



## Stuttford Van Lines Country Guide for

# Spain



Country Guides: Courtesy of Overseas Moving Network International ( OMNI )

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## 1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

**Location:** Western Europe.

**Time:** Mainland Spain/Balearics: GMT + 1 (GMT + 2 from last Sunday in March to last Sunday in October). The Canary Islands: GMT (GMT + 1 from last Sunday in March to last Sunday in October).

Spanish National Tourist Office in the UK

**PO Box 4009, London W1A 6NB, UK Tel:** (020) 7486 8077 or (0845) 940 0180 (24-hour brochure request line; calls cost 60p per minute). Website: [www.spain.info](http://www.spain.info) Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0915-1615.

Spanish Embassy in the UK

**39 Chesham Place, London SW1X 8SB, UK Tel:** (020) 7235 5555. Website: [www.mae.es](http://www.mae.es)

Spanish Consulate in the UK

**20 Draycott Place, London SW3 2RZ, UK Tel:** (020) 7589 8989 or (0906) 550 8970 (recorded visa information; calls cost £1 per minute) or (020) 7594 4904 (to make an appointment). Website: [www.conspalon.org](http://www.conspalon.org) Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0915-1415 (closed Spanish national holidays; visa information by appointment only).

Embassy and Consulate of the Kingdom of Spain in the USA

**2375 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20037, USA Tel:** (202) 728 2330. Website: [www.spainemb.org](http://www.spainemb.org)

Spanish Tourist Office in the USA

**666 Fifth Avenue, Btwn 52nd and 53rd Street, 35th Floor, New York, NY 10103, USA Tel:** (212) 265 8822. Website: [www.okspain.org](http://www.okspain.org)

## 2 OVERVIEW

'Fiesta in the sun'

Mediterranean beaches, sangria in the sun and paella by the plateful. Southern Spain has long been a popular place, but tourists are increasingly turning to the fascinations of another Spain, far removed from the high-rise developments lining the Costa del Sol. Spain is a treasure chest of unforgettable scenery. Separating Spain from France, the snow-capped Pyrenees, as well as having breathtaking views, offer resorts like La Molina and Panticosa with plenty of opportunities for skiing. In the north, the winding rivers and lush, green forests of Galicia present a picture not usually associated with Spain, and in complete contrast to the Moorish-influenced south, Galician culture traces its routes to a Celtic origin. Everywhere are reminders of Spain's rich and varied past, from the Alhambra in Granada to Don Quixote's windmills in La Mancha. Old mixes with new in cities such as Toledo, Barcelona, Salamanca and the capital, Madrid, as celebrated museums, galleries and Baroque churches rub shoulders with blaring bars and thumping discos. What will never change is the Spaniards' passion for partying. Snack on tapas as you skip from bar to bar, before heading off to enjoy Spain's infamous nightlife. Then revitalise the senses



Spain's cultural heritage brims with flamenco, painting, opera, literature, sport, bullfighting and flamboyant, colourful fiestas. Bargains abound amid intense airline competition, so there has never been a better time to visit Spain. Just soak up the atmosphere you won't be disappointed.

Leon Gray

### 3 GENERAL INFORMATION

**Area:** 505,988 sq km (195,363 sq miles); includes Spanish North Africa.

**Population:** 44.1 million (official figures, 2005).

**Population Density:** 87.15 per sq km.

**Capital:** Madrid. Population: 5.5 million (2005).

**GEOGRAPHY:** Spain shares the Iberian peninsula with Portugal and is bordered to the north by the Pyrenees, which separate Spain from France. The Balearic Islands (Mallorca, Menorca, Ibiza and Formentera), 193km (120 miles) southeast of Barcelona, and the Canary Islands off the west coast of Africa are part of Spain, as are the tiny enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla on the north African mainland. With the exception of Switzerland, mainland Spain is the highest and most mountainous country in Europe, with an average height of 610m (2000ft). The Pyrenees stretch roughly 400km (249 miles) from the Basque Country in the west to the Mediterranean Sea; at times the peaks rise to over 1524m (5000ft), the highest point being 3404m (11,169ft). The main physical feature of Spain is the vast central plateau, or Meseta, divided by several chains of sierras. The higher northern area includes Castille and León, the southern section comprises Castile/La Mancha and Extremadura. In the south, the plateau drops abruptly at the Sierra Morena, beyond which lies the valley of Guadalquivir. Southeast of Granada is the Sierra Nevada, part of the Betic Cordillera, which runs parallel to the Mediterranean, rising to 3481m (11,420ft) and the highest point on the Spanish peninsula (the Pico del Teide on Tenerife in the Canaries is the highest peak in Spain). The Mediterranean coastal area reaches from the French frontier in the northeast down to the Straits of Gibraltar, the narrow strip of water linking the Mediterranean with the Atlantic and separating Spain from North Africa.

**Government:** Parliamentary Monarchy since 1978. Head of State: King Juan Carlos I since 1975. Head of Government: José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero since 2004. Recent history: Spain's right-of-centre Popular Party (PP) won a clear majority in Parliament in 2000 and was comfortably ahead in the polls before the 2004 general elections. Three days before the elections, however, devastating terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists in Madrid killed 191 people and threw the political situation into turmoil. Unexpectedly, the Spanish Socialist Workers Party won the election and formed a minority Government under new Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero. In April, Zapatero was sworn in, and he immediately ordered Spanish troops to be withdrawn from Iraq. The last troops left in May. One of Spain's most serious domestic issues continues to be tension in the northern Basque region. The Supreme Court finally approved a government request for a permanent ban on the Basque separatist party Batasuna in March 2003, despite the party's persistent denial that it is terrorist group ETA's political wing. In May 2005, the government offered peace talks with ETA on condition that the group disarms.

**Language:** Spanish (Castillian), Catalan (in the northeast), Galician (in the northwest) and Basque (in the north).



**Religion:** There is no official religion, but the majority of the population is Roman Catholic.

**Electricity:** 220 or 225 volts AC, 50Hz. Generally, round two-pin plugs and screw-type lamp fittings are in use.

**Social Conventions:** Spanish life has undergone rapid change in recent years and many of the stricter religious customs are giving way to more modern ways, particularly in the cities and among women. Nonetheless, many old customs, manners and traditions have not faded and hospitality, chivalry and courtesy remain important. Handshaking is the customary form of greeting. Normal social courtesies should be observed when visiting someone's home. If invited to a private home, a small gift is appreciated. Flowers are only sent for special celebrations. Conservative casual wear is widely acceptable. Some hotels and restaurants encourage men to wear jackets. A black tie is only necessary for very formal occasions and is usually specified if required. Outside resorts, scanty beachwear should be confined to beach or poolside. The evening meal is taken late, generally 2100-2200. The Spanish have two family names; in conversation only the first should be used. A new law banning smoking in offices, shops, schools, hospitals, cultural centres and on public transport was introduced on 1 January 2006.

Passport/Visa

	<i>Passport Required?</i>	<i>Visa Required?</i>	<i>Return Ticket Required?</i>
<b>British</b>	1	No	No
<b>Australian</b>	Yes	No/2	Yes
<b>Canadian</b>	Yes	No/2	Yes
<b>USA</b>	Yes	No/2	Yes
<b>OtherEU</b>	1	No	No
<b>Japanese</b>	Yes	No/2	Yes

**Note:** Spain is a signatory to the 1995 Schengen Agreement. For further details about passport/visa regulations within the Schengen area, see the introductory section How to Use this Guide.

**PASSPORTS:** Passport valid for at least three months beyond length of stay required by all except:(a) 1. EU/EEA nationals (EU + Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway) and Swiss nationals holding a valid national ID card. Note: EU and EEA nationals are only required to produce evidence of their EU/EEA nationality and identity in order to be admitted to any EU/EEA Member State. This evidence can take the form of a valid national passport or national identity card. Either is acceptable. Possession of a return ticket, any length of validity on their document, sufficient funds for the length of their proposed visit should not be imposed. (b) nationals of Andorra and Monaco holding a valid national ID card.

**VISAS:** Required by all except the following: (a) nationals of EU countries, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland regardless of purpose and/or length of stay; (b) 2. other nationals referred to in the chart above for stays of up to 90 days; (c) nationals of Andorra, Anguilla, Argentina, Bermuda, Bolivia, Brazil, British Virgin Islands, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cayman Islands, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, El Salvador, Falkland Islands, Guatemala, Honduras, Hong Kong (SAR), Israel, Korea (Rep), Liechtenstein, Macau (SAR), Malaysia, Mexico, Monaco, Montserrat, New Zealand, Nicaragua,



Panama, Paraguay, Romania, St Helena, San Marino, Singapore, Turks & Caicos Islands, Uruguay, Vatican City and Venezuela for stays of up to 90 days;

(d) holders of travel documents issued by the Geneva convention of July 1951, by Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK for stays of up to 90 days; (e) nationals of any of the Schengen member states who hold permanent residency are entitled to re-enter the Schengen area without a visa, provided proof of residence and a valid passport are submitted; (f) transit passengers continuing their journey by the same or first connecting aircraft provided holding valid onward or return documentation and not leaving the airport (except nationals of certain countries). Visitors are advised to check transit regulations with the relevant Embassy or Consulate before travelling.

**Types of visa and cost:** A uniform type of visa, the Schengen visa, is issued for tourist, business and private visits. Cost is £24.15.

**Note:** (a) Spouses and children of EU nationals (providing spouse's passport and the original marriage or birth certificate is produced), and nationals of some other countries, receive their visas free of charge (enquire at Embassy for details). (b) Do not buy a ticket for travel to Spain before obtaining a visa.

**Validity:** Short-stay (single- and multiple-entry): valid for six months from date of issue for a stay of maximum 90 days per entry. Transit (single- and multiple-entry): valid for a maximum of five days per entry, including the day of arrival. Visas cannot be extended and a new application must be made each time.

**Application to:** In person (strictly only by appointment solicited in writing) to the appropriate Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy) in the country of the passport holder. Postal applications are not accepted. Travellers visiting just one Schengen country should apply to the Consulate of that country; travellers visiting more than one Schengen country should apply to the Consulate of the country chosen as the main destination or the country they will enter first (if they have no main destination).

**Note:** Applicants will be seen by appointment only.

**Application requirements:** (a) Passport or travel document, valid for at least four months longer than requested visa with one full blank page. (b) Two completed application forms. (c) Two passport-size photos. (d) Fee, payable by cash or postal order only. (e) Letter from employer, school or college. (f) Bank statement. (g) Proof of purpose of visit. (h) Proof of medical insurance.

**Working days required:** Seven to ten days to obtain an appointment. After appointment, a visa will be issued in between two and three weeks dependent on nationality.

**Temporary residence:** Refer enquiries to Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy).

**Passport/Visa Information:** Spanish Embassy in the UK39 Chesham Place, London SW1X 8SB, UK Tel: (020) 7235 5555. Website: [www.mae.es](http://www.mae.es) Spanish Consulate in the UK20 Draycott Place, London SW3 2RZ, UK Tel: (020) 7589 8989 or (0906) 550 8970 (recorded visa information; calls cost £1 per minute) or (0906) 526 6666 (to order visa applications; calls cost £1.50 per minute). Website: [www.conspalon.org](http://www.conspalon.org) Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0915-1415 (closed Spanish national holidays; visa information by appointment only). Embassy and Consulate of the



Kingdom of Spain in the USA2375 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20037, USA Tel: (202) 728 2330. Website: [www.spainemb.org](http://www.spainemb.org)

## 4 MONEY

**Single European currency (Euro):** The Euro is now the official currency of 12 EU member states (including Spain). The first Euro coins and notes were introduced in January 2002; the Spanish Peseta was still in circulation until 28 February 2002, when it was completely replaced by the Euro. Euro (€) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of €500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of €2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10, 5, 2 and 1 cents.

**Currency exchange:** Money can be changed in any bank, and at most travel agencies, major hotels and airports. National Girobank Postcheques may be used to withdraw cash from UK accounts at main Spanish post offices.

**Credit & debit cards:** American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are widely accepted, as well as Eurocheque cards. Check with your credit or debit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other facilities which may be available. ATMs are widely available.

**Traveller's cheques:** International traveller's cheques are widely accepted. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take traveller's cheques in Euros or Pounds Sterling. Traveller's cheques should be changed at banks or exchange bureaux.

**Currency restrictions:** The import and export of local currency is unlimited, but the export of amounts exceeding €6010 (in any currency) per person per journey must be declared. The export of cash notes and bearers-cheques, in any currency, exceeding €3050 per person per journey must also be declared.

Exchange rate indicators

Date At time of publishing £1.00 = €1.46 \$1.00 = €0.82

**Banking hours:** Mon-Fri 0900-1400.

## 5 DUTY FREE

The following goods may be imported into Spain without incurring customs duty by passengers 17 years of age or older arriving from non-EU countries: 200 cigarettes or 100 cigarillos 50 cigars or 250g tobacco (300 cigarettes, 150 cigarillos, 70 cigars and 400g of tobacco for EU nationals); 1l of spirits if exceeding 22 per cent volume or 2l of alcoholic beverage not exceeding 22 per cent volume and 2l of wine (1.5l exceeding 22 per cent and 3l of up to 22 per cent and 5l of wine for EU nationals); 250ml eau de toilette and 50g of perfume; 500g of coffee or 200g of coffee extract (1000g of coffee and 4000g of coffee extract for EU nationals); 100g of tea or 40g of tea extract; gifts up to the value of approximately €37.26.

**Abolition of duty free goods within the EU:** On June 30 1999, the sale of duty free alcohol and tobacco at airports and at sea was abolished in all of the original 15 EU member states. Of the 10 new member states that joined the EU on May 1 2004, these rules already apply to Cyprus



and Malta. There are transitional rules in place for visitors returning to one of the original 15 EU countries from one of the other new EU countries. But for the original 15, plus Cyprus and Malta, there are now no limits imposed on importing tobacco and alcohol products from one EU country to another (with the exceptions of Denmark, Finland and Sweden, where limits are imposed). Travellers should note that they may be required to prove at customs that the goods purchased are for personal use only.

## 6 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Below are listed Public Holidays for the January 2006-June 2007 period. Jan 1 2006 New Year's Day. Jan 6\* Epiphany. Mar 19\* San Jose. Apr 13\* Maundy Thursday. Apr 14 Good Friday. May 1 Labour Day. Aug 15 Assumption. Oct 12 National Day. Nov 1 All Saints' Day. Dec 6 Constitution Day. Dec 8 Immaculate Conception. Dec 25 Christmas Day. Jan 1 2007 New Year's Day. Jan 6\* Epiphany. Mar 19\* San Jose. Apr 5\* Maundy Thursday. Apr 6 Good Friday. May 1 Labour Day.

(a) \*These holidays may be replaced by the autonomous communities with another date. (b) The following dates are also celebrated as regional public holidays (within these regions, there are **further public holidays peculiar to the various towns and cities**): Jan 29 Dia de la Convivencia (Ceuta). Feb 28 Andalucía Day. Mar 1 Balearic Isles Day. Apr 23 San Jorge (Aragon) and Day of the Region of Castilla y Leon. May 2 San Segundo (Castilla y Leon) and Fiesta of the Comunidad de Madrid. May 17 Dia de las Letras Gallegas (Galicia). May 30 Canaries Day. May 31 Day of the Region of Castilla-La Mancha. Jun 9 Day of the Region of Murcia and Day of La Rioja. Sep 8 Asturias Day, Day of Extremadura and Nuestra la Virgen de la Victoria (Melilla). Sep 11 National Day of Catalonia. Sep 15 Nuestra Senora de la Bien Aparecida (Cantabria). Sep 17 Commemoration of the Spanish Refounding of the City of Melilla. Dec 26 San Esteban (Balearic Isles and Catalonia). (c) Catalonia, Navarra, Pais Vasco (Basque Country) and Valenciana also celebrate Easter Monday (Apr 17 2006 and Apr 9 2007).

## 7 HEALTH

	Special Precautions	Certificate Required
<b>Yellow Fever</b>	No	No
<b>Cholera</b>	No	No
<b>Typhoid and Polio</b>	No	N/A
<b>Malaria</b>	No	N/A

**Other risks:** Leishmaniasis is present and there have been some outbreaks of Legionnaires Disease in tourist resorts. Rabies is present. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. For more information, consult the Health appendix.

**Health care:** European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland: If you or any of your dependants are suddenly taken ill or have an accident during a visit to an EEA country or Switzerland, free or reduced-cost necessary treatment is available in most cases on production of a valid European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). Each country has different rules about state medical provision. In some, treatment is free. In many countries you will have to pay part or all of the cost, and then



claim a full or partial refund. The EHIC gives access to state-provided medical treatment only and the scheme gives no entitlement to medical repatriation costs, nor does it cover ongoing illnesses of a non-urgent nature, so comprehensive travel insurance is advised. Note that the EHIC replaces the Form E111, which is no longer valid since 31 December 2005. Some restrictions apply, depending on your nationality. Make sure the practitioner you see works within the Spanish state health service. In some parts of the country, particularly the outlying islands, you may have to travel some distance to attend a state surgery (consultorio), health centre (centro sanitario) or hospital clinic (ambulatorio). If you need to call out a doctor in an emergency, make it clear that you have a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) and that you want to be treated under the EU arrangements. Whenever you need treatment, show your EHIC. Dental treatment is not generally provided under the state system, and the costs will not be reimbursed. In Spain, doctors, health centres and hospitals have separate surgery times for private patients and those treated under the state health service. If you are asked to pay, you are not being treated under the Spanish health service and your EHIC will not be accepted. Medicines prescribed by health service practitioners can be obtained from any pharmacy (farmacia). You will have to pay up to 40 per cent of the cost unless you are an EEA pensioner, in which case the medicines will be free of charge. You must show proof that you are a state pensioner, otherwise you will be charged 40 per cent of the cost, which you can claim back on your return home. If a hospital says you need medicines after you are discharged, you must take the medical report to a GP, who will give you a prescription. A doctor will usually arrange any hospital treatment you may need. In an emergency, you can only get free treatment in a public ward at a public hospital. You must show your EHIC; if not, you will be charged as a private patient and will not get your money back. Under the strict terms of the Spanish health service, there are no refunds for private healthcare charges. Make sure you have private medical insurance in case you are treated in an emergency in a private hospital. Doctors in the emergency departments of state health service hospitals will prescribe medicines on the appropriate medical report, but do not issue official prescriptions. You must take the report to a primary care doctor who will issue the official prescription. More information can be obtained in Spain from the Servicio Regional de Salud (Regional Health Service Officers).

#### Travel - International

**Note:** For information on travel to and within the Balearic Islands and the Canary Islands, see the respective sections.

**AIR:** The national airline is IBERIA (IB) (website: [www.iberia.com](http://www.iberia.com)). Many airlines operate to Spain, including an increasing number of low-cost airlines from the UK.

**Approximate flight times:** From Barcelona to London is two hours; from Ibiza is two hours 20 minutes; from Madrid is two hours 20 minutes and from Málaga is two hours 45 minutes. From Madrid to Los Angeles is 12 hours 20 minutes; to New York is eight hours 35 minutes; to Sydney is 30 hours.

**Main airports:** Spain boasts over 30 international airports. Information on the major airports follows; information on any of the others can be obtained from AENA (Aeropuertos Espanoles y Navegación Aérea), Calle Arturo Soria 109, Madrid 28043 (tel: (90) 240 4704 (customer service line); website: [www.aena.es](http://www.aena.es)), which is the organisation responsible for running all of the Spanish airports. Madrid (MAD) (Barajas) is 13km (8 miles) northeast of the city. To/from the airport: A bus service departs to the city around every 18 minutes on weekdays and every 19-23 minutes at weekends (0600-2325) and underground services run every four to seven minutes (0600-0200) costing €3.64. Taxi service is available. Facilities: Restaurants and bars, bank, several car hire offices, hotel reservation and tourist information desks, and outgoing duty free shop.



Barcelona (BCN) (el Prat) is 3km (2 miles) southwest of the city. To/from the airport: Bus service to the city departs Mon-Fri every 15 minutes, Sat every 30 mins and Sun every 20 mins (0600-0100). Rail service is every 20 minutes (0625-2350). Taxi service to the city is available, costing about €18 (travel time - 30 minutes). Facilities: A bank, restaurant, bar, several car hire companies, hotel reservation and tourist information desks and duty free shops. Alicante (ALC) (Altet) is 12km (7 miles) southwest of the city. To/from the airport: Bus service runs to the city (0655-2310) every 10 to 40 minutes, costing €1. A taxi service is available to the city, costing about €12. There is a taxi connection between Alicante and Valencia Airport. Facilities: Duty free shop, bank, bureau de change, car hire, tourist information and restaurant. Málaga (AGP) is 10km (6 miles) southwest of the city. To/from the airport: Buses run every 10 to 30 minutes (0700-0000). A train service runs every 30 minutes, costing €1.05-€1.15 (0700-0000). A taxi service to the city is available, costing €12. Facilities: Duty free shop, bank/bureau de change, restaurant and car hire. Valencia (VLC) (Manises) is 8km (5 miles) west of the city. To/from the airport: An aero bus takes passengers into the city (0600-2200), costing €2.50. Other buses travel to the city every 15 minutes (0630-2345). Taxis cost about €14 plus a €2.75 supplement. Facilities: Several car hire firms, bank/bureau de change, restaurant, bar and duty free shop.

**Departure tax:** None.

**SEA:** Main ports: Barcelona (website: [www.apb.es](http://www.apb.es)), Cadiz (website: [www.puertocadiz.com](http://www.puertocadiz.com)), Santander (website: [www.puertasantander.es](http://www.puertasantander.es)), Valencia (website: [www.valenciaport.com/cultures/es](http://www.valenciaport.com/cultures/es)) and Vigo (website: [www.apvigo.com](http://www.apvigo.com)). Brittany Ferries (tel: (08703) 665 333; website: [www.brittany-ferries.com](http://www.brittany-ferries.com)) operates a service to Santander (on the north coast) from Plymouth (travel time 18 hours), twice-weekly. P&O European Ferries (tel: (08705) 202020; website: [www.poportsmouth.com](http://www.poportsmouth.com)) operates a twice-weekly service from Portsmouth to Bilbao (travel time 35 hours).

**RAIL:** The quickest route by train from the UK is through the Channel Tunnel with connections from Paris to Spain. Eurostar is a service by the railways of Belgium, the UK and France, operating direct high-speed trains from London (Waterloo International) to Paris (Gare du Nord) and to Brussels (Midi/Zuid). It takes two hours 40 minutes from London to Paris (via Lille) and two hours 20 minutes to Brussels. For further information and reservations, contact Eurostar (tel: (0870) 600 0792 (travel agents) or (08705) 186 186 (public; within the UK) or +44 (1233) 617 575 (public; outside the UK); a £5 booking fee applies to all telephone bookings; website: [www.eurostar.com](http://www.eurostar.com)); or Rail Europe (tel: (08705) 848 848; website: [www.raileurope.co.uk](http://www.raileurope.co.uk)). There are direct trains between MadridParis and MadridLisbon, as well as BarcelonaParis, Barcelona Zürich or Milan, Barcelona-Montpellier and BarcelonaGeneva. These services are called Estrella, Talgo or Train-Hotel. On other international services to and from Spain, a change of train is necessary. However, work on the AVE (high-velocity train) route between Madrid and Barcelona is expected to be completed in 2006, after which the French border connection is expected to be fully operational in 2010 and it will be possible to connect with the French TGV (high-velocity route) and the rest of the high-velocity routes in Europe. Motorail services run between Paris and Madrid. For more information, contact the Spanish Rail service (tel: (020) 7224 0345; website: [www.spanish-rail.co.uk](http://www.spanish-rail.co.uk)). Rail passes: The Inter-Rail pass offers unlimited second-class train travel in up to 29 European countries (includes Morocco and Turkey) split into eight zones (A-H). Three different tickets are available: a ticket covering one zone (two to six countries, 16 days' validity), a ticket covering two zones (six to 10 countries, 22 days' validity) and an All Zone Pass (29 countries, one month's validity). Ferry services between Italy and Greece are included. Passengers must be resident in Europe for at least six months before the pass is used. Travel is not allowed in the passenger's country of residence. Travellers under 26 year receive a reduction of about 30 per cent. Children's tickets are reduced by about 50 per



cent. Supplements are required for some high-speed services, seat reservations and couchettes. Discounts are offered on Eurostar and some ferry routes. Available from Inter rail (website: [www.interrail.com](http://www.interrail.com)). The Eurailpass offers unlimited first-class train travel in 17 European countries. Tickets are valid for 15 days, 21 days, one month, two months or three months. The Eurailpass Youth ticket is available to those under 26 and offers unlimited second-class train travel. The Eurailpass Flexi allows either 10 or 15 travel days within a two-month period. The Eurail Selectpass is valid in three, four or five bordering countries and allows five, six, eight or 10 travel days (or 15 for five countries) in a two-month period. The Eurail Regional Pass allows four to 10 travel days in a two-month period in one of nine regions (usually two or more countries). Children receive a 50 per cent reduction. The passes cannot be sold to residents of Europe, Turkey, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia or the Russian Federation. Available from The Eurail Group (website: [www.eurail.com](http://www.eurail.com)).

**ROAD:** The main route from the UK is via France. The main motorways to Spain from France are via Bordeaux or Toulouse to Bilbao (northern Spain) and via Marseille or Toulouse to Barcelona (eastern Spain). There are numerous and excellent road links with neighbouring countries. Eurolines (52 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0AU; tel: (08705) 143 219; website: [www.eurolines.com](http://www.eurolines.com)) and National Express 9 Ensign Court, 4 Vicarage road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 3ES; tel: 08705 808 080; website: [www.nationalexpress.com](http://www.nationalexpress.com) run regular coach services from the UK to Spain. Travellers can either choose Mini-Pass breaks or book a 15-, 30- or 60-day pass. The six Mini-Passes give travellers the freedom to visit three cities, with prices starting from £55. Travellers can stay as long as they like in each city. For information on documentation and traffic regulations, see Travel Internal section.

#### Travel - Internal

**AIR:** Domestic flights are run by IBERIA (IB) (website: [www.iberia.com](http://www.iberia.com)), Air Europa (website: [www.air-europa.com](http://www.air-europa.com)), Binter (website: [www.binternet.com](http://www.binternet.com)) and Spanair (website: [www.spanair.com](http://www.spanair.com)). Scheduled flights connect all main towns as well as the Balearic and Canary Islands and enclaves in North Africa. Air taxis are available at most airports. Reservations should be made well in advance.

**SEA:** There are regular hydrofoil and car and passenger ferry sailings from Algeciras to Tangier and Ceuta (North African enclave); Málaga and Almeria to Melilla (North African enclave); Barcelona, Valencia and Alicante to the Balearic Islands; and Cádiz to the Canary Islands. There are also inter-island services, including a catamaran service linking Barcelona and Palma de Mallorca, which takes three hours and runs twice a day. For further information, contact Trasmediterránea c/o Southern Ferries (tel: (902) 454 645; website: [www.trasmediterranea.es](http://www.trasmediterranea.es)).

**RAIL:** The state-owned company RENFE (website: [www.renfe.es](http://www.renfe.es)) operates a railway network connecting all the regions on the Iberian peninsula. It is mainly a radial network, with connections between Madrid and all the major cities. There are also some transversal services connecting the northwest coast with the Mediterranean coast, as well as services from the French border down the Mediterranean coast. Principal trains are air conditioned, and many have restaurant or buffet service. Reservations for passenger services in Spain may be made in the UK through the Spanish Rail service (see above), European Rail Travel (tel: (020) 7387 0444; website: [www.europeanrail.com](http://www.europeanrail.com)), Freedom Rail (tel: (0870) 757 9898; website: [www.freedomrail.com](http://www.freedomrail.com)) and Ultima Travel (tel: (0151) 339 6171).

**Discount Rail Travel:** The Spanish rail system is one of the cheapest in Europe and various discounts are available. Travellers under 26 can purchase a RENFE Tarjeta Explorerrail, which allows unlimited travel on all but some regional and fast trains. It can be bought in Spain, or in



the UK from selected travel agents, and is available for seven-, 15- and 30-day periods. For more discount rail travel, See Travel International section. Note: Seat reservations are required on all intercity trains. This ruling applies to the passes and cards mentioned above.

**High-Speed Trains:** The Ave service averages 300kph and connects Madrid and Seville in two hours 15 minutes, with 12 services each way via Córdoba. Some services also stop at Ciudad Real and Puerto Llano (La Mancha). The stretch from Madrid to Lleida has been in operation for several years. Planned completion of the Madrid to Barcelona leg is due in 2006, and the high-speed border connection with France in 2010. Also, in 2010, the stretches from Cordoba to Malaga, Madrid to Valencia and Madrid to Valladolid should be ready. The Talgo 200 connects Madrid and Malaga thrice-daily in four hours 35 minutes. Holders of most of the cards and passes mentioned above qualify for discounts, albeit less substantial than the rates quoted above.

**Tourist Trains:** The Andalus Express and Transcantábrico offer a pleasant way of discovering their respective regions. There are also a number of privately-run narrow-gauge railways in Spain, located mainly in the north of Spain as well as the Mediterranean coast and the Balearic Islands, which run at a leisurely pace through picturesque scenery. For more information on tourist trains, contact the Spanish National Tourist Office (see Top Things To Do).

**ROAD:** Motorways are well-maintained and connect Spain northsouth. Tolls are in operation on some sections and have to be paid in Euros. Trunk roads between major cities are generally fast and well-maintained. Rural roads are of differing quality. Bus: There are bus lines which are efficient and cheap, operating between cities and towns. Departures are generally from a central terminal at which the operators will have individual booths selling tickets. Most places have a bus link of some kind, even the more remote villages. Bus tickets cannot be bought in advance though seats may be reserved locally one or two days in advance. Car hire: All major car hire companies are represented in major cities. Drivers must be over 21 to hire a car. Motorcycles: No person under 18 may hire or ride a vehicle over 75cc. Crash helmets must be worn. Regulations: Traffic drives on the right. Side lights must be used at night in built-up areas. Spare bulbs and red hazard triangles must be kept in all vehicles. Traffic lights: two red lights mean 'No Entry'. Parking laws are rigorously enforced. The speed limit for motorways is 120kph (80mph) in general, but for buses and lorries the limit is 100kph (60mph); in built-up areas the limit is 50kph (30mph); for other roads it is 90kph (56mph). Documentation: Most foreign licences including Canadian, EU and US are accepted. Third Party insurance is compulsory, plus a Green Card if bringing your own car (available from insurance company).

**URBAN:** Traffic in Spanish cities is normally heavy, and urban driving takes some time to adjust to. City public transport facilities are generally good. Barcelona, Bilbao, Madrid and Valencia have metros as well as buses. Pre-purchase multi-journey tickets are sold. Other towns and resorts are well served by local buses. Metered taxis are available in most major cities and a 2 to 3 per cent tip is customary.

**TRAVEL TIMES:** The following chart gives approximate travel times (in hours and minutes) from Madrid to other major cities and towns in Spain.

Air  
Road  
Rail

Barcelona  
1.00



8.00

8.00

Canary Is.

2.30

-

-

Mallorca

1.00

-

-

Palma

1.10

6.00\*

5.00\*

**Note:** \*Plus nine hours by boat (three hours by catamaran).

## 8 ACCOMMODATION

**HOTELS & HOSTELS:** A variety of hotel-type accommodation is available including apartment-hotels, hotel-residencias and motels. The term residencia denotes an establishment where dining-room facilities are not provided, although there must be provisions for the serving of breakfast and a cafe. Further information on accommodation in Barcelona and Madrid can be obtained free of charge online (website: [www.barcelona-on-line.com](http://www.barcelona-on-line.com) or [www.madrid-on-line.com](http://www.madrid-on-line.com)). Grading: Most accommodation in Spain is provided in hotels, classified from 1 to 5 stars (the few exceptions have a Gran Lujo, Grande De Luxe category); or hostels and pensiones, classified from 1 to 3 stars. It is always advisable to book accommodation well in advance, particularly during festivals or at popular resorts on the coast from late spring to October. Reservations may be made by writing directly to the hotels, lists of which may be obtained from the Spanish National Tourist Office (see Top Things To Do), or through travel agents or certain hotel booking services. Letters to 5-, 4- or 3-star hotels may be written in English, but it is advisable to write in Spanish to lower categories.

**GOVERNMENT LODGES:** A chain of lodging places has been set up by the Ministry of Tourism in places of special interest or remote locations. These include attractive modern buildings and ancient monuments of historic interest, such as monasteries, convents, old palaces and castles. Standards are uniformly high, but not at the expense of individual charm and character. Below is a brief description of each type of lodging:

**PARADORES:** National Tourist Inns, Paradores, are hotels with all modern amenities including rooms with private bathroom, hot and cold running water, central heating, telephone in every room, public sitting rooms, garages and complementary services. Many Paradores are restored castles, convents or palaces in a scenic setting. Advance booking is advised.

**GUEST HOUSES:** Pensiones are common throughout Spain and vary in quality from austere to relatively luxurious. They are usually run by the family on the premises and provide bed and board only.



**CAMPING/CARAVANNING:** There are over 1000 campsites throughout the country, covering a wide quality and price range. Permission from the local police and landowner is essential for off-site camping and there may be no more than three tents/caravans or 10 campers in any one place. Regulations demand that off-site camping is in isolated areas only.

**YOUTH HOSTELS:** The Spanish Youth Hostel Network (REAJ) is the representative in Spain for the International Youth Hostel Federation and there are currently over 200 registered youth hostels throughout the whole of Spain. Most must be booked in Spain, but a couple can be booked from the UK.

**ACCOMMODATION INFORMATION:** Confederación Española de Hoteles y Alojamientos (CEHAT) Calle Orense 32, 28020 Madrid, Spain Tel: (91) 556 7112 or (90) 201 2141. Website: [www.cehat.com](http://www.cehat.com). Paradores de Turismo Calle Requena 3, Madrid 28013, Spain Tel: (91) 516 6666. Website: [www.parador.es](http://www.parador.es) Keytel International 402 Edgware Road, London W2 1ED, UK Tel: (020) 7616 0300. Website: [www.keytel.co.uk](http://www.keytel.co.uk) Federación Española de Empresarios de Cámpings y Ciudades de Vacaciones (ANCE) San Bernardo 97-99, 28015 Madrid, Spain Tel: (91) 448 1234. Website: [www.fedcamping.com](http://www.fedcamping.com). Spanish Youth Hostel Network (REAJ) E-mail: [info@reaj.com](mailto:info@reaj.com) Website: [www.reaj.com](http://www.reaj.com) Turisme Juvenil de Catalunya in Barcelona C/Rocafort 116-122, 08015 Barcelona, Spain Tel: (934) 838 363. Turisme Juvenil de Catalunya in Madrid C/Castello 24, 1G, 28001 Madrid, Spain Tel: (91) 522 7007. YHA International in England Tel: (01629) 592 600 Website: [www.yha.org](http://www.yha.org)

## Introduction

Spain, one of the largest countries in Europe, occupies four-fifths of the Iberian Peninsula. A land of extraordinary geographical and cultural diversity, it has much to offer the tourist. While the Mediterranean beach resorts on the Costa Blanca, Costa Brava and Costa del Sol continue to attract sunseekers, the north coast is gradually gaining in popularity. But there is a great deal more to Spain than the beaches. The terrain is amazingly diverse with a huge variety of **landscapes:** deciduous and coniferous forests, arid plains, salt marshes, rocky bays and coves, peaks, verdant river valleys and mountain streams. One of the most pleasurable ways to discover Spain's natural beauty and abundant wildlife is to visit one of the National Parks. Walks, hiking trails and jeep excursions enable visitors to explore marshes and wetlands, coastal dunes, isolated mountain peaks and Atlantic beaches. At certain times of the year the skies are filled with migrating birds heading for North Africa and the parks are also the habitat of a wealth of indigenous flora and fauna. Special mention should be made of rare and endangered species like the royal eagle, the capercaillie (woodcock) and the Pyrenean mountain goat. The major national parks in mainland Spain are: Coto de Doñana (provinces of Seville and Huelva), Tablas de Daimiel (La Mancha), Ordesa (Huesca Pyrenees), Aigües Tortes (Lleida) and Montaña de Covadonga (Picos de Europa). Over the centuries, Spain's indigenous and conquering peoples have left an indelible legacy. Cromlechs and cave paintings from the prehistoric period, temples and aqueducts from the Roman occupation, Romanesque churches, Moorish baths, mosques and fortresses, medieval cathedrals and castles, Renaissance and Baroque palaces, the modernist architecture of Antoni Gaudí and his contemporaries, as well as present-day masterpieces like the Guggenheim museum in Bilbao and the City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia. For the purposes of this section, Spain has been divided into eight regions, which do not necessarily reflect political or cultural boundaries: Madrid, Andalucia, Ceuta & Melilla, Castile/La Mancha & Extremadura, Castile/León & La Rioja, The Northern Region, Navarre & Aragon, Valencia & Murcia and Catalonia (including Barcelona). Information on the Balearic Islands and the Canary Islands, both integral parts of Spain, are dealt with separately.



## Madrid

The Spanish capital is a vibrant, atmospheric city, short on famous monuments but rich in cultural sights. Pride of place belongs to the city's three superb art museums. The Prado has one of the most remarkable art collections in the world, with works by major Spanish and European masters from the Renaissance onwards. The Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia is devoted to 20th-century Spanish art with representative works by Miró, Dalí, Juan Gris, and above all by the Cubists, including Picasso. The most famous work on show is his masterpiece from the Civil War period, Guernica. The Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza is one of the most important private collections of western painting in the world, with more than 800 paintings from the Italian Renaissance to the 20th-century avant garde. The Royal Palace dates from the mid-18th century. There are more than 20 rooms open to the public, exhibiting priceless tapestries, paintings, carpets, clocks, furniture, silverware and porcelain. The armoury has one of the most valuable collections in Europe, mainly from the 16th century. Madrid's most historic square, the Plaza Mayor, is enclosed by arcades sheltering a variety of craft shops, restaurants and tapas bars. It was completed in 1617 during the reign of Philip III. The popular centre of Madrid is the famous square, the Puerta del Sol, the main shopping district and hub of the city's nightlife. Madrid's most accessible green space is the Retiro Park. A former royal retreat, its attractions include a boating lake and summer concerts. The Botanical Gardens, a short walk from the Prado, are worth a visit. The Casa de Campo, west of the city centre, is a huge open space with a swimming pool, tennis courts, a jogging track and a zoo with aquarium. On the edge of Casa de Campo is the Parque de Atracciones, a large amusement park. Southeast of the city is the Parque Biológico, a new theme park on bio-diversity with pavilions recreating a variety of ecosystems. There is a 250-hectare Warner Brothers theme park in San Martín de la Vega. Many visitors to the city take the opportunity to see Real Madrid, one of the **world's most successful football clubs, at the Bernabéu Stadium. EXCURSIONS:** There are numerous places of interest within easy reach of the city. The Monastery of San Lorenzo del Escorial (49km, 30 miles) was commissioned by Philip II as a mausoleum for Spanish rulers. The highlights are the art museum, with works by Rubens, Tintoretto, Titian and Veronese, the palace, the basilica and the library. Approximately 9km (6 miles) from the Escorial is the Valle de los Caídos (Valley of the Fallen), a huge crypt cut into the mountainside surmounted by a stone cross of 152m (500ft). The dictator, General Franco, conceived this dramatic monument as a tribute to those on the Fascist side who died in the Civil War. Franco himself is buried here. Alcalá de Henares, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is the birthplace of the writer Miguel de Cervantes and the English queen, Catherine of Aragon. The main point of interest is the university, founded in the 16th century by Cardinal Cisneros. Other attractions include the 17th-century convent of San Bernardo and the oldest surviving public theatre in Europe as important to Spain as Shakespeare's Globe is to England. Aranjuez is famous for its gardens, an 18th-century Summer Palace, built by the Spanish Bourbons and Charles IV's enormously expensive folly, the Casita del Labrador, on the banks of the River Tagus. Aranjuez is known for strawberries and asparagus. The Strawberry Train (Tren de la Fresa), complete with steam engine and wooden carriages, operates between Madrid and Aranjuez between mid-April and July and September to mid-October. Chinchón is an attractive little town with an atmospheric main square, Plaza Mayor, still used for bullfights during the fiesta (August) and for a passion play at Easter. The mountains of the Sierra de Guadarrama are easily accessible from Madrid and are an important centre for skiing and winter sports. Puerto de Navacerrada and Valdesquí are the main resorts.

## Andalucia, Ceuta & Melilla

Andalucia is a mountainous region in the far south of Spain, rich in minerals and an important centre for the production of olives, grapes, oranges and lemons. Andalucia (Al-Andalus) was the last stronghold of the Moors who first arrived here from North Africa early in the eighth century



and were finally expelled in 1492. The Arab architectural legacy is an important reason for visiting the region, especially the three great cities of Córdoba, Granada and Seville.

**SEVILLE (SEVILLA):** The regional capital is Seville, one of the largest cities in Spain, bearing numerous traces of the 500 years of Moorish occupation. Seville is the romantic heart of the country, the city of Carmen and Don Juan; its cathedral is the largest Gothic building in the world and has a superb collection of art and period stonework. Christopher Columbus is buried here. The cathedral bell tower, known as the Giralda from its crowning weather vane, was originally a minaret and observatory. The climb is worth the effort for the commanding views. Of great importance is the Alcázar, the palace-fortress of the Arab kings and one of the finest examples of Mudéjar (Moorish) architecture, mostly dating from after the Christian re-conquest. Seville's other sights include the Alcázar gardens, the evocative neighbourhood of Santa Cruz with its white-washed houses and tiled patios, and the Torre de Oro, part of the Arab fortifications and later said to have been covered with gold leaf imported from the Americas. Holy Week in Seville embodies the religious fervour of the Spanish and is one of the most interesting festivals in the country. Early booking for accommodation at festival time is essential. Holy Week is followed closely by the famous April Fair, during which couples parade the fairground mounted on fine Andalusian horses, dressed in the traditional flamenco costume. Drinking, eating, song and dance are the order of the day for the whole week and the fairground with its coloured lanterns and casetas bordering the streets is a continuous movement of colour.

**CÓRDOBA:** Founded by the Romans, Córdoba's heyday was during the early Moorish period when it was reputed to be the most splendid city in Europe. The Great Mosque built between 785 and 1002 is the main tourist attraction. Highlights include the Great Hall, characterised by delicately carved horseshoe arches of alternating white stone and red brick, the Patio de Los Naranjas, the Ablutions Courtyard still shaded by orange trees and cooled by fountains, and the Mihrab (prayer niche). In the 16th century the mosque was transformed into a Christian church with the building of a Renaissance Choir. Other reminders of Córdoba's history are the old Jewish Quarter, which boasts a 14th-century mosque (one of only three in Spain), the Archaeological Museum with its substantial Roman and Moorish finds and the area by the river. Just outside town is the ruined palace of Medina Azahara the site is still being excavated.

**GRANADA:** The last city to fall to the Christians, Granada's outstanding monument is the Alhambra, the palace-fortress built by the Nasrid rulers in the 13th to 14th centuries. The most popular tourist attraction in Spain, tickets must be booked at least 24 hours in advance. The highlights include: the Palacios Nazariés, its halls, courtyards and loggias decorated with painted enamel tiles, delicately fretted arches, stalactite vaulting, marble sculptures and stucco ornament; the Alcazaba, an 11th-century hilltop fortress and the Generalife, the gardens of the summer palace. Across the river from the Alhambra is the atmospheric Arab quarter of the Albaicín. The main sights here are the Arab baths, the Renaissance Casa de Castril and the Church of San Nicolás from where the views of the Alhambra and the surrounding countryside are outstanding. In the town itself, visitors should not miss the Gothic Capilla Real (Royal Chapel) built by Ferdinand and Isabella as a mausoleum and a symbol of their triumph over the Moors. The adjoining cathedral, built over several centuries, is impressive mainly in its proportions.

**THE SIERRA NEVADA:** South of Granada and only about 40km (25 miles) from the coast, is the upland area of the Sierra Nevada, a mountain range running roughly east to west. It contains the highest peaks in Iberia; one of these, the Pico de Veleta (over 3400m/11,155ft), is accessible for most of its height by road and coach trips. The region offers the unique opportunity to combine a holiday of winter sports with coastal sunshine and watersports in the Mediterranean (see below). Mountain resorts include Capileira (south of the Pico de Veleta), Borreguiles and Pradolano (both in the Solynieve region). There are also coach excursions from Granada to the



picturesquely isolated villages of the Alpujarra on the southern fringes of the Sierra Nevada. There are dramatic views of the valleys and ravines from the twisting mountain roads. Jaén is an ancient town rich in historic buildings and art treasures: the Provincial Museum, the Cathedral, the Castle of Santa Catalina and the 11th-century Moorish baths among them. Baeza is noteworthy for its aristocratic town houses, mostly dating from the Renaissance period. The most distinguished is the Palacio de Jabalquinto, its ornamentation clearly revealing Mudejar influences. Like Baeza, Ubeda has many Renaissance palaces, but the outstanding monument here is the Capilla del Salvador, a fine example of Plateresque architecture.

**COSTA DE LA LUZ:** This attractive stretch of coastline extends from the Portuguese border in the west to Tarifa in the east and, while popular with Spanish tourists, is still relatively undeveloped. Cádiz's heyday as a port was in the 16th century when it traded in gold and silver from the Americas. Today, the town's slightly down-at-heel appearance is part of its charm. Points of interest include the sea fortifications, the 'old' and 'new' cathedrals and the tower, Torre Tavira, worth the climb for the sweeping rooftop views. The nearest beach is the Playa de la Victoria, but there are plenty of alternatives in the direction of San Lúcar de Barremada. Less than 30 minutes away is the sherry town of Jerez de la Frontera. Several of the bodegas (bars), whose links with England began with the importation of 'sherris-sack' in the 16th century, are open to the public for tastings. Other attractions include the splendid Renaissance cathedral and a restored 11th-century Moorish Alcázar with baths. Another popular excursion from Cadiz is to the Sierra de Grazalema National Park where visitors can enjoy the wonderful mountain scenery. Points of interest along the route include the Puerto de las Palomas mountain pass which overlooks Grazalema itself, the fortified town of Zahara de la Sierra and Arcos de la Frontera, a picturesque village with a commanding cliff top location overlooking the Rio Guadalete. The road from Cádiz to Algeciras offers spectacular views of the Straits of Gibraltar, the North African coastline and the Atlas Mountains. From Algeciras, ferries run to Tangier and Ceuta on the north African coast, as well as to the Canary Islands. In the province of Huelva is the village of El Rocío where one of the most important Spanish festivals in honour of the Virgin Mary is held at Whitsun. Also of interest are the beautiful stalactite caves of Gruta de las Maravillas in Arcena in the north of Huelva province and the national park, Coto de Doñana.

**COSTA DEL SOL:** This densely populated area, popular with tourists on account of its fine beaches and picturesque towns, extends along most of Andalusia's Mediterranean coastline, from Almeria to Tarifa. Usually regarded as little more than the gateway to the Costa del Sol, Málaga is an attractive and lively city with plenty to interest the passing visitor. The birthplace of Spain's greatest 20th-century artist, Pablo Picasso, it is now home to the newly opened Picasso Museum which exhibits an important collection of his paintings. His parents' house is also open to the public. Other sights worth a look are the unfinished Cathedral (16th to 18th centuries), the Tropical Gardens and two restored Moorish castles, the Alcazaba and Gibralfara. Marbella and Torremolinos, the main resorts of the Costa del Sol, are overdeveloped, but it is still possible to find a relatively uncrowded beach further afield. In the same province is Nerja, known as the 'Balcony of Europe' on account of its having a promontory look-out which is perched high above the sea with commanding views of the Mediterranean. It is also the home of well-preserved prehistoric caves. An excursion can be made from Málaga to the old mountain town of Ronda, spectacularly situated on a gorge in the Sierra de Ronda.

**COSTA DE ALMERÍA:** To the east of the Costa del Sol is the province of Almería, one of the most heavily developed tourist regions of the country. The capital of the same name is a former Roman port, dominated by its Moorish castle, the Alcazaba. Attractions here include the 16th-century Cathedral and the Church of Santiago el Viejo. The main resorts of Roquetas de Mar, Aguadulce, El Cabo de Gata and Mojácar lie east and west of the town.



**THE AFRICAN ENCLAVES:** Ceuta is a free port on the north coast of Africa. The city is dominated by the Plaza de Africa in the town centre and the cathedral. The promontory has the remains of the old fortress. Bus services are available into Morocco and there are regular car-ferry sailings from Algeciras. Melilla is also a free port on the north coast of Africa, and is served by car ferries from Málaga and Almería. The town is mainly modern, but there are several older buildings, including a 16th-century church.

#### Castile/La Mancha & Extremadura

This inland region lies between Madrid and Andalucia. Bordered by mountains to the north, east and south, it is irrigated by two large rivers, the Guadiana and the Tajo, both of which flow westwards to Portugal and thence to the Atlantic. Castile/La Mancha, the higher, western part of the region, is also known as Castilla La Nueva (New Castile).

**CASTILE/LA MANCHA:** To the south of Madrid is the ancient Spanish capital of Toledo. Rising above the plains and a gorge of the Rio Tajo, the city is dominated by the magnificent cathedral and Alcazar. The town seems tortured by streets as narrow as the steel blades for which it is famous. Toledo is justly proud of its collection of paintings by El Greco, who lived and painted here. El Greco's most famous painting, The Burial of the Count of Orgaz, is preserved in the Santo Tomé Church. There are more El Grecos as well as works by Goya and other artists in the Hospital y Museo de Santa Cruz, a magnificent Renaissance building with a Plateresque façade. Other reminders of Toledo's rich cultural heritage are its two medieval synagogues and a 10th-century mosque, currently undergoing restoration. Guadalajara, capital of the province of the same name, is situated northeast of the capital, on the Rio Henares. Sights include the 15th-century Palacio del Infantado and the Church of San Gines. The provincial capital of Ciudad Real is the chief town in the La Mancha region, the home of Don Quixote. There are many places in the surrounding area associated with Don Quixote, including Campo de Criptana, believed to be the setting for his fight with the windmills. Cuenca, also a provincial capital, is famous for its hanging houses. It is one of the most attractive of Spain's medieval towns and the Gothic cathedral is particularly richly decorated. The nearby countryside includes woods, lakes, spectacular caves, towering mountains and valleys, many with fortified towns and villages clinging to their sides. Albacete is the centre of a wine-producing region. The town witnessed two exceptionally bloody battles during the Reconquista, but the considerable rebuilding of the town has left few reminders of its history. More evidence, however, is scattered in the surrounding countryside, where such places as the Moorish castle at Almansa and the old fortified towns of Chinchilla de Monte Aragón and Villena reflect the area's stormy past.

**EXTREMADURA:** This region consists of the provinces of Cáceres and Badajoz. Cáceres was founded in the first century BC by the Romans, and was later destroyed by the Visigoths and rebuilt by the Moors. There are traces of all the stages of the city's history, although most of the buildings date from Cáceres' Golden Age during the 16th century. Nearby is the beautiful village of Arroyo de la Luz. Around 48km (30 miles) away is the walled town of Trujillo, birthplace of the conquistador, Francisco Pizarro. Apart from two museums devoted to the conquest of the New World, visitors can see the fortress, a number of Renaissance town houses and historic churches. Also in this province is Plasencia, founded in the 12th century, which has a beautiful medieval aqueduct, cathedral and a 15th-century convent that has retained much of its original architecture, masonry, painting and murals. The ancient fortified town of Badajoz (in the province of the same name), is situated very close to the Portuguese frontier and was founded by the Romans. The Alcazaba, the Moorish part of the town, is on a hill in the northeast of the town. Not far away is the town of Albuquerque, which has the ruins of a massive castle and a large Gothic church. In the same province is the town of Mérida, famous for ancient Roman ruins; the



remains are housed in the Museum of Archaeology. A few kilometres away is Medellín, where Cortés was born in 1485.

### Castile/León & La Rioja

The inland region of Castile and León lie to the north and northwest of Madrid and occupy the northern part of the Meseta Central, the plateau that covers much of central Spain. As with the Madrid region, Castile and León are hemmed in by high mountains to the north, east and south and are the catchment area for a large river, the Douro, which flows westward into Portugal. Hot and dry throughout much of the year, the region's extensive plains nonetheless make it an important agricultural asset for a country as mountainous as Spain. The small wine region of La Rioja is tucked away to the northeast of Castile and León.

**CASTILE LA VIEJA:** Superbly situated on a plain overlooked by the Sierra de Gredos, Avila is the highest provincial capital in the country. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it is famous for its perfectly preserved 11th-century walls and as the birthplace of the 16th-century mystic, St Teresa. Walking the ramparts is the most obvious attraction. The sights most closely associated with St Teresa are the 17th-century Convent now named in her honour (the small museum exhibits items of clothing and other possessions), the Convento de la Encarnación, where she served as a nun and the Convento de San José which she founded in 1562. The Cathedral is a curious hybrid of the Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance styles. Segovia is renowned for its 800m-long Roman aqueduct, one of the best preserved structures of its kind in the world. Its other attractions include 18 outstanding Romanesque churches and a Gothic cathedral by the Arab Alcazar. The turrets soaring from its rocky outcrop are said to be the inspiration for Walt Disney's fairytale castles. A short distance from the town is the wonderfully sited Summer Palace and gardens of La Granja, built in the first half of the 18th century for Philip V. The province of Soria has a large number of archaeological remains of the Celtiberian and Roman civilisations, many of which can be seen in the Museo Numantino in the provincial capital of the same name. Around 9km (6 miles) north of the town is the site of Numancia, a fortified Celtiberian town. Attractions in the town of Soria include the 13th-century Church of San Juan de Duero, the Cathedral of San Pedro and the Renaissance Palacio de los Condes de Gómara. Burgos was the birthplace of the knight El Cid, the embodiment of the chivalric tradition. His tomb, and that of his beloved Doña Jimena, can be seen in the magnificent Gothic cathedral. Palencia, the capital of the province of the same name, was the one-time residence of the Kings of Castile and seat of the Cortes of Castile. The 15th-century Gothic Cathedral is the main point of interest, though it can not stand comparison with Burgos. The city has several other late-medieval buildings and an archaeological museum. The industrial city of Valladolid (population 500,000), capital of a province rich in castles and other ancient buildings, is famous for the Holy Week Procession at Easter and the Ferias Mayores (Great Fairs) in September. Towards the end of October, the city hosts a major international film festival. Book ahead if a visit is planned at any of these times. The city is associated with some of the most famous names in the history of the Iberian peninsula. Columbus (although not a Spaniard) died here in 1506 the Museo de Colon has objects and artefacts from the Mayan, Aztec and Inca civilisations; the great Spanish poet, Miguel de Cervantes, also had a home here, which is now a museum. The Museo Nacional de Escultura has the best collection of polychromatic religious sculpture in the world. There's also a beautiful medieval cathedral and a university. The superb castle at Peñafiel houses a Museum of Wine of the Ribera del Duero region, and commands stunning scenic views.

**LEÓN:** The lively city of León was recaptured from the Moors in 850, and the architecture reflects its long history under Christian rule. The cathedral is one of the finest examples of the Gothic style in the country and boasts some outstanding 13th-century stained glass. Also worth seeing is the Pantheon in the Church of San Isidoro, which contains the tombs of the medieval



kings of Castile and León and is decorated with Romanesque wall paintings. There are several places of interest within easy reach of León, including the spectacular Puerto de Pajares, Benavente and the attractive region around Astorga, a town which, like other towns in the region, was a stopping point on the Way of St James (see Santiago de Compostela in the Northern Region section). South of León is the province of Zamora; the provincial capital of the same name was the scene of many fierce struggles between the Moors and the Christians during the Reconquista, in which the Spanish hero El Cid figured prominently. The town has a Romanesque Cathedral and several 12th-century churches. Approximately 19km (12 miles) northwest of the town is an artificial lake, created in 1931; on the shores of the lake, in El Campillo, is a Visigoth church dating from the seventh century, which was moved when its original site was flooded by the new reservoir. The southernmost province of León, Salamanca, has as its capital the ancient university town of the same name, awarded the title of 'European City of Culture' in 2002. It is situated on the swiftly flowing Tormes River and has many superb Renaissance buildings, weathered to a golden-brown hue. The most famous of these are the two Cathedrals, one Romanesque, the other late-Gothic in style but not completed until the 18th century. The university and the fine houses around the Plaza Mayor are also striking. More unusual is the Museo Art Nouveau y Art Deco, with its fascinating collections of objets d'art from the first half of the 20th century. The fiesta in September is very popular and bookings should be made well in advance.

**LA RIOJA:** This region is famous for its vineyards. The capital, Logroño, is in the centre of the region. It is a district with a great historical past; the origins of poetry in the Castilian language lie here and it contains the channel of a European stream of culture the Road to Santiago.

#### The Northern Region

This region comprises northwestern Spain and the northern coast stretching as far as the French frontier. The two outstanding natural features are the Cantabrian Mountains and the Rías Gallegas estuaries in Galicia. The highest peaks are the Picos de Europa (2615m/8579ft) in Asturias, favoured by walkers, climbers and wildlife enthusiasts. There are excellent beaches along the entire coastline, mostly of fine sand, often surrounded by cliffs and crags. Much of the hinterland, however, is green, lush and forested. This is at least partly due to the climate, which is noticeably wetter than in the south.

**GALICIA:** Galicia is a mountainous region with large tracts of heathland broken by gorges and fast-flowing rivers. The coastline has many sandy bays, often backed with forests of fir and eucalyptus, and deep fjord-like estuaries (rías), which cut into the land. The dominant building material is granite. Galicia has its own culture and language (gallego, influenced by Portuguese) and many of the roadsigns are in two languages. La Coruña is one of the largest towns in the region and is said to have been founded by the Phoenicians. Since then it has enjoyed a tempestuous history the Armada set sail from here in 1588 and Sir John Moore's British Army had to evacuate the town following an ignominious retreat from Napoleon's forces in January 1809. Moore died in the encounter and is buried in the Jardín de San Carlos. La Coruña's most attractive feature is the Ciudad Vieja (old quarter) on the north spur of the harbour. Santiago de Compostela has been a centre of pilgrimage since the early middle ages and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The focal point for all visits is the Gothic Cathedral completed in 1188. Apart from the revered image of St James, it boasts a magnificent portico and crypt. For further information, see The Way of St James section. The Roman town of Lugo is noted for having one of the finest surviving examples of Roman walls. Orense first attracted the Romans on account of its therapeutic waters. The 13th-century cathedral was built on the site of one dating from the sixth century. Pontevedra, the region's fourth provincial capital, is a granite town with arcaded streets and many ancient buildings. Further south is the important port of Vigo, the centre of a region of



attractive countryside. A good view of the town and the bay can be had from the Castillo del Castro.

**THE WAY OF ST JAMES:** During the Middle Ages, the tomb of St James at Santiago de Compostela was regarded as one of the most holy sites in Christendom and thousands of pilgrims travelled through Spain each year to visit the shrine. This route, the Way of St James, was lined with monasteries, religious houses, chapels and hospices to cater for the pilgrims. Many of these buildings still survive, and any traveller following the route today will find it an uplifting introduction to the religious architecture of medieval Spain. The route began in Navarre, at Canfranc or Valcarlos; from there, travelling west, the main stopping places were Pamplona, Santo Domingo de la Calzada, Logroño, Burgos, León, Astorga and Santiago de Compostela. The Saint's feast day, 25 July (the term 'day' is a misnomer since the festival runs for a full week) is celebrated in vigorous style in Santiago de Compostela and accommodation should be booked well in advance. There are several specialist books on the subject of this and other old pilgrim routes that may be followed, both in Spain and elsewhere in Europe.

**ASTURIAS:** This small, once independent principality is predominantly mountainous although there are also large tracts of forest. The resorts are known collectively as the Costa Verde on account of the rich vegetation. Oviedo, the capital of Asturias, is an historic town with an outstanding 12th-century Gothic Cathedral. The Camara Santa has some impressive Romanesque wall paintings and other artistic treasures. Asturias has a remarkably rich legacy of Romanesque churches, several of which can easily be visited from Oviedo. San Julian de los Prados dates from AD 830 and is decorated with medieval frescoes. The Palacio de Santa Maria del Naranco was also built in the ninth century for Ramiro I as a hunting lodge. The chapel of San Miguel de Lillo is nearby. There are many good beaches along the coast, especially around the large fishing village of Ribadesella and Lastres.

**CANTABRIA:** The Cantabrian resorts make a convenient base for expeditions to the mountains. Cantabria (and Asturias) are important centres for skiing and winter sports. The main stations are at Alto Campo, San Isidro and Valgrande-Pajares. Santander is a busy traditional resort set in a beautiful bay ringed with hills. The Gothic Cathedral was destroyed by fire in 1941, but has been carefully restored. The Municipal Museum contains a fine collection of paintings by many 17th- and 18th-century artists. Nearby are the fine beaches of El Sardinero and Magdalena. Santander hosts an impressive music festival throughout August. There are a number of smaller beach resorts to east and west of Santander: Comillas, San Vicente (an old fishing port with a hill-top Gothic church and ducal palace), Laredo and Castro Urdiales (an attractive village with a fine harbour, overlooked by a medieval church and the remains of a Knights Templar castle). The Caves of Altamira are decorated with wall paintings dating back 13,000 years. Note however that admission is strictly limited and advance applications are essential. 100 metres away is Neocueva, a reproduction of the prehistoric original. Nearby is the well-preserved historic town of Santillana del Mar with buildings dating from the 12th to the 18th centuries. Solares is noted for the therapeutic qualities of its mineral waters.

**THE BASQUE COUNTRY (PAÍS VASCO):** Guipúzcoa, Vizcaya and Alava form the Basque provinces, to the east of the Cantabrian Mountains. The economy of this fertile region is based on agriculture, despite having been highly industrialised in the 19th century. The Basques are an ancient pre-Indo-European race and the origins of their language have baffled etymologists for centuries. An independence movement started to make headway around the turn of the 20th century and the separatists still have a following in parts of the region. The Spanish constitution allows the Basques a degree of autonomy, but Nationalist politicians are demanding a greater say in their own affairs. A large though declining port, Bilbao is the main city of the region. The city was founded in the early 14th century and the Old Town is quite extensive with a Gothic



Cathedral and an attractive Town Hall. Bilbao's pre-eminent attraction is Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum, hailed as a masterpiece of 20th-century architecture. The vast exhibition spaces are given over to rotating exhibitions of modern art in all its forms. The Palacio Euskalduna is Bilbao's new congress and music centre. The provincial capital of San Sebastián, situated very close to the French frontier, is one of the most fashionable and popular Spanish seaside resorts. Just 7km (4 miles) west of the town is Monte Ulia, which offers superb views across the countryside and the Bay of Biscay. The art treasures found in the 13th-century Castle of Butron, near Bilbao, are also worthy of note. The third provincial capital of the Basque region, and also the regional capital, is Vitoria, famous as being the site of a British victory during the Peninsula War, an event commemorated in various places in the city. Vitoria is remarkable for having two cathedrals; one was completed in the 15th century, whilst the other, on which work commenced in 1907, has yet to be finished.

#### Navarre & Aragon

These two medieval kingdoms lie southwest of the French border, with the Pyrenees to the northeast. The landscape offers spectacular views, the mountains contrasting with the lush valleys of the lower ground. This is a popular area for skiing and winter sports. The main resorts include Astun, Candanchú, Cerler, El Formigal, and Panticosa.

**NAVARRRE:** Pamplona has been inundated with tourists ever since American writer Ernest Hemingway put the town on the map with his novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1927). His fascination was with the *Corrida*, the 'running of the bulls', at the Festival of San Fermín (Jul 6-14). During this week, brave or foolhardy visitors join the young men of the town in trying to outrun a large herd of bulls that stampedes through the town's narrow, closed streets. Visitors should book early and expect relatively high prices. Outside the fiesta season, Pamplona's main attractions are its old walled quarter, Renaissance Cathedral and imposing Citadel.

**ARAGON:** Aragon rose to prominence in the late 15th century when its kings resided at Zaragoza, now the regional capital. Situated on the River Ebro, it is a university town with a medieval Cathedral, a 17th-century basilica dedicated to the Virgin of Pilar (a focus of pilgrimage and celebrations in the second week of October) and the Aljafería, a Moorish palace dating from the 11th to the 15th centuries. The Museo de Zaragoza has finds dating back to the city's Roman foundations. In the surrounding countryside there are several areas noted for their wine production, such as Borja and Cariñena, and several castles. Huesca, situated in the foothills of the Pyrenees, is an important market town. There are several attractions within easy reach, including the Ordesa National Park, excellent walking and climbing country; the popular summer holiday resort of Arguis in the Puerto de Monrepós region; the spa town of Balneario de Panticosa; and the high-altitude resort and frontier town of Canfranc. The third and southernmost province of Aragon is Teruel. The provincial capital is sited on a hill surrounded by the gorges of the Rio Turia. It has a pronounced Moorish influence (the last mosque was not closed until 10 years after the end of the Reconquista in 1492), and there are several architectural survivals from its Islamic period. Nearby is the small episcopal city of Sergobe, spectacularly situated between two castle-crowned hills.

#### Valencia & Murcia

**VALENCIA:** Spain's third-largest city (population 800,000), Valencia is famous for its orange groves, its fruit and vegetable market (one of the largest in Europe) and its lively nightlife. It is also a popular tourist resort with beaches a short bus ride from the town. The newest tourist attraction is Santiago Calatrava's City of Arts and Science Park. The Hemispheric, an amazing glass structure, houses a planetarium, IMAX dome and laserium. The Palace of Arts boasts the



largest oceanarium in Europe. Valencia's Cathedral claims possession of the Holy Grail. The Fallas (Mar 15-19) is a major festival culminating in the burning of papier-mâché effigies satirising famous Spanish figures and a magnificent fireworks display.

**ALICANTE & THE COSTA BLANCA:** The Costa Calida in the province of Murcia lies to the south of Alicante and is thinly populated except in the areas around the river valleys. Summer temperatures here can be unbearably hot in the resorts but especially inland. Murcia, the town, has a university, cathedral and small old quarter. The salt water lagoon at Mar Menor is good for watersports, while nearby, La Manga offers tennis, golf and so on. Other resorts include Mazarrón, La Unión and Aguilas. The best time to visit Cartagena, founded, as its name implies, by the Carthaginians in the third century BC, is during Holy Week. The town museum has a good collection of Roman and pre-Roman artefacts. Space on the beaches around Torrevieja is at a premium during the summer. Further north along the coast is Alicante, the most important town on the Costa Blanca. The town is dominated by the vast Moorish castle of Santa Barbara, which offers superb views of the city. Excursions from Alicante include a run inland to Guadalest, a village perched like an eagle's eyrie high in the mountains and accessible in the last stages only by donkey or on foot. Also of great interest are several historical sites, including the castles at Elda and Villena, and Elche, famous for its forest of a million palm trees, Botanical Gardens and Basilica, where a medieval Mystery play is performed to celebrate the feast of the Assumption (Aug 14-15). The Costa Blanca has expanded rapidly in recent years and most of the coastal towns between the Peñón de Ifach and Alicante are primarily tourist resorts. Temperatures are higher than on the Costa Brava and the beaches tend to be more extensive. Benidorm is the largest and most intensively developed resort. The new Terramitica theme park is proving popular with visitors. One of many places of interest in the area is the Peñón de Ifach (Ifach Rock), 5km (3 miles) beyond the walled town of Calpe.

**THE COSTA DEL AZAHAR:** This coastal region extends from Vinaròs and the Gulf of Valencia to beyond Denia. The region has expansive beaches around Benicàssim, but its most outstanding feature is, perhaps, the medieval fortress town of Peñíscola, a dramatic sight when viewed from a distance. Other places of interest are the ruined castle of Chisvert, inland from Peñíscola; the 16th-century Torre del Rey at Oropesa; and the Carmelite monastery at the Desierto de las Palmas. North of Valencia is the attractive provincial capital of Castellón, Castellón de la Plana. This small town is situated on a fertile plain, and is the centre of a thriving trade in citrus fruits.

#### Catalonia (Catalunya)

Catalonia is the eastern coastal region, bordering France. It has an ancient culture quite distinct from its neighbours, and many of the inhabitants speak Catalan, a Romance language influenced by medieval French. Catalonia is Spain's industrial and commercial powerhouse but agriculture (olive oil, wine, almonds and fruit) is also important in the region. Catalonia is an important focus of tourism, especially the seaside resorts of the Costa Brava and Costa Dorada. **Skiing and winter sports are on offer for up to six months of the year in the Pyrenees:** the resorts include Baqueira-Beret, Espot Esquí, Masella, La Molina, Nuria, Port del Compte and Rasos de Peguera.

**BARCELONA:** Spain's second-largest city (population 4.9 million) is a major commercial and industrial centre and an important Mediterranean port. The Barri Gòtic (Gothic quarter), as the name suggests, has buildings dating back to the 14th and 15th centuries. Highlights include the Seu (old cathedral), the Episcopal Palace, the Palau de la Generalitat and the Plaça del Rei. The Museo Picasso focuses on the artist's formative years, but includes works from the Blue and Rose periods. Las Ramblas, Barcelona's main thoroughfare, occupies the site of the ancient city walls and extends from the Plaça de Catalunya to the port. Cafes, bookstalls, flower and bird markets



and street artists are just some of the attractions of this fashionable avenue. Beyond Plaça Catalunya, the Eixample (Extension) boasts a wealth of Art Nouveau and Art Deco architecture. The still incomplete church of the Sagrada Família (Holy Family) is the masterpiece of Spain's greatest 20th-century architect, Antoni Gaudí. Other examples of his work are the Casa Batlló, the Casa Mila and Parc Güell. The funicular to Tibidabo, the highest of Barcelona's hills, and the cable car to Montjuic in the southern suburbs, offer spectacular views over the city. There are funfairs on both summits. Barcelona's best museums include the Picasso (see above), the Fundació Joan Miró with works by another of Spain's most innovative 20th-century artists, the Museum of Catalan Art, the Maritime Museum, the Zoological Museum and the Monastery of Pedralbes, which houses part of the Thyssen-Bornemisza art collection. A popular excursion from Barcelona (40km, 24 miles) is to the famed monastery of Montserrat and the shrine of the Black Madonna. The mountain setting, 1135m (3725ft) above the Llobregat River, is spectacular.

**THE COSTA DORADA:** The coastline from Barcelona to Tarragona has more fine sandy beaches. Tarragona was an important army base in Roman times and visitors can still see the remains of the forum, amphitheatre, aqueduct and fortified walls. The city also has an impressive medieval quarter. Inland is the town of Montblanc with a fine Gothic church and the ruins of the 12th-century Cistercian monastery at Poblet. The two main resorts are Salou (the Port-Aventura Theme Park is a key attraction) and cosmopolitan Sitges.

**THE COSTA BRAVA:** This coastal strip northeast of Barcelona comprises pine-clad rocks, sandy bays and package resorts. Inland is Lleida, a province that borders the Pyrenees and boasts some of the most spectacular mountain scenery in Spain. Some resorts on the Costa Brava, such as Tossa de Mar, remain largely unspoilt despite the massive influx of holidaymakers; others (Blanes and Lloret de Mar for example) are intensely developed. In summer the crowds can begin to pall but, with persistence, relatively isolated beaches can be found. Coastal ferries operate between the main resorts. Girona (Gerona) is one of Catalonia's oldest cities, dating back to the Roman period. The Gothic Cathedral has a remarkable collection of medieval religious art. Other attractions include the Arab baths, the former Jewish quarter and the fortified walls. Figueres was the birthplace of the artist Salvador Dalí and has a fascinating Museum devoted to his work. Cadaquès is an enchanting, but touristy, fishing village made famous by Dalí who was a regular visitor. Pals is an intact medieval village, complete with fortifications. Empúries (Ampurias) has impressive Graeco-Roman remains.

## 9 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

**Outdoor pursuits:** The many high mountains and the vast central plain or meseta offer excellent opportunities for hiking, mountaineering and walking. Particularly suitable for trekkers are the mountains in the north of the country. The Pyrenees, which cover an area of 450 sq km, feature breathtaking scenery with rocky walls, lakes and ravines. The Picos de Europa, just west of Santander, are also wild and dramatic, with some peaks rising to over 2600 metres (8528 feet). Spain's flora and fauna includes the brown bear (found in the Asturias), the cabra hispánica or mountain goat (relatively common in the Pyrenees and the Sierra de Gredos, west of Avila) and the rare capercallie or European grouse (in the forests of northern Spain). There are good opportunities for rock climbing in the mountains. Well known, challenging climbs include the Naranjo de Bulnes in the Picos de Europa and Monte Perdido in Ordesa National Park. Mountain biking is becoming increasingly popular, and paths and tracks are plentiful, making most areas accessible. Spain's long equestrian tradition means that horse riding can easily be arranged. Mountain trails, river valleys and the wide plains can all be explored on horseback.



**Watersports:** Swimming, water-skiing, and windsurfing facilities can be found at nearly all seaside resorts. These can be busy in the summer months. Spain's premier windsurfing resort is Tarifa, on the Straits of Gibraltar, where the world championships are held. Inland lakes on the meseta in the regions of Castilla and Extremadura also have good facilities for windsurfing. Whitewater rafting and canoeing are practised on the rapids in northern Spain. Centres are well equipped and have skilled staff. Sailing is very popular, both around the coast and inland. Spain has over 4000km of coastline, and there are many harbours. Over 100 sailing clubs exist, most of which are located near the Mediterranean. Diving is also popular; permits can be acquired from the relevant regional authorities.

**Fishing:** Excellent opportunities exist for all types of fishing. The rivers and streams of the Pyrenees and the Picos de Europa offer good freshwater game fishing, while trout is abundant throughout the country. The Asturias contain the best salmon rivers. Other catches include barbel, perch, pike and tench. Permits must be requested from the regional authorities.

**Golf:** This is becoming increasingly popular, with both Costa del Sol and La Manga emerging as two of Spain's premier golfing destinations. At present, Spain has over 200 golf courses, including courses designed by the likes of Robert Trent Jones, Severiano Ballesteros, Jack Nicklaus and Jose María Olazabel. The Valderrama (near Madrid) is particularly well known. Spain's balmy climate allows for a long golf season. Tuition and equipment hire are widely available.

**Wintersports:** Spain offers great opportunities for skiing and there are many natural ski-runs and winter resorts, equipped with modern facilities, all blessed with the promise of warm sun and blue skies. There is also a wide range of hotels, inns and refuges from which to choose. There are five main skiing regions in Spain; these are the Pyrenean Range, the Cantabrian Range, the Iberian Chain, the Central Chain and the Penibetic Chain. These ranges have diverse characteristics and all are attractive for mountaineering in general and for winter sports in particular.

**Spectator sports:** A typical and spectacular sport is pelota vasca, or jai-alai. Most major northern Spanish cities have courts where daily matches are played from October to June. In the towns and cities of the Basque regions, the game is played in summer as well. Football is probably the most popular spectator sport, with clubs such as Real Madrid and Barcelona being among the most famous in the world; first-class matches are usually played on Sunday. International matches are also staged from time to time. There is a magnificent horse racing track in Madrid with meetings in the autumn and spring; there is racing in San Sebastián in the summer and in Seville in winter. Motor racing is a popular spectator sport in Barcelona and Cadiz.

**Language Courses:** There are many ways to learn Spanish: a language course, a paid internship, living as an au-pair or working. Courses last from one-month to one-year.

#### Entertainment

**Food & Drink:** Eating out in Spain is often cheap and meals are substantial rather than gourmet. One of the best ways to sample Spanish food is to try tapas, or snacks, which are served at any time of day in local bars. These range from cheese and olives to squid or meat delicacies and are priced accordingly. Restaurants are classified by the Government and many offer tourist menus (menu del día). Restaurants and cafes have table service. Cocktail lounges have table and/or counter service. There are no licensing hours. National specialities: Seafood: cod vizcaina or cod pil-pil (Basque provinces); Angulas, the tasty baby eels (Aguinaga); shellfish and hake à la Gallega (Galicia); lobster Catalan (Catalonia); fresh anchovies (Andalucía). Paella based on meat or seafood (Eastern provinces). Butifarra sausage stewed with beans (Catalonia).



Roast meats: lamb, beef, veal and suckling pig (Castile). Gazpacho, a delicious cold vegetable soup (Andalucía). Jabugo ham (Huelva). National drinks: Sherry (there are four main types: fino (very pale and very dry), amontillado (dry, richer in body and darker in colour), oloroso (medium, full-bodied, fragrant and golden) and dulce (sweet)). Wine: Rioja (Logroñ); Valdepeñas (midway between Madrid and Córdoba); Ampurdán; Chacolí (Basque Country) and Perelada (Catalonia); Cava (sparkling wine): Codorníu and Freixenet are popular. Spanish brandy: Lanjarón, Vichy Catalan, Malavella and Font Vella. Tipping: Service charges and taxes are usually included in hotel bills, however in addition, a tip should be left for the chambermaid and porters should be tipped per bag. It is also customary to leave a tip for the waiter. Restaurants often include service in the bill so a tip is discretionary. In cafes and bars, it is 5 to 10 per cent. Tip taxis 10 to 15 per cent when metered.

**Nightlife:** Spaniards often start the evening with el paseo, a leisurely stroll through the main streets. A cafe terrace is an excellent vantage point to observe this tradition, or enjoy street theatre in the larger cities. The atmosphere is especially vibrant at fiesta time, or when the local football team has won, when celebrations are marked by a cacophony of car horns, firecrackers and a sea of flags and team regalia. Tapas bars offer delicious snacks in a relaxed, enjoyable setting and it is fun to try out several bars in one night. The nightclubs of Ibiza, Barcelona and Madrid have attracted the attention of the international media, but the variety on offer caters for most tastes. Things work up to la marcha (good fun) relatively late and it is possible to literally dance until dawn. Flamenco or other regional dancing displays provide an alternative for those who prefer to watch dancing.

**Shopping:** In Spain, the shopper can find items of high quality at a fair price, not only in the cities, but in the small towns as well. In Madrid, the Rastro Market is recommended, particularly on Sundays. Half of the market takes place in the open air and half in more permanent galleries, and it has a character all of its own. Catalanian textiles are internationally famous and there are mills throughout the region. Spanish leather goods are prized throughout the world, offering high-fashion originals at reasonable prices. Of note are the suede coats and jackets. In general, all leather goods, particularly those from Andalucía, combine excellent craftsmanship with high-quality design. Fine, handcrafted wooden furniture is one of the outstanding products; Valencia is especially important in this field, and has a yearly international furniture fair. Alicante is an important centre for toy manufacturing. Shoe manufacturing is also of an especially high quality; the production centres are in Alicante and the Balearics. Fine rugs and carpets are made in Cáceres, Granada and Murcia. The numerous excellent sherries, wines and spirits produced in Spain make good souvenirs to take home. A seven per cent VAT is added to rates for all restaurants and hotel rooms. Shopping hours: Mon-Sat 0930-1330 and 1630-2000. However, most commercial stores and malls stay open from 1000-2100/2200.

#### Business

**GDP:** US\$955.1 billion. Main imports: Machinery and equipment, fuels, chemicals, semi-finished goods, foodstuffs, consumer goods, measuring and medical control instruments. Main exports: Machinery, motor vehicles, foodstuffs, pharmaceuticals, medicines and other consumer goods. Main trade partners: Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Portugal, UK and USA.

**Economy:** Until 1975, under the Franco regime, the Spanish economy developed almost in isolation, protected from foreign competition by tight import controls and high tariffs, and gradually evolved from an essentially agrarian economy to an industrial one. Spain joined the (then) European Community in 1986. The transition, which was expected to be very difficult, passed off remarkably well and the Spanish economy now ranks eighth in the world by output. Despite the decline of many of its traditional industries, such as shipbuilding, steel and textiles,



Spain achieved the highest average growth rate in the Community during the 1980s and a steady performance throughout the 1990s. This was largely due to the growth of its service sector, which now accounts for two-thirds of economic output. The only significant legacy of structural weaknesses in the Spanish economy which has not been fully tackled is unemployment, which remained stubbornly high at 11 per cent of the workforce in 2004. However, other economic indicators - such as interest rates and budget deficit - are within the limits that allowed Spain to join the European Monetary Union at the start of 1999. In common with most of its EU partners, the Spanish economy has slowed somewhat since 2000. The annual GDP growth at present is 3.5 per cent. The agricultural sector produces cereals, vegetables, citrus fruit, olive oil and wine. The processed foods industry has also expanded rapidly. The fishing fleet, although reduced from its peak of a few decades ago, remains one of the world's largest. The relative importance of the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors has declined over the last decade and now accounts for less than 4 per cent of GDP. Energy requirements are met by indigenous coal and natural gas, imported oil (mostly from north Africa), and a sizeable nuclear power programme. In the manufacturing sector, the decline of older industries has been offset by rapid expansion in chemicals, electronics, information technology and industrial design. Spain has also become an important producer of motor vehicles; this industry alone accounts for 5 per cent of GDP and 80 per cent of all output is exported. In the service sector, Spain has a vast tourism industry mainly servicing visitors from northern Europe: in 2002, this brought an estimated \$40 billion (about 7 per cent of GDP) into the economy. Financial services, transport, media and telecommunications have also undergone substantial growth.

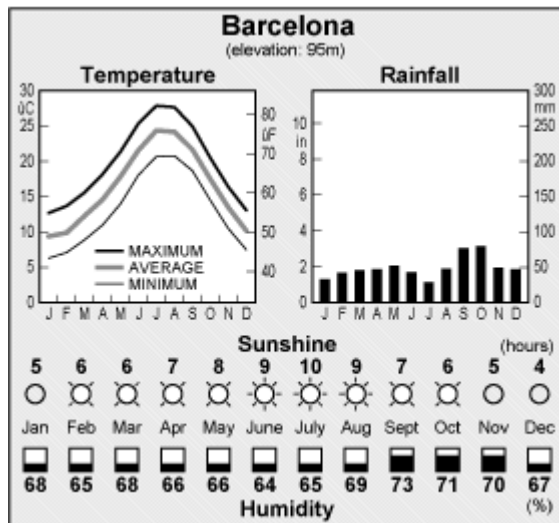
**Business Etiquette:** Businesspeople are generally expected to dress smartly. Although English is widely spoken, an interest in Spanish and an effort on the part of the visitor to speak even a few words will be appreciated. Business cards are exchanged frequently as a matter of courtesy and appointments should be made. Punctuality is important. Office hours: Tend to vary considerably. Businesspeople are advised to check before making calls.

**Conferences/Conventions:** Most large towns have dedicated convention centres in addition to the facilities provided by hotels. Seating capacity ranges from 540 in Jaca to 4200 in Palma de Mallorca; Madrid can seat up to 2650 persons.

**Commercial Information:** Consejo Superior de Cámaras de Comercio Industria y Navegación de España, C/Ribera del Loira 12, 28042 Madrid, Spain Tel: (90) 210 0096. Website: [www.camaras.org](http://www.camaras.org) Instituto Español de Comercio Exterior (ICEX) 2nd Floor, 66 Chiltern Street, London W1U 4LS, UK Tel: (020) 7467 2330. Website: [www.mcx.es/londres](http://www.mcx.es/londres) Spain Convention Bureau (FEMP) (Information on Conferences/Conventions) Calle Nuncio 8, 28005 Madrid, Spain Tel: (91) 364 3700. Website: [www.femp.es](http://www.femp.es) Oficina de Congresos de Madrid (Information on Conferences/Conventions) Calle Mayor 69, 28013 Madrid, Spain Tel: (91) 588 2900. Website: [www.munimadrid.es/congresos](http://www.munimadrid.es/congresos)



## 10 CLIMATE



Spain's climate varies from temperate in the north to dry and hot in the south. The best months are from April to October, although mid-summer (July to August) can be excessively hot throughout the country except the coastal regions. Madrid is best in late spring or autumn. The central plateau can be bitterly cold in winter.

**Required clothing:** Light- to mediumweights and rainwear, according to the season.

## 11 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

**History:** For five centuries from 218 BC, Spain was under the rule of the Romans, who left remnants of their culture throughout the country. Spain then came under the rule of the Visigoths, who rapidly integrated with the inhabitants until driven north by invading Arabs. Muslim culture soon established itself, most notably in the south, where the region centred on Cordoba and Granada became a hub of Arabic culture and learning. The evidence of Arabic influence is still strong, particularly in the wealth of remaining Moorish architecture. During the Middle Ages, Christianity gradually gained ground. Many kingdoms Aragon, Castile, Navarre, Leon and Portugal being the major ones were established, most of them constantly at war. The spirit of Reconquista, the fierce flame that burned throughout so much of the medieval period (roughly comparable to the Islamic concept of Jihad or holy war), produced heroes, folklore, legend, staggering architectural achievements and great acts of bravery and chivalrous folly. It also, after centuries of intermittent fighting, produced a final triumph for Christianity. In 1469, Ferdinand and Isabella respectively King of Aragon and Queen of Castile, then the two most powerful kingdoms in Iberia, united by marriage captured Granada, the last Muslim stronghold on the peninsula. The same year saw Columbus' discovery of America, financed by Castile, and the beginning of Spain's 'Golden Age' as the centre of the far-flung Habsburg Empire of Charles V (Charles, or Carlos I of Spain). The reign of Philip II during the late-16th century was also one of the most artistically fertile in the country's history, with Cervantes, El Greco, Lope de Vega and Velazquez coming to prominence at this time. The Habsburg monarchy became progressively less able to deal with the serious political and economic problems of its empire during the 17th century, and the dynasty reached its nadir under the inept rule of King Carlos II. There was a



revival under the Bourbons, notably Carlos III, but the late 18th and early 19th centuries saw Spain suffering from the protracted drain of the Napoleonic wars and internal political vendettas. The abdication of King Alfonso XIII in 1931 brought into being a left-wing republic. This was short-lived and was effectively crushed by General Franco in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39. His fascist regime lasted until his death in 1975, when the monarchy was restored. By March 1978, a democratic constitutional monarchy had been put in place. During the 1980s and the early-1990s, domestic politics were dominated by the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE, Socialist Party), under the leadership of Felipe Gonzalez, an archetype of the new generation of Spanish socialists who favoured pragmatism and technocratic development in favour of ideology. The Socialists won four consecutive elections from 1982 onwards. Their main achievement in office was to establish Spain as a valuable and enthusiastic member of the European Union, which it joined in 1986 and from which it has benefited considerably. Spanish ratification of the Maastricht Treaty on European Union was completed in November 1992 and the single European currency was adopted upon its inception in January 1999. Gonzalez also took Spain into NATO in 1982 and continued membership was confirmed in a referendum held in 1986. Corruption scandals fuelled growing popular disillusionment with the PSOE, and during the early 1990s, it was able to govern only in coalition with Basque and Catalan regional parties. The withdrawal of the Catalan from the Government precipitated an early general election in March 1996. At this point, the Spanish nation overcame its distrust of the right (a legacy of the civil war) and the PSOE was replaced as the largest party in the Cortes by the right-wing Partido Popular (Popular Party) under Jose Maria Aznar. After some initial difficulties, the new government found its feet after several years in office and became a confident and reasonably competent administration. The expected outcome a third consecutive term for the PP was dramatically undermined in the aftermath of a horrific terrorist attack three days before the poll. A co-ordinated series of bombings of Madrid commuter trains claimed 200 lives and many more were injured. The Spanish Government immediately blamed the Basque separatist group ETA (see below), although there were strong indications that Islamic extremists were responsible. It held to this position over the following days, even as evidence of al-Qaeda's involvement mounted. This appears to have had a crucial bearing on the election result as voters registered their anger at the PP government's apparent dissembling to gain electoral advantage. Many also felt that Spain's official support for the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 to which the vast majority of Spaniards were opposed had provoked the attack. The PSOE (Socialist Party) forms the new government under party leader Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero. Territorial problems have taxed successive Spanish Governments especially the Basque province and Gibraltar. Governments of both complexions have pursued a hard line against the Basque separatist paramilitary organisation, ETA. After undertaking spectacular attacks in its early years notably the assassination of premier Admiral Carrero in 1973 ETA's campaign has gradually been diminished by internal splits and attrition by the security forces. But while the Socialists were prepared to explore political options, the previous Azna government resolutely refused to seek any accommodation and was solely interested in a security-based resolution of the conflict. The pro-independence party, Herri Batasuna, which is seen by Madrid as the political affiliate of ETA, was banned by the Madrid government in 2002, after operating legally since the early 1980s (with a sizeable representation in the regional assembly). The political consequences of this are unpredictable and, although ETA has been relatively inactive of late, the organisation has been erroneously written off before. The problem of Gibraltar has proved just as intractable, albeit for very different reasons. A British colony since the 19th century, Gibraltar's single-minded attachment to the UK has consistently frustrated the most inventive schemes of the London and Madrid governments to resolve its status. (see Gibraltar). The Spanish have a similar historical anomaly of their own although they resent the comparison - in the form of the Ceuta and Melilla enclaves on the north coast of Morocco, along with a group of tiny island possessions. One of these latter, Perejil, became the subject of an odd, almost comical dispute between the Spanish and Moroccan governments in late 2002 (see Morocco). Relations between Spain and Morocco have since thawed and the two



governments now plan a sub-Mediterranean tunnel linking them. Spain's wider historical relations with the Arab world have been somewhat set back, however, by Spain's keen support for the Anglo-American invasion in Iraq in 2003. Across the Atlantic, Spain naturally enjoys substantial and deep-rooted ties with the Spanish-speaking nations of Latin America.

**Government:** The 1978 constitution created a bicameral parliament (Cortes), divided into the Congress of Deputies and the Senate, which holds legislative power. The 350-strong Congress is elected every four years by proportional representation, while the 202 senators are chosen by direct election. There are also 17 autonomous regions, the Governments of which are elected every four years.

#### Travel Advice

On 22 March 2006, the Basque terrorist organisation ETA announced a "permanent ceasefire", effective from 24 March 2006. In March 2004 192 people died and over 1400 were injured following bomb attacks on three trains in Madrid. A group purporting to represent Al Qaida claimed responsibility. Visitors should be alerted to the existence of street crimes, especially in the larger cities. Most visits to Spain are trouble-free but you should be aware of the global risk of indiscriminate international terrorist attacks, which could be against civilian targets, including places frequented by foreigners. This advice is based on information provided by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in the UK. It is correct at time of publishing. As the situation can change **rapidly, visitors are advised to contact the following organisations for the latest travel advice:** British Foreign and Commonwealth Office Tel: (0845) 850 2829. Website: [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk) US Department of State Website: <http://travel.state.gov/travel>

#### Top Things To See

Madrid is a paradise for art lovers. Explore the city's three superb art museums. The Prado has one of the most remarkable art collections in the world. The Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia focuses on modern art and is where Picasso's famous Guernica is on display. The Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza is one of the most important private collections of western painting in the world. Discover Madrid's Royal Palace, which dates from the mid-18th century and has more than 20 rooms open to the public. Enjoy the atmosphere in the area around Puerta del Sol, the heart of the city, and on Madrid's most historic and popular square, the Plaza Mayor, completed in 1617 during the reign of Philip III. Travel the 30 kilometres from Madrid to Alcalá de Henares, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the birthplace of the writer Miguel de Cervantes and the English queen Catherine of Aragon. The main points of interest are the university, founded in the 16th century by Cardinal Cisneros, and the oldest surviving public theatre in Europe - as important to Spain as Shakespeare's Globe is to England. Absorb the lively atmosphere of Barcelona, Spain's second-largest city. A major commercial and industrial centre, it is graced by several of Antoni Gaudí's architectural masterworks, the most famous being the still incomplete church of the Sagrada Família (Holy Family). Visit the Barri Gòtic (Gothic quarter), where the buildings date back to the 14th and 15th centuries. Highlights include the Seu (old cathedral), the Episcopal Palace, the Palau de la Generalitat and the Plaça del Rei. Take the funicular to Tibidabo, the highest of Barcelona's hills, or a cable car to Montjuic in the southern suburbs. Both offer spectacular views over the city and have funfairs at the summits. Barcelona's museums include the Museo Picasso, which focuses on the artist's formative years, but includes works from the Blue and Rose periods, the Fundació Joan Miró with works by another of Spain's most innovative 20th-century artists, the Museum of Catalan Art, the Maritime Museum, and the Zoological Museum. Frank Gehry's marvellous Guggenheim Museum has turned Bilbao, the main city of the Basque region, into a very successful tourist destination. The museum has been hailed as a masterpiece of 20th-century architecture. Bilbao's Old Town is quite extensive with a Gothic



Cathedral and an attractive Town Hall. Check out the newest tourist attraction in Valencia, Santiago Calatrava's City of Arts and Science Park. The Hemispheric, an amazing glass structure, houses a planetarium, IMAX dome and laserium, and the Palace of Arts boasts the largest oceanarium in Europe. While in Valencia's, visit the cathedral. It claims possession of the Holy Grail. The Fallas (Mar 15-19) is a major festival culminating in the burning of papier-mâché effigies satirising famous Spanish figures and a magnificent fireworks display. Outside the fiesta season, Pamplona's main attractions are its old walled quarter, Renaissance cathedral and imposing citadel. Seville is the romantic heart of Spain, the city of Carmen and Don Juan. Lovers of Gothic architecture should come here to see the cathedral, the largest Gothic building in the world. Christopher Columbus is buried here. The bell tower, known as the Giralda from its crowning weather vane, was originally a minaret and observatory. Seville bears numerous traces of the 500 years of Moorish occupation. Of great importance is the Alcázar, the palace-fortress of the Arab kings and one of the finest examples of Mudéjar (Moorish) architecture. Discover the magic of the Alhambra, the palace-fortress in Granada that **was built by the Nasrid rulers in the 13th and 14th centuries. Highlights include:** the Palacios Nazariés, its halls, courtyards and loggias decorated with painted enamel tiles, delicately fretted arches, stalactite vaulting, marble sculptures and stucco ornament; the Alcazaba, an 11th-century hilltop fortress; and the Generalife, the gardens of the summer palace. The Alhambra is the most popular tourist attraction in Spain. To the south of Madrid is the ancient Spanish capital of Toledo. The city is dominated by the magnificent cathedral and Alcazar. Toledo is justly proud of its collection of paintings by El Greco, who lived and painted here. Go and see his most famous painting, The Burial of the Count of Orgaz, which is preserved in the Santo Tomé Church. There are more El Grecos as well as works by Goya and other artists in the Hospital y Museo de Santa Cruz, a magnificent Renaissance building with a Plateresque façade. Superbly situated on a plain overlooked by the Sierra de Gredos, Avila is a UNESCO World Heritage Site famous for its perfectly preserved 11th-century walls and for being the birthplace of the 16th-century mystic, St Teresa. The ancient university town Salamanca, 'European City of Culture' in 2002, is well worth a visit on account of its many superb Renaissance buildings, weathered to a golden-brown hue, and the unusual and absorbing Museo Art Nouveau y Art Deco, with its fascinating collections of objets d'art from the first half of the 20th century.

**Tourist Information:** Spanish National Tourist Office in the UKPO Box 4009, London, W1A 6NB, UK Tel: (020) 7486 8077 or (0845) 940 0180 (24-hour brochure request line; calls cost 60p per minute). Website: [www.spain.info](http://www.spain.info) Opening hours: Mon-Fri 0915-1615. Spanish Tourist Office in the USA 666 Fifth Avenue, Btwn 52nd and 53rd Street, 35th Floor, New York, NY 10103, USA Tel: (212) 265 8822. Website: [www.okspain.org](http://www.okspain.org)

### Top Things To Do

Fancy a quick sprint through narrow, closed streets chased by a stampede of big bulls? In Pamplona, both locals and an increasing number of tourists indulge in this rather dangerous activity every year. The 'running of the bulls' at the Festival of San Fermín takes place in July and attracts huge numbers of tourists. If you fancy seeing a bull fight from the safety of your seat, go to Madrid, which is home to the imposing bullring of Las Ventas, also known as the 'Cathedral of Bullfighting'. Feel the passion of flamenco, whose tragic lyrics and tones reflect the sufferings of the gypsy people. Gypsies say it is in the blood, but Spain's famous poet and writer Fredrico Garcia Lorca, called flamenco one of the greatest inventions of the Spanish people. Many flamenco or other regional dancing displays can be seen throughout Spain, particularly in Andalucia, Southern Spain. Follow the Way of St James to Santiago de Compostela, a centre of pilgrimage since the early middle ages and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The focal point for all visits is the Gothic Cathedral completed in 1188. During the Middle Ages, the tomb of St James was regarded as one of the most holy sites in Christendom and thousands of pilgrims travelled



through Spain each year to visit the shrine. This route, the Way of St James, was lined with monasteries, religious houses, chapels and hospices to cater for the pilgrims. The route began in Navarre, at Canfranc or Valcarlos; from there, travelling west, the main stopping places were Pamplona, Santo Domingo de la Calzada, Logroño, Burgos, León, Astorga and Santiago de Compostela. Explore Spain's natural beauty and abundant wildlife by visiting one of the National Parks. Walks, hiking trails and jeep excursions take visitors to marshes and wetlands, coastal dunes, isolated mountain peaks or Atlantic beaches. At certain times of the year, the skies are filled with migrating birds heading for North Africa and the parks are also the habitat of a wealth of indigenous flora and fauna. With a bit of luck it is possible to spot rare and endangered species like the royal eagle, the capercaillie (or European grouse) and the Pyrenean **mountain goat**. **The major national parks in mainland Spain are:** Coto de Doñana (provinces of Seville and Huelva), Tablas de Daimiel (La Mancha), Ordesa (Huesca Pyrenees), Aigües Tortes (Lleida) and Montaña de Covadonga (Picos de Europa). There are good opportunities for rock climbing in Spain's mountains. Well known, challenging climbs include the Naranjo de Bulnes in the Picos de Europa and Monte Perdido in Ordesa National Park. Mountain biking is becoming increasingly popular, and paths and tracks are plentiful. Explore Spain on horseback. Spain's long equestrian tradition means that horse riding can easily be arranged. Mountain trails, river valleys and wide plains can be accessed with the help of a horse. Swimming, water-skiing, and windsurfing facilities can be found at nearly all seaside resorts. Spain's premier windsurfing resort is Tarifa, on the Straits of Gibraltar, where the world championships are held. Inland lakes on the meseta in the regions of Castilla and Extremadura also have good facilities for windsurfing. Whitewater rafting and canoeing enthusiasts should head for the rapids in northern Spain. Centres are well equipped and have skilled staff. Spain is great for sailing, with over 4000km of coastline and plenty of harbours and sailing clubs. Diving is also popular; permits can be acquired from the relevant regional authorities. Excellent opportunities exist for all types of fishing. The rivers and streams of the Pyrenees and the Picos de Europa offer good freshwater game fishing, while trout is abundant throughout the country. The Asturias contain the best salmon rivers. Other catches include barbel, perch, pike and tench. Permits must be requested from the regional authorities. Golf is becoming increasingly popular, with Costa del Sol and La Manga emerging as two of Spain's premier golfing destinations. At present, Spain has over 200 golf courses, including courses designed by the likes of Robert Trent Jones, Severiano Ballesteros, Jack Niklaus and Jose María Olazabel. The Valderrama (near Madrid) is particularly well known. Spain offers great opportunities for skiing and there are many natural ski-runs and winter resorts, equipped with modern facilities, all blessed with the promise of warm sun and blue skies. There is also a wide range of hotels, inns and refuges from which to choose. There are five main skiing regions in Spain: the Pyrenean Range, the Cantabrian Range, the Iberian Chain, the Central Chain and the Penibetic Chain. They are all attractive for mountaineering in general and for winter sports in particular. Check out the upland area of the Sierra Nevada, south of Granada and only about 40km (25 miles) from the coast, a nice place for a holiday combining winter sports with coastal sunshine and watersports in the Mediterranean.

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## Overview II

Mediterranean beaches, sangria in the sun and paella by the plateful. Southern Spain has long been a popular place, but tourists are increasingly turning to the fascinations of another Spain, far removed from the high-rise developments lining the Costa del Sol. Spain is a treasure chest of



unforgettable scenery. Separating Spain from France, the snow-capped Pyrenees, as well as having breathtaking views, offer resorts like La Molina and Panticosa with plenty of opportunities for skiing. In the north, the winding rivers and lush, green forests of Galicia present a picture not usually associated with Spain, and in complete contrast to the Moorish-influenced south, Galician culture traces its routes to a Celtic origin. Everywhere are reminders of Spain's rich and varied past, from the Alhambra in Granada to Don Quixote's windmills in La Mancha. Old mixes with new in cities such as Toledo, Barcelona, Salamanca and the capital, Madrid, as celebrated museums, galleries and Baroque churches rub shoulders with blaring bars and thumping discos. What will never change is the Spaniards' passion for partying. Snack on tapas as you skip from bar to bar, before heading off to enjoy Spain's infamous nightlife. Then revitalise the senses - Spain's cultural heritage brims with flamenco, painting, opera, literature, sport, bullfighting and flamboyant, colourful fiestas. Spain was a dictatorship under General Franco until his death in 1975. The authoritarian regime was then transformed into a democratic Government with King Juan Carlos I as Head of State. Modern Spain is a successful democracy with a lot of autonomy given to directly elected regional authorities, although the tension between the state and the separatist movement in the Basque region in the north remains a political problem. As bargains abound amid intense airline competition, there has never been a better time to visit Spain. Just soak up the atmosphere - you won't be disappointed.

#### Communications

**Telephone:** IDD is available. Country code: 34. Emergency calls: 112. Area codes are incorporated within a nine digit number. The following are a selection of codes for major centres: Madrid 91, Alicante 96, Balearic Islands 971, Barcelona 93, Benidorm 96, Bilbao 94, Granada 958, Málaga and Torremolinos 95, Las Palmas 928, Santander 942, Seville 95, Tenerife 922 and Valencia 96

**Mobile telephone:** Roaming agreements exist with most international mobile phone companies. Coverage is good throughout most of the country.

**Internet:** There is a variety of Internet cafes in most urban areas.

**Post:** There are efficient internal and international postal services to all countries. Airmail within Europe usually takes around five days.

**MEDIA:** Broadcasting in Spain has witnessed a spectacular expansion in recent years with the emergence of new commercial operators and the launch of digital services. Press: Local newspapers published in English include the Costa Blanca News, Majorca Daily Bulletin and the English-language edition of Sur (weekly). Spanish dailies with large circulations include ABC (website: [www.abc.es](http://www.abc.es)), El Marca (sports only), El Mundo (website: [www.elmundo.es](http://www.elmundo.es)), El País (website: [www.elpais.es](http://www.elpais.es)), El Perodico de Catalunya (website: [www.elperiodico.com](http://www.elperiodico.com)) La Razon (website: [www.larazon.es](http://www.larazon.es)) and La Vanguardia (website: [www.lavanguardia.es](http://www.lavanguardia.es)). Radio: RNE operates Radio 1, Radio Clasica, Radio 3 and Radio 5. Cadena SER and Onda Cero are commercial stations. Cadena COPE is controlled by the church. TV: TVE operates La Primera, La 2, TVE Internacionale and Channel 24. Tele Conco, Antena 3 and Cuatro are national, commercial networks.