorones which is made from almonds, flour and sugar. Cava, Catalan champagne, would be the chosen drink for the Christmas toast though plenty fine Spanish wines will also be consumed with the meal.

## 25 December.- Christmas (Navidad) (N)

Children may receive a small gift on Nochebuena or this morning but the day for presents is 6th January, Epiphany, when the Three Kings bring gifts for the children. Christmas Day is a national holiday in Spain so shops are closed yet it is not a day of great celebration but rather a calm day when people go out for a walk, drop into a bar, etc. Another large family meal at lunchtime is common though it's becoming more common to see families eating out on the afternoon of Christmas day



### The day of the holy innocents.

This is one of the most popular and entertaining Christmas traditions in Spain.

**December 28** is the day when everyone is allowed to play practical jokes and when it is customary to buy joke articles in Christmas markets like the one in the Plaza Mayor square in Madrid.

One of the most widespread jokes on this day is to stick a figure cut out of white paper on someone's back (without them realising). The word in Spanish for this practical joke is an "inocentada". And, in the numerous Christmas markets (usually located in the large squares in the cities) you can find a whole range of joke articles (wigs, itching powder, false ink...).

# Bull Fighting

Bullfighting is a physical contest that involves humans and animals attempting to publicly subdue, immobilise, or kill a bull, usually according to a set of rules, guidelines, or cultural expectations. Bull fighting is very closely associated with Spain

and can trace its origins back to 711 A.D

- This is when the first bullfight took place in celebration for the crowning of King Alfonso VIII
- The top bullfighter, called the Matador, performs the faena, which is a dance with death to demonstrate his superiority over the bull



## Others

### Spanish festivals and traditions

Spain used to be a very religious country so many festivals come from the religious tradition.

Easter (Holy Week in Seville, Granada, Málaga, .....)

El Rocío (every May, in the province of Huelva)



**Other festivals** are not so religious:

- Fallas.- Valencia
- San Fermines.- Pamplona
- Carnival in Cádiz and Tenerife
- Feria de Abril.- (Festival of Fire) . Seville
- Feria Del Caballo (Horse Fair) . Jerez
- Festival de los Patios in Cordoba
- Feria De Málaga (August Fair In Malaga) ...
- La tomatina.- (Tomato Fight Festival) . Buñol
- Vijanera en Silió (Molledo), Cantabria
- Concurs de Castells.- Tarragona
- Cascamorras.- Guadix and Baza, Granada
- Fiesta de los Enharinados en Ibi. Alicante
- La Tamborrada.- San Sebastián
- Baixada dels Raiers en Coll de Nargó, Lleida
- La Danza de la Muerte. Verges, Girona
- The Fiesta Mayor de Gracia in Barcelona
- Saint John's Eve
- Boloencierro in Mataelpino, Madrid
- The Wine Battle of Haro
- The Semana Grande of Bilbao



## Literature

- Our best-known writer is **Miguel de Cervantes**, he wrote in the 16th century the very popular book «Don Quixote of la Mancha» concocted a fantasy background and this background was largely influenced by a manuscript written by a fictional Moorish historian, Cide Hamete Benengeli.
- This book has been translated into many different languages.

### More About Spanish Literature

Vicente Aleixandre

Federico García Lorca

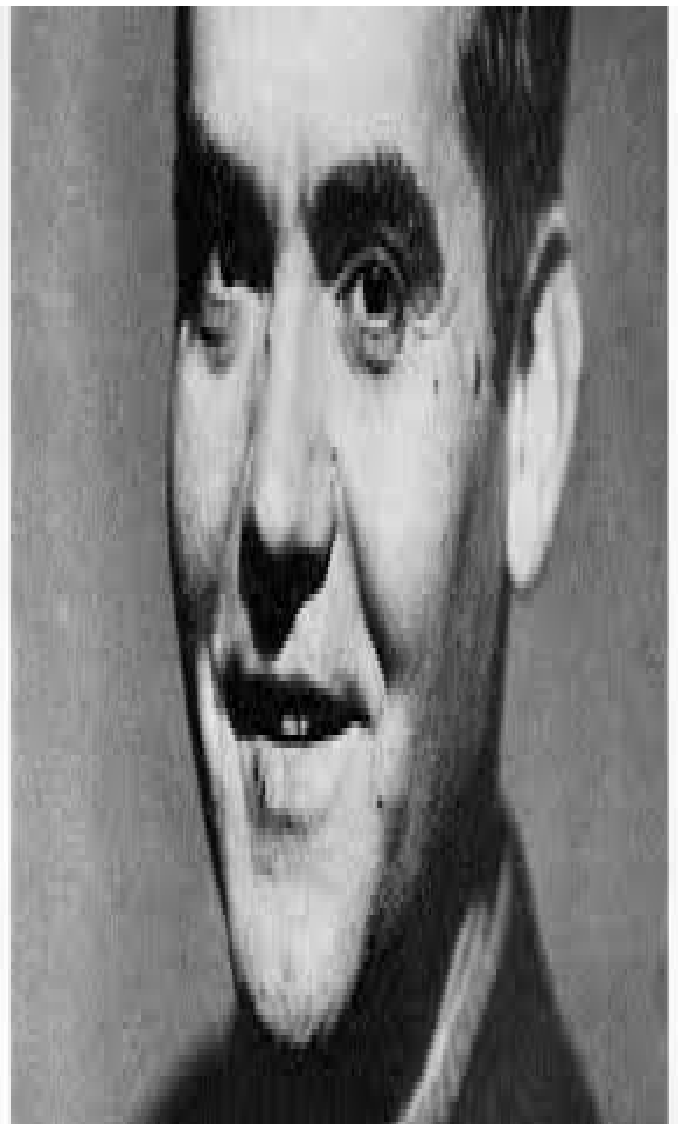
Fernando de Rojas

Lope de Vega

Miguel de Unamuno

Luis de Góngora

Antonio Machado





## **Painting.-** 10 most famous paintings by Spanish Artists.

- 1.- Guernica.- Pablo Picasso.-
- 2.- The Maids of Honour.- Velazquez.- Considered one of the most important paintings ever
- 3.- The persistence of Memory. Dali
- 4.- The Young Ladies of Avignon. Picasso
- 5.- The third of may 1808. Goya.
- 6.- The burial of the count of Orgaz. Greco
- 7.- Swans reflecting elephants. Dali
- 8.-The nude maya. Goya
- 9.-The immaculate conception of the Venerables. Murillo
- 10.- The farm. Miro



- Penélope Cruz and Antonio Banderas are two famous Spanish actors.

**Penélope Cruz.-** Known outside her native country as the “Spanish enchantress”. As a toddler, she was already a compulsive performer, re-enacting TV commercials for her family’s amusement, but she decided to ...

**Antonio Banderas**, one of Spain’s most famous faces. He is now an international film star known for playing Zorro in the eponymous film series.

- Penélope won an Oscar in 2009.

- **Pedro Almodóvar**, the cinema director, won an Oscar too in 1999 (best film).



## Sports



Football is the most popular sport in Spain, the Real Madrid and Barcelona teams are famous all over the world, the National selection is also well known.

- Nadal is our international tennis champion.



Fernando Alonso is our international champion in car racing. quia velis di omnimi, quo essum doleni volut.



# DANCE

Though **traditional dance** in Spain summons up iconic images of flamenco, there are many variations widespread across the country. From the gypsy communities of the south, to the Celtic heritage of Galicia in the north, the rich and diverse culture of Spain is perfectly captured by these traditional Spanish dances.

Flamenco  
Muiñeira  
Paso doble  
Bolero  
Fandango  
Zambra  
Jota  
Sardana  
Sevillanas

**Flamenco** it's an art form recognised as part of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. It emerged among the gypsy communities of Andalusia and is performed by a mixture of singing, guitar playing, dancing, finger snapping and hand clapping.

**The zambra** is often qualified as a type of flamenco which emerged from around the city of Granada in Andalusia where it was historically performed at weddings. Unlike flamenco, it is danced barefoot and has many similarities with Arabian belly dancing



**The Sevillana** is a type of folk music and dance which originates in the southern Spanish city of Seville and shares similarities with the other main Andalusian dance: flamenco. However, Sevillanas are less formal and less physically demanding than flamenco,





## Spanish history timeline

**The history of Spain** is a history of cultural fusion. In Spain, many different peoples and cultures have lived: Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, northern tribes of Europe, Arabs ...

Spanish culture is the result of these mixtures and exchanges.

### 218-201BC

After Rome defeated Carthage in the Second Punic War they began a 600 year Roman occupation of Spain.

### AD 410

Barbarian tribes from the north take control of the Iberian Peninsula (Suevi, Vandals)

### AD 466

Visigothic rule over the Iberian Peninsula begins

### AD 711

Moorish invaders arrive from North Africa and soon destroy the Visigoths

800 años de cultura islámica en España. Los árabes vivieron ocho siglos en España y dejaron una importante herencia cultural: arte, ciencia, palabras, etc.

### 1248

A major coup for the reconquest with the fall of Seville to Fernando III. Granada is the only remaining Moorish state

### 1469

Isabella (heir to Castile) and Fernando (heir to Aragon) get married which unites the peninsula's two most powerful states

### 1478

The Catholic Kings (Reyes Católicos) begin the Spanish Inquisition

### 1492

In January, Granada falls to the Reyes Católicos, ridding Spain of the Moors.

In April, having guaranteed religious tolerance, the Reyes Católicos begin to expel Jews who refuse to convert to Catholicism. And in October, with funding from the Reyes Católicos, Columbus discovers America.

### 1517-56

Carlos I rules Spain as the first Habsburg monarch

### 1556-98

The reign of Carlos I's son, Felipe II,

was at its peak. The Spanish Armada was in 1588.

### 1701

Felipe V became the first Bourbon King of Spain

### 1702-13

War of Spanish Succession

### 1793

Spain declared war on France following the beheading of Louis XVI (he was Carlos IV's cousin). Two years later they became pals and promised to support the French against the British

### 1805

At the Battle of Trafalgar a French-Spanish fleet was defeated by Nelson which effectively ended Spanish sea power

### 1808-13

Spain was occupied under Napoleon's brother Joseph Bonaparte who forced out Carlos IV. This resulted in the Peninsular War (Spanish War of Independence) in which the French were forced out with help from British and Portuguese forces under the Duke of Wellington

### 1813-24

Most of the Spanish Empire collapsed as countries gained their independence



### 1931-36

The Second Republic results from a republican victory at the polls and King Alfonso XIII goes into exile in Italy

### 1936-39

The Spanish Civil War in which General Franco lead his Nationalist troops to victory over the Republicans. An estimated 350,000 people died in the war

### 1939-75

Franco's brutal dictatorship isolated Spain from the rest of Europe. Franco pledged support for Hitler in WWII. Only US aid in return for locating four military bases in Spain set the country on the road to economic improvement. The arrival of foreign tourists was crucial in promoting economic

### 1873

The First Republic ends in chaos and the monarchy is restored

### 1923-30

General Miguel Primo de Rivera leads a mild dictatorship

### 1975

Franco died and was succeeded by King Juan Carlos I

### 1976-81

Adolfo Suárez was prime minister during this period which is referred to as the 'transition'

### 1982-96

A centre-left government (PSOE) was led by Felipe Gonzalez. Spain joined the EU in 1986

### 1996-2004

José Maria Aznar's centre-right party (PP) achieved an impressive period of economic development

## 2004

Grave atentado terrorista yihadista (11-M) en Madrid que se salda con 192 personas asesinadas y casi cerca de 2000 heridos. 14-M: Elecciones generales: VIII Legislatura; Zapatero, del PSOE, presidente del gobierno; Mariano Rajoy, del PP, líder de la oposición. Primer gobierno paritario en la Hª de España. España retira sus tropas de Irak. Boda de Felipe de Borbón con Letizia Ortiz.

## 2005

El congreso rechaza el Plan Ibarretxe. España aprueba la Constitución Europea en referéndum. Legalizado el matrimonio homosexual.

## 2008

Elecciones generales: IX Legislatura; Zapatero, reelegido; Carmen Chacón, primera mujer en ser ministra de Defensa.

## 2011.-

Elecciones generales: X Legislatura; Mariano Rajoy, presidente del Gobierno. ETA anuncia «el cese definitivo de su actividad armada».

## 2015.-

Las elecciones autonómicas y municipales marcan la **ruptura del bipartidismo** con la representación de dos nuevos partidos emergentes: Podemos y Ciudadanos.

## 2016.-

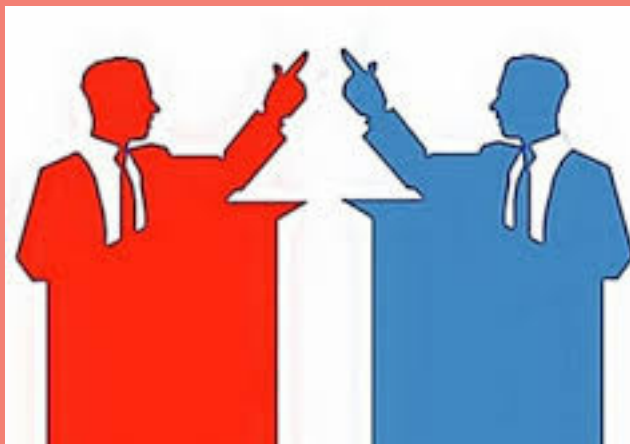
Por primera vez en la Hª de España finaliza una Legislatura —la XI— sin haber sido investido un presidente del Gobierno: se repiten las elecciones generales en las que vuelve a vencer el Partido Popular. Mariano Rajoy es investido presidente del Gobierno en minoría con el apoyo de Ciudadanos y la abstención del PSOE.

## 2017.-

Referéndum sobre la independencia de Cataluña 1-O; el Parlament declara la independencia; el Gobierno aplica el art. 155; el president Puigdemont huye del país.

## 2018.-

Disolución de la banda terrorista ETA. Pedro Sánchez es investido presidente del Gobierno tras vencer por una moción de censura.





## SPANISH CUISINE

Spanish cuisine is heavily influenced by historical processes that shaped local culture and society in some of Europe's Iberian Peninsula territories. Geography and climate had great influence on cooking methods and available ingredients. These cooking methods and ingredients are still present in the gastronomy of the various regions that make up Spain. Spanish cuisine derives from a complex history where invasions and conquests of Spain have modified traditions which made new ingredients available. Thus, the current and old cuisine of Spain incorporates old and new traditions.





**Traditional Spanish** cuisine is down-to-earth, uncomplicated food that is based on the ingredients available locally or the crops grown regionally.

The **two basic ingredients** of all Spanish food are olive oil and garlic. However, because Spain has very distinct geographical regions settled by different ethnic and cultural groups, and because the weather varies from province to province, the regional cuisines are very different.

1. Croquettes
2. Tortilla Espanola
3. Gazpacho or salmorejo
4. Pisto – Spanish ratatouille
5. Cured meats – jamon, chorizo, salchichón
6. Pulpo a la gallega
7. Spain's famous bean stews – and salads
8. Paella
9. Fried milk
10. Prawns in fried garlic
11. Migas



# DO'S AND DON'TS



## Don't

expect to eat early. Spain does everything late and eating is no exception. Lunchtime is usually between 13:00 – 15:30, and dinner is rarely served before 21:00.

## Don't

involved in discussions about regionalism. Spanish people are extremely sensitive to this topic and they have a very strong sense of regional pride, especially in Catalonia, the Basque Country, and Galicia,

## Don't

rush or take punctuality too seriously. Spanish tend to have a very relaxed sense of time, so be patient and just enjoy being in Spain!

## Don't

expect to see Flamenco everywhere. that doesn't mean you're going to see an authentic show everywhere you travel.

## DO

Going for tapas" is an essential part of life in Spain. In Granada (and a few select other cities) your tapas come free with your drink.

## DO

Although people are not conservative, it's better to dress appropriately. Of course, we don't expect you to carry too many clothes while traveling for volunteering, but make sure to dress properly every time you go out. People in Spain are very particular about their style and accessories.

## DO

Shake hand whenever you meet someone. At gathers, try to greet the elders first, and then the younger ones. Expect a hug and kiss on your cheeks from the ones you know/ have met before – that's a Spanish way of showing affection!





## Don't

expect to see Flamenco everywhere. Of course, this is a genuine Spanish form of art and one of the first things that come to mind when thinking of Spain. And although it has a strong tradition in many parts of the country, that doesn't mean you're going to see an authentic show everywhere you travel.

## Don't

Don't bring too many clothes. Spain is a shopping mecca with options for any budget and style out there.

## Don't

expect to see a bullfight in Barcelona or the Canary Islands.

## Don't

head for a table every time you enter a locale. This will offer you the opportunity to socialize with the staff and the other clients, make friends, and learn things that you don't usually find in tourist guides.

## Don't

Don't stick to the main cities. Half of the magic of Spain lies in its wonderful countryside, lesser-known towns, and charming villages. Visiting them will help you get a better sense of the heritage, customs, and traditions of the region you're in.

## DO

Tipping in restaurants is customary in Spain. If you are satisfied with the food and service, make sure to leave some tips.



## DO

Also, siesta (afternoon sleep) is something extremely popular in Spain and people prefer to take a short break of 2 hours post-lunch, in order to get some sleep! Most of the shops would remain closed during the late afternoons and trust me, you'll absolutely enjoy the siesta period!



## DO

Leave all your important documents at your accommodation. Spain is a safe country, but if you lose anything important, then it's entirely your responsibility.



## Don't

Do not wander the city streets wearing only swimsuit. It's tasteless, inappropriate, and even illegal in seaside cities like Barcelona, Malaga, and Mallorca, where you can be punished with a €100 – €200 fine.

## Don't

underestimate tapas, especially if you're traveling on a budget. They are not just an excellent way to immerse yourself in the Spanish culture and sample the local cuisine, but also a great way to cut down on travel costs.

## Don't

Pass the salt shaker from hand to hand. According to Spanish tradition, it brings bad luck.

## Don't

Plan anything important on Tuesday 13, or Tuesday in general. In Spain is not Friday the 13th that brings bad luck, but Tuesday. They even have a saying for it: – On Tuesday, don't get married, don't board (on a ship or plane), and don't leave the house.

**Don't** stay in a tourist resort. Spain's major coasts are packed with all kinds of tourist hotels and all-inclusive resorts, and most of them do offer all the comforts and amenities one would need for a pleasant holiday, but they're also pretty expensive, dull, and unfriendly.

## DO

Take the local transport while traveling. Interact with the locals as much as you can because they can tell you about the best things to do and best places to explore.



## DO

Explore the countrysides and the offbeat towns – while Madrid, Barcelona, and Valencia are popular cities with too many things to do for travelers, you'll always find these places to be too crowded! Traveling to offbeat places would be equally amazing and better deals as such.

## Do

explore Spain on your own, connect with locals and their culture, try new foods, and be adventurous!

## Don't

overlook the mountains. Spain may be the land of sunny costas and charming Mediterranean way of life, but it's also the second most mountainous country in Europe, with extraordinary hiking, skiing, and other adventure opportunities. Sierra Nevada in Andalusia are all wonderful destinations whether you're looking for recreation, thrilling outdoors, culture, history, or authentic cuisine.

## Don't

drink your hot chocolate. Spanish hot chocolate is usually very thick and creamy, more like a pudding than a proper drink. Do as locals do and serve it with delicious crispy churros.

## Don't

Don't stay in a tourist resort. Go out there, explore Spain on your own, connect with locals and their culture, try new foods, and be adventurous!

## Don't

plan every minute of your trip. Every visitor to Spain should leave some time for serendipitous opportunities, you never know what you might discover by chance in this beautiful country that bursts with treasures, excitement, and creativity.

## Do

If you receive a gift, open it in front of the giver as he/she will expect to see your reaction. And it's kind of mandatory to give a return gift as well!



## Do

Keep changes handy – you never know when you'll need it!



## SPAIN TRAVEL TIPS: THINGS THAT WILL SURPRISE FIRST-TIME VISITORS

### **The Spanish don't speak Spanish**

Everyone can speak Spanish. But for plenty of Spaniards, the language we know as Spanish is actually their second tongue. In Barcelona they speak Catalan. In San Sebastian and Bilbao they speak Basque. Everyone will be able to communicate with you in Spanish – but they'd prefer to use their native tongue.

### **It's hot. Really hot.**

Go anywhere south of Madrid in summer and you'll find that the place is an absolute furnace. Temperatures There's an amazing amount of diversity in Spain – this is a country made up of 17 semi-autonomous regions, each of which clings fiercely to a unique culture. in cities such as Seville and Cordoba regularly nudge 40 degrees during July and August, making it pretty uncomfortable for travellers. It makes you appreciate why sies-

**There's an amazing amount of diversity** in Spain – this is a country made up of 17 semi-autonomous regions, each of which clings fiercely to a unique culture.

**Spanish food is not just good, it's the best in the world.** Seriously: the world's best restaurant, food in Spain is as cherished and richly enjoyed as it is anywhere in Europe, with regional specialties and home-style cooking showing the best of gastronomy across the country.

**Between 2pm and 4pm** – say, going shopping – you'll be annoyingly thwarted by the fact that **everything is closed** and everyone has gone home. This doesn't apply, thankfully, in Barcelona and Madrid.

### It's cheap

Spain is refreshingly affordable, particularly down south. Head to Seville or Granada and a meal at a restaurant will only cost \$20 or so; a beer at a bar will be a couple of bucks. Accommodation, too, is surprisingly cheap throughout much of the country.

