

# Spain



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LAS MÉDULAS  
EL BIERZO, LEÓN (CASTILE-LEÓN)

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Cover: *Historic Old Town of Ibiza*  
Back cover: *Road along the Corralejo dunes, Fuerteventura*

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## INTRODUCTION

Spain is a country that offers a multitude of options. It has a vast and exciting cultural, natural and gastronomic heritage. It's a place where you can wander around modern cities, and cities that will take you back in time to a different age. You'll fall in love with its climate and its people.

Come and sample Spain's famous **tapas** or indulge in **haute cuisine** of the highest order. Marvel at the wildlife in its

**protected natural spaces** or enjoy your favourite outdoor sport. Go **partying** or **shopping**. Lounge on the **beach** or go skiing in the mountains. Whatever you like doing, you'll find it here.

Immerse yourself in a **culture with an ancient history**. From the archaeological sites at Atapuerca in Burgos to the Alhambra in Granada. Spain is the country with the third largest number of **UNESCO World Heritage sites**.



Savour Spain's **gastronomy, steeped in tradition and the avant-garde**. Typical dishes such as paella and tapas, innovative restaurants, gastronomic markets and some of the world's best wines. Spain will captivate your taste buds.

Discover your adventurous side with the vast offer of **active tourism** options available. Gliding, climbing, cycling, exploring the underwater world or simply hiking along a trail with the family. The variety of Spain's natural spaces makes it an outstanding setting for anyone with a spirit of adventure. From north to south, you'll be amazed by **the diversity of its landscapes**. Spain is the country with the most UNESCO-designated Biosphere Reserves in the world, and it has no fewer than 15 national parks.

Spain guarantees **leisure and fun for everyone**. Everything from shops selling the top labels and international designers to crafts markets. Cities like Madrid, Barcelona and Malaga are just a few of the places where you can enjoy a fantastic day out shopping. And everyone will find something up their street in its varied calendar of festivals: the San Sebastián International Film Festival, Primavera Sound, the Mérida Classical Theatre Festival and many others. In summer, most take place outdoors.

Enjoy the **sea, the sand and the sun**. In Spain you'll find beaches for relaxing and swimming all year round. Lapped by the waters of the Mediterranean, the Cantabrian and the Atlantic, it has beaches to suit every possible taste: long stretches of sand, at the foot of imposing cliffs, with beach bars, hidden behind a pine forest, nudist beaches, family beaches... Almost 600 of them have the Blue Flag quality award.

All this and much more is waiting for you in Spain: a country that welcomes visitors of all descriptions. Come with us as we take a look at its main attractions, and let yourself be charmed by the openness and friendliness of its people.





# WHAT TO DO IN SPAIN

## ART AND CULTURE

Spain is home to a vast cultural heritage. Are you interested in art? You'll find it in our network of over 1,500 museums. History? We have no fewer than 15 World Heritage cities. Architecture? You can visit incredible monuments like the Sagrada Familia cathedral and

the Great Mosque of Cordoba. And if you want to discover Spain's traditions, come and join in with any of its festivities: the Easter Week commemorations or the Fallas bonfire festival will make a lasting impression.

## DISCOVER THREE OF THE WORLD'S TOP-RANKED MUSEUMS

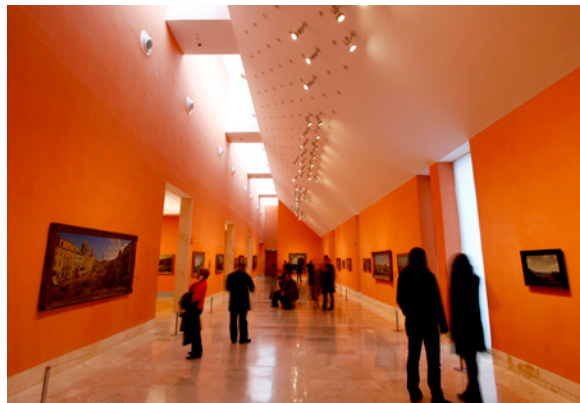
Spain's museums contain some of the finest art collections anywhere. Where to begin? These are just a few that you can't afford to miss:

### PRADO MUSEUM (MADRID)



Considered one of the world's greatest art galleries for the quality and scope of its collection. Inside you'll find treasures by masters like Velázquez, Rembrandt, Goya and many others.

### THYSSEN-BORNEMISZA (MADRID)



Very near the Prado, it houses works from some of the most important pictorial schools of Western art. In its collection you'll find masterpieces by Dürer, Renoir and Kandinsky.



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## REINA SOFÍA NATIONAL ART MUSEUM (MADRID)

One of the largest museums in Europe, with a magnificent collection of contemporary art. This is where you can see Picasso's historic painting Guernica.



## GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM (BILBAO)

This spectacular titanium building designed by the prestigious architect Frank Gehry is home to a collection of key works of contemporary art.



## ALTAMIRA NATIONAL MUSEUM AND RESEARCH CENTRE (CANTABRIA)

Travel back in time to the prehistoric era. Find out how the bison in these caves were painted over 18,000 years ago.





### DALÍ THEATRE-MUSEUM (GIRONA)

Discover the surprising life and times of Salvador Dalí in the lovely coastal city of Figueres, the location of this temple to surrealism.

These are some of the most famous, but there are many more. There are also science museums, archaeological museums, maritime museums... In almost every city and town you'll find minor museum treasures that are well worth a visit. You can find out more about the National Museum network at [www.spain.info](http://www.spain.info) or on the website of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, [www.mecd.gob.es](http://www.mecd.gob.es).

## THE TEN MOST VISITED MONUMENTS IN SPAIN

Spain is history, as you'll see from its monuments. Many have been awarded the World Heritage designation. Here are the visitors' top ten.

### THE ALHAMBRA IN GRANADA

As you wander round its fabulous palaces and gardens with their lovely fountains and pools you'll be transported back in time to another era. And if you visit by night, you'll understand the true meaning of the word magic. The ancient citadel, fortress and place of residence of the Nasrid sultans, the Alhambra is Granada's supreme cultural treasure.





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## THE SAGRADA FAMILIA BASILICA

This cathedral, an icon of the city and the foremost example of modernism, stands in the very heart of Barcelona. The work of the genius Gaudí, its most spectacular features are its pointed towers. You can climb up to the top to see Barcelona from the heights and take a closer look at some of the details on the building's exterior.

## THE GREAT MOSQUE OF CORDOBA

Stroll through a forest of columns and superimposed arches, domes, carved marble, mosaics, drawings... And in the centre, a surprising Christian cathedral. This architectural treasure in the lovely historic centre of the city of Cordoba is a symbol of the Muslim legacy in Spain.



▲ THE GREAT MOSQUE OF CORDOBA

◀ THE SAGRADA FAMILIA  
BARCELONA





SANTIAGO CATHEDRAL  
SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA



BURGOS CATHEDRAL



WHAT TO DO IN SPAIN

THE ALCÁZAR IN SEGOVIA

## THE CATHEDRAL OF SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

This will be your final destination if you're setting out on the Way of Saint James, just as it has been for the thousands of pilgrims who have travelled this route since the 13th century. It is the finest example of Romanesque art in Spain, although its numerous extensions have left the imprint of other styles, like the Baroque of the Obradoiro and its imposing facade.

## BURGOS CATHEDRAL

You'll be amazed by the elegance and beauty of its soaring towers with their Germanesque fretwork spires. This is a must for lovers of Gothic art, and is also home to the mortal remains of El Cid, the hero of the Reconquest in the 11th century. It has been declared part of our World Heritage by the UNESCO.

## THE ALCÁZAR IN SEGOVIA

Its interior will make you feel like you're in a fairy tale: a moat with a drawbridge, a tower that resembles a ship's prow, geminate windows, luxurious halls decorated by Mudéjar artists, the weapons museum... Built at the confluence of two rivers, this fortified palace was once the residence of Castilian monarchs.



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## MALLORCA CATHEDRAL

A treasure of Gothic art, it is built atop the city walls in Palma de Mallorca's historic quarter. This is a chance to see one of the most spectacular rose windows in the world, known as the "eye of the Gothic". It was reformed by Antonio Gaudí and contains a spectacular mural by the Majorcan painter Miquel Barceló.

## THE BASILICA OF NUESTRA SEÑORA DEL PILAR

In the interior of this Baroque cathedral in Zaragoza, one of the most important centres of Marian worship in the world, you'll find genuine treasures including two frescoes by the painter Francisco de Goya. Another highlight is the Santa Capilla chapel, containing the image of the Virgin of El Pilar.

## THE ROMAN THEATRE IN MERIDA

During the Mérida International Classical Theatre Festival you'll have the chance to attend an open-air performance exactly like the Romans did over 2,000 years ago. This theatre is part of an archaeological site that includes an amphitheatre and a Roman circus.





## THE GIRALDA TOWER

Climb up its ramps to the belltower of the cathedral of Santa María de la Sede in Seville and you'll be rewarded by some unforgettable views over the city from the former minaret of the Arab mosque. For centuries it was the tallest structure in Spain and one of the highest in Europe.

## COME AND VISIT SPAIN'S WORLD HERITAGE CITIES

Spain is the country with the third most UNESCO World Heritage assets in the world. Among them are 15 cities whose architectural, artistic and cultural value make them well worth including in your route.

**Toledo**, a city famous historically for the harmonious coexistence between Muslims, Jews and Christians, and

**Salamanca**, known as the home of one of the oldest universities in the world, invite you to discover the history of Spain through their streets and monuments. In **Cordoba** you can visit its picturesque old town, the second largest in Europe, and –the jewel in its crown– the Great Mosque, one of the finest examples of Muslim art in the world.

SALAMANCA





You'll also find the legacy of the Romans awaiting you in **Mérida** and **Tarragona** where you can walk amid numerous archaeological remains such as amphitheatres, circuses and theatres. **Segovia** is also home to a veritable marvel of engineering, the Roman aqueduct, one of the best preserved in Europe.

**Avila**, with its imposing city walls, and **Cáceres**, with its cobbled streets, its mediaeval fortress-houses and its towers, will transport you back in time to the Middle Ages.

**Alcalá de Henares**, the birthplace of Cervantes, is the site of Europe's oldest open-air theatre, and in **Santiago de Compostela** you'll discover treasures in the Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque styles. The old city of Santiago is one of the most beautiful town centres in the world.



## ▶ CUENCA

Other World Heritage sites not to be missed include Úbeda and **Baeza**, with their impressive Renaissance palaces and churches, and **Cuenca**, where you'll be amazed to see the "hanging houses" perched on a cliff and blending seamlessly with the natural surroundings.

And you'll find a whole range of priceless cultural attractions on the islands. The streets in the city of **San Cristóbal de la Laguna** in Tenerife offer an insight into the origins of Spanish-American town planning. Finally, in the Mediterranean, the fortified city of Dalt Vila in Ibiza has been awarded the UNESCO World Heritage designation for its culture and biodiversity.

## LEARN ALL ABOUT SPAIN'S TRADITIONS THROUGH ITS FIESTAS

If you're coming to Spain you're guaranteed to have a great time. You'll find over 250 festivities to choose from. They start off in winter, with the **Three Kings** parade and **carnival**. You can welcome the spring with **the Fallas** in Valencia, **Easter Week** and the **April Fair** in Seville. The arrival of summer brings an abundance of celebrations, with events like the **San Fermín** bull-running festival in Pamplona and the **Tomatina** tomato festival in Buñol in Valencia. Which one will you go for?

Come and experience **Easter Week** – you'll be entranced by one of Spain's most authentic festivities, and one with centuries of tradition. Devotion, art and the solemn magic of the processions fill the streets in most of Spain's towns and cities.





The spirit of religious fervour and devotion you'll see in Easter Week is in total contrast to the atmosphere during **carnival**.

Easter Week in **Seville** deserves a special mention. The climax is the “Madrugá”, the night between Thursday and Friday when the Passion of Christ is recreated, and when thousands of people flock to join the procession that accompanies the religious images. Make sure you try the “torrijas”, the typical sweet found at this time of year, a treat for anyone with a sweet tooth.



**EASTER WEEK IN SEVILLE**  
Photo: Antonio Ciero Reina/123rf.com



**CARNAVAL IN TENERIFE**  
Photo: Luciano De La Rosa/123rf.com

The main feature of these festivities before Easter is their uninhibited high spirits and the freedom to say what you like. Come and take part in these fantastic parades and dance to the beat of the music. Also highly recommended are the world-famous carnival in **Santa Cruz de Tenerife**, and the spectacular carnivals in **Cadiz** and **Águilas**.

Are you brave enough to witness the thrilling **San Fermín bull-running festival** in **Pamplona**? In an atmosphere of high spirits and in the warm July sunshine, hundreds of people run before the bulls through the streets of the old town until they reach the bullring. For over one week you can immerse yourself in the non-stop festive atmosphere, with dances, street parties, open-air concerts, folklore displays and much more.



## ROUTES FOR EXPLORING SPAIN

Would you like to try a different way of discovering the history, culture, nature and gastronomy of Spain? Then these cultural routes are just the thing for you.

One of the most famous is the **Way of Saint James**. On foot, on horseback, by bike or even sailing, this is the best possible way to discover the north of Spain. Each year it attracts millions of travellers and has been declared a part of our World Heritage. This is a chance to observe the grandeur of nature, enjoy an unbeatable personal experience and discover the hidden history of the Camino by visiting dozens of valuable cultural monuments.



The **Silver Route** follows the layout of an ancient Roman road that linked Seville with Gijón. Set off on an adventure and dare to do it on foot or by bike. If you prefer to travel by motorbike or car, follow the road and discover all the charms of this itinerary by exploring the small towns and villages that still preserve sections of the original route. For more information go to [www.rutadelaplata.com](http://www.rutadelaplata.com).

In each region you'll find a range of different options for exploring the country in depth. You'll find cultural itineraries such as the **Route of El Cid**, which covers a large part of the landscape from



the centre through to the east, following in the footsteps of this mediaeval Castilian knight. If you're looking to enjoy a delicious culinary experience, then the Basque Country or Euskadi is the place for you. There you'll find a route designed especially around fish (hake, sea bream, tuna and cod prepared in a multitude of ways).



Discover the Arab heritage of the south in the **Route of the White Villages** in the Sierra de Cádiz, a thrilling journey through steep green landscapes.





# URBAN TOURISM

Visit the best exhibitions in the world, thrill to a flamenco show, travel back in time as you wander through a mediaeval quarter, or dance till dawn... Experiencing Spain's cities is an exciting adventure. These are some of the destinations we suggest.

## MADRID

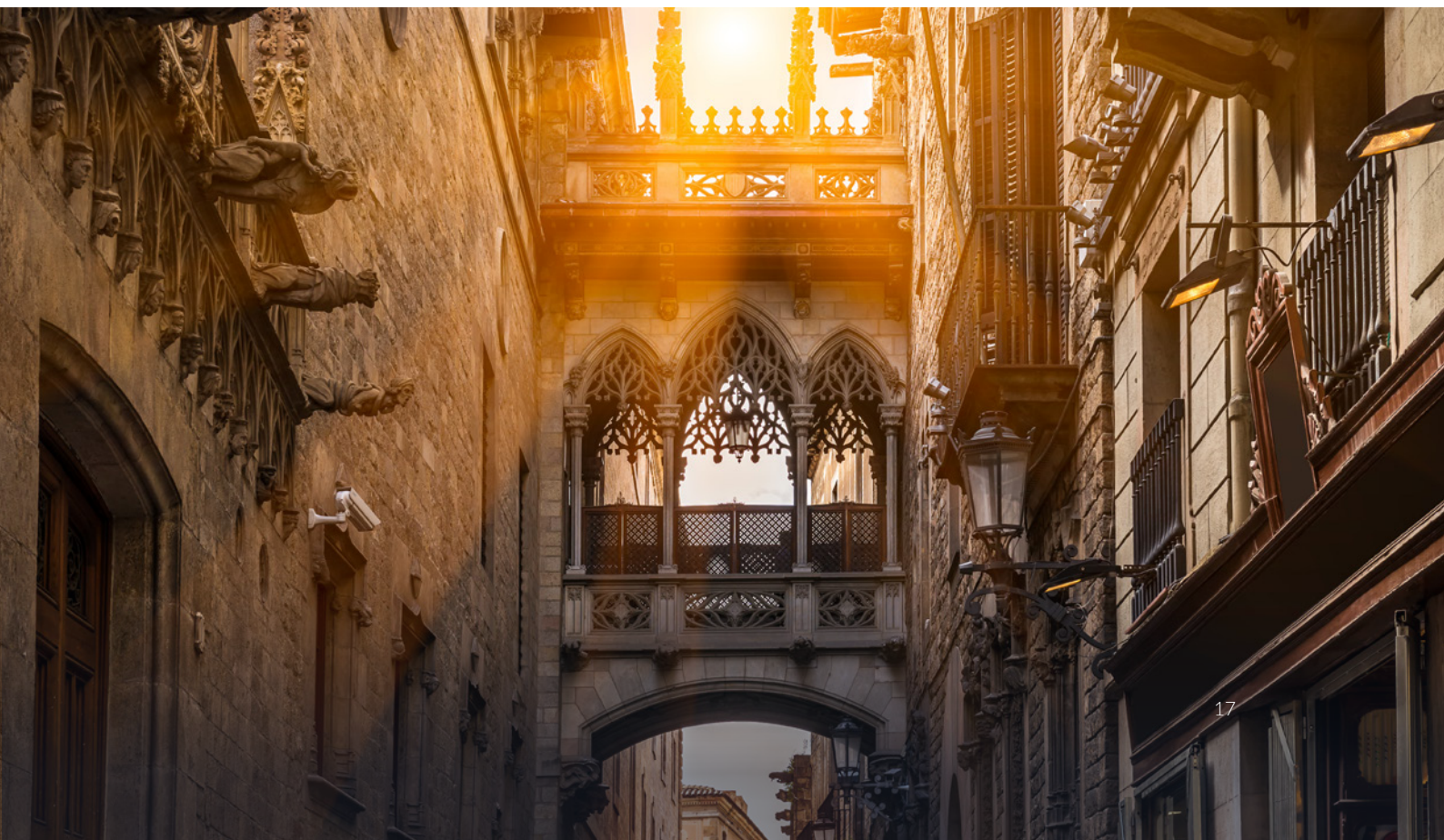
Spain's capital is home to a vast cultural heritage. You can wander up the “**Paseo del Arte**” or “art walk”, with its concentration of museums, palaces and beautiful gardens. Here in the leafy boulevard of the Paseo del Prado you'll find some of the best collections in the world: the **Prado**, the **Thyssen-Bornemisza** and the **Reina Sofía**. You can end your walk by visiting the fountains of **Cibeles** and **Neptune**, the **Royal Botanical Garden** and the **Astronomical Observatory**.

## BARCELONA

In this Mediterranean city, the capital of Catalonia, Roman remains and mediaeval quarters (like the famous **Gothic Quarter**) can be found cheek by jowl with modern avant-garde buildings. You'll discover a city that's open to the world: a venue for international events and a driver of new trends, something that can be seen from the multitude of spaces dedicated to alternative culture. A simple walk along the **Ramblas** is enough to observe the cosmopolitan spirit of this city that attracts travellers from cultures around the world.

◀ **SETENIL DE LAS BODEGAS**  
CÁDIZ

▼ **BRIDGE IN THE CALLE DEL BISBE**  
GOTHIC QUARTER IN BARCELONA







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VALENCIA

## VALENCIA

In this city on the shores of the Mediterranean you can stroll around one of the largest historic quarters in Spain. Capital of the Region of Valencia and famous for its beaches and its exceptional climate, it's also home to one of the most extensive scientific and cultural complexes in Europe: the **City of Arts and Sciences**. It comprises six spectacular structures that offer a range of activities related to science, art, nature and technology, in a setting of fascinating avant-garde architecture. The imposing Hemisfèric in the shape of an eye houses a screening room with an enormous concave screen, while the Oceanogràfic contains the largest aquarium in Europe.



BILBAO

## BILBAO

Bilbao is a byword for urban planning worldwide, for the way it has successfully integrated the most innovative structures with its industrial past. The spectacular **Guggenheim Museum**, designed by the Canadian architect Frank Gehry, is without doubt the finest example of this architectural renewal and a distinctive symbol of the city. It houses masterpieces of modern and contemporary art. It also offers interesting artistic activities to ensure your visit awakes your creative instincts.



## SEVILLE

Located on the banks of the Guadalquivir river, the capital of Andalusia is famous for its beautiful **Giralda** tower, and will captivate you with all the joie de vivre to be found in its busy streets and squares. The influence of the Arab culture has endowed the historic quarter with a special beauty. Seville is also one of the most important places in the world of flamenco. To learn more about this unique artistic expression the best idea is to visit the Triana neighbourhood with its numerous taverns and tablaos (venues dedicated exclusively to flamenco “cante”).



TORRE DEL ORO TOWER  
SEVILLE



PLAZA REAL SQUARE  
BARCELONA

Photo: Lakov Filimonov 123rf.com

## NIGHTLIFE

The excellent climate and the fun-loving character of the Spanish people are the reason Spain's cities have such an exciting nightlife. Restaurants, bars, concert halls, clubs, after hours and much more. Everything to guarantee that the fun can continue till dawn. The best nightlife destinations are the big cities like Barcelona, Madrid, Bilbao, Valencia and Granada, but there are also others like the island of Ibiza or the Costa del Sol.



## FOOD

Spanish cuisine is famous all over the world. In Spain's bars and restaurants you can try everything from **traditional recipes** like **paella**, to surprising dishes from **haute cuisine**. Organic cuisine, based on a model of sustainable production, is gaining popularity both in the home and on restaurant menus.

Try an original way of sampling quality Spanish cuisine and make for an **urban market**. Many of these spaces have a history going back decades and have reinvented themselves to offer unique gastronomic experiences. Stroll around the **San Miguel market** in Madrid, the **Boquería market** in Barcelona or the **Central Market** in Valencia, and you can enjoy a glass of wine while you sample a canapé or a gourmet tapa, listen to live music and mingle with the locals. Beautiful to look at, and a treat for the tastebuds!





## TRADITIONAL CUISINE

In addition to the famous paella and the potato omelette, each region in Spain has a wide variety of irresistible traditional dishes. Everything from hearty bean stews like **cocido madrileño** and **fabada asturiana**, perfect for chilly days, through to seasonal vegetables and the delicious deserts and sweets produced in each region (**filloas** in Galicia, **crema catalana** in Catalonia, **ensaimada** in Mallorca, and much more). Try the seafood from Spain's seas and rivers prepared in a wide variety of ways, and the shellfish, which is a highly prized ingredient in the Spanish gastronomic repertoire. And surrender to temptation with the delicious ibérico cured ham, one of the greatest treasures in the Spanish larder.



## AVANT-GARDE CUISINE

You'll be amazed to discover the exquisite inventions of **Carme Ruscalleda**, **Juan Mari Arzak**, **Ferrán Adrià**, **María Marte**, **David Muñoz**, **Fina Puigdevall**, **Joan Roca**, among others. These are just a few of the top chefs in the Spanish gastronomic firmament who have managed to transform cooking into an art. Inspired by traditional recipes and with the help of innovative techniques (such as deconstruction or the application of liquid nitrogen), they have created unique dishes that will captivate your senses. Their ideas have become famous around the world: Spanish chefs have nearly **250 Michelin stars** between them.





## THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

The Spanish diet is varied, tasty and good for the health. More than just a **healthy diet**, it's a **way of life** that focuses on traditionally prepared ingredients, eating with friends and family, respecting the land and biodiversity, and preserving traditional fishing and farming activities. Try the wide variety of **virgin olive oils**, one of its key ingredients.

## WINE TOURISM

If you want to discover the exciting world of wine, the best idea is to take a wine route. You can visit ancient or avant-garde wineries, sleep in the vineyards and discover the secrets of pairing wine and food with the help of expert sommeliers. These excursions are ideal for lovers of gastronomic tourism.

In **La Rioja**, the land of one of the most famous Designations of Origin, you'll

find a world of sensations in the winery of Marqués de Riscal, with its luxury hotel in an avant-garde building designed by the Canadian architect Frank Gehry.

The south, and particularly the province of Cadiz, is the birthplace of the different varieties of sherry, or the wine of Jerez. Find out how this highly-prized elixir is made in the Tío Pepe winery in **Jerez de la Frontera**, or learn about the close connection between wine, Spanish thoroughbred horses and the fighting bull in wineries and traditional farmhouses where these three disciplines are practised.

Come and visit in autumn at the time of the wine harvest festival (when the grapes are harvested for making wine), and discover the wonderful world of wine. These festivities are the ideal way to enjoy all the traditions and the popular festive atmosphere based on wine culture.





## SHOPPING

If you love shopping, Spain's your destination. You'll find the best fashion labels, outlets selling top brands, and designer stores. There are also numerous traditional markets and antique shops. This is a fantastic way to get to know a city.

In **Madrid** you can let yourself be seduced by luxury in the **Golden Mile** in the Salamanca district. This is where you'll find shops selling the most prestigious fashion labels, including the top Spanish firms. If you're looking for something more alternative, **Calle Fuencarral** has a wide variety of different establishments. And on Sunday, head for the **Rastro**, an enormous open-air market in the city centre selling everything under the sun.

The most exclusive boutiques await you in the **Eixample** district in **Barcelona**, near the **Paseig de Gracia** and the **Avinguda Diagonal**. For alternative shopping the best idea is to wander round **El Born** and the **Gothic Quarter**. And if you want to discover the best street markets, then head for **Las Ramblas** or the Plaza de **Les Glories Catalanes** square, where you can enjoy browsing to your heart's content.







A visit to **Marbella** in **Malaga** is an excuse to soak up the *glamour* in a select and exclusive atmosphere that's perfect for your luxury purchases. Make a note of the avenues of **Ricardo Soriano** and **Ramón y Cajal**, and the **Boulevard Príncipe Alfonso Hohenlohe**. You'll feel like a star as you browse in shops selling the most prestigious brands of fashion, jewellery and design.

If you want to take home a special souvenir from Spain, we recommend the local **arts and crafts**, which always make popular gifts. The picturesque shop of **Art Escudellers** in Barcelona is an absolute must for original and top-quality handmade goods. The **Antigua Casa de Talavera** in Madrid is the best place if you're in search of quality ceramics. And if you're looking for something re-

ally unique, in **Toledo** you can buy a genuine mediaeval sword. For particularly attractive presents, you'll find surprising variety and quality in the gift shops in the major museums. Art galleries like the **Prado** and the **Thyssen** in Madrid, or the **Guggenheim Museum** in Bilbao offer a whole range of personalised items.

The advantages of shopping and Spain go beyond its wide variety of products. If you live outside the European Union you can shop tax free. You can request the **return of the VAT**. To do this you need to show your passport and request the tax free invoice in the shop. You'll need to show your purchases and have the invoices stamped at customs (the stamp is valid for three months from the date of purchase), then request the refund amount from the managing company. They all have reimbursement points **at the main Spanish airports and borders**. You can also request the refund to be made to your credit card, by bank transfer, or by international bank draft.





# NATURE

Discover the majestic waterfalls in the **Ordesa y Monte Perdido National Park**, wild animal refuges like the **Monfragüe**, gorges enclosed between vertical walls like the **Arribes del Duero**, marine ecosystems in the **Cíes Islands**, and much more. In Spain you'll find a multitude of protected natural areas that will captivate you with their variety and spectacular ecological richness. Wouldn't you be sorry to miss them?

MONFRAGÜE NATURE RESERVE  
CÁCERES

Over a quarter of Spain's territory is dedicated to nature preservation. Come with us to explore some of Spain's ecological treasures: they'll captivate you with their beauty and diversity.

## PROTECTED SPACES

Over a quarter of Spain's territory is dedicated to nature conservation. Come with us to explore some of Spain's ecological treasures: they'll captivate you with their beauty and diversity.

The variety and charm of its landscapes will take your breath away. Spain has **15 national parks** scattered around the Iberian Peninsula and in the Canary and Balearic Islands, where you'll discover some of its most emblematic nature reserves.

Do you like the mountains? Then come and discover the **Picos de Europa**, where you can enjoy their glacier lakes, high ridges, and dense forests that are the natural habitat of deer, wolves and bears. The only other comparable place is the **Aigüestortes i Estany de Sant Maurici National Park**, a spectacular setting of waterfalls and mountains.





SPAIN



DOÑANA NATIONAL PARK  
HUELVA



SIERRA NEVADA  
GRANADA

Bring along your field glasses and come and marvel at the beauty of the **Tablas de Daimiel** in Ciudad Real, and the **Cabañeros Park** in the Montes de Toledo; two unique ecosystems for observing a wide variety of birds and large mammals. Andalusia is also home to many natural treasures like the **Sierra Nevada** in Granada, where you can ski while you enjoy views of the sea, and the **Doñana Nature Reserve**, between Huelva, Seville and Cadiz, Andalusia's verdant jewel and a priceless bird sanctuary.



Discover the charm of these islands and their multiple contrasts. As you tour the lava fields of the **Timanfaya National Park** in Lanzarote you'll see one of the most spectacular volcanic landscapes in the world. In the forests of **Garajonay** on La Gomera, you can go deep into a fascinating leafy evergreen forest that's

frequently shrouded in mist. And the **Cabrera Archipelago** in the Balearic Islands, and the **Atlantic Islands** in Galicia are a perfect destination for scuba divers. You can find out more about all the parks in Spain by visiting the website [www.spain.info/es/consultas/naturaleza/parques-nacionales.html](http://www.spain.info/es/consultas/naturaleza/parques-nacionales.html).



▲ TIMANFAYA  
LANZAROTE

Spain is the country with the most UNESCO-designated **Biosphere Reserves** in the world, thanks to its spectacular natural richness. These are landscapes where you can experience the beauty and magic of nature in a very special way.

From the Mediterranean through to the Cantabrian coast, and including cross-border areas and the Spanish islands, you'll discover the captivating diversity of Spain's biosphere reserves. You can marvel at the **Sierra de Grazalema** in Cadiz, a veritable wall overlooking the ocean. Other natural attractions include

the imposing Catalan massif of the **Montserrat**, and the lakes and wetlands in **La Mancha Húmeda** between Toledo and Albacete... Almost 50 unique places await you.

## BIRDWATCHING

Birdwatching is one of the most gratifying experiences on offer in nature. You can enjoy all the richness of Spanish bird life in areas like the **Pyrenees** or the mountains of **Extremadura**, **Navarre** and **Castile-León**. In the national parks mentioned earlier you'll find some exceptional settings for this activity.



## STARGAZING

Come and see stars, constellations and planets. Spain has one of the best night skies in the world for studying the firmament. You can do so in protected natural spaces, rural houses and small hotels specialising in stargazing tourism. The **Starlight Tourist Destination** certification distinguishes the sites that are best for watching the night sky in optimal conditions. Here are a few options.

In the Canary Islands you'll find some of the most spectacular settings in the world for seeing the stars, like the **Roque de Los Muchachos Observatory** in La Palma. Are you ready to stargaze on the top of a volcano? The **Teide National**

**Park** in Tenerife is the place to enjoy this unique experience.

Inland Spain also offers excellent destinations for anyone interested in seeing stars. The **Monfragüe National Park** in Extremadura offers the chance to see a spectacular sky in the **Torrejón el Rubio Astronomical Observatory** and at the **Castillo de Monfragüe** viewing point.

The **Sierra Morena**, a mountainous area that crosses a large part of northwest Andalusia, is an excellent spot with multiple viewing points and accommodation for stargazers. There are experience packages available which include specialised guides, observation equipment and transport.



# BEACHES

Discover for yourself one of the best coastlines in Europe. Spain has more **Blue Flags** than any other country in Europe: here you'll find sun and sea in the best possible conditions. Beaches with the **Q for Quality** certifying the excellence of their waters and sands can be found in ever greater numbers on the Spanish coasts.



## THE MEDITERRANEAN COAST

Take a dip in the crystal clear waters of the Mediterranean. You're guaranteed warm temperatures, and equal measures of fun and recreation and peace and quiet. The **Costa Brava** will delight you with its turquoise waters, its hidden coves among leafy vegetation, its fishing villages, and as a backdrop, the Pyrenees. On the **Costa Dorada** you can enjoy secluded coves and long beaches, alternating with Roman remains.

You can visit the **Costa Cálida** at any time of year, as it has a practically constant summer, while the **Costa Blanca** offers kilometres of coastline flanked by palm trees and orchards. If you want over 300 days of sunshine a year, the **Costa del Sol** is the place for you. You'll find an oasis of peace and quiet in the warm waters of the **Costa del Azahar** and the coast of **Valencia**. The **Costa Tropical** owes its name to its exceptional climate for growing tropical fruit, and is characterised by its dozens of secluded beaches and coves.



SPAIN

PLAYA DE BOLONIA BEACH  
CÁDIZ

## THE ATLANTIC COAST

The most notable feature of the west of Spain is its contrasts. To the north in Galicia, the steeply sloping **Costa da Morte** will reveal the immensity of the ocean in all its splendour. Discover the fishing tradition in the estuaries of the **Rías Altas and Bajas**, their ancient lighthouses, the delicious smell of shellfish and their Celtic-inspired legends. To the south, on the **Costa de la Luz**, you'll find a multitude of enchanting popular festivities, pilgrimages, protected natural areas and an Andalusia that's open to the ocean.

## THE CANTABRIAN COAST

You can stroll around charming fishing villages, enjoy nature in its purest state as it merges with the sand, and look out over cliffs that will take your breath away. This is **Galicia**, where you'll find the Ribadeo, Foz and Viveiro estuaries, places where the rivers flow into the Cantabrian Sea. In Ribadeo you can visit the spectacular Las Catedrales beach, regarded as

▼ LAS CATEDRALES BEACH  
RIBADEO, LUGO



one of the best in the world. This is a landscape that extends as far as the **Green Coast** that runs along the whole of the coastline of Asturias. More towards the west, the steeply sloping **Cantabrian Coast** has as many as 90 beaches, many of them isolated and ideal for a plunge. The journey ends at the **Basque Coast**, where you'll find endless stretches of sand, surfing paradises and legendary urban beaches such as **La Concha** in San Sebastián.





## THE BALEARIC ISLANDS

Discover an earthly paradise: **Mallorca**, **Menorca**, **Ibiza** and **Formentera** form a crescent-shaped archipelago in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. Surrounded by pine forests that descend to the beach itself, its rocky coves with their crystal clear waters and its white sandy beaches in a turquoise sea will make an indelible impression.

## THE CANARY ISLANDS

Come and discover the Atlantic and you'll fall in love with this archipelago and its multitude of contrasts. Enjoy its volcanic beaches, endless sand dunes, leafy forests, lunar landscapes, natural pools and spectacular underwater seabeds. Its mild year-round temperatures and its rich biodiversity make this a **perfect destination for relaxing**, marveling at its natural spaces and enjoying a range of water sports.





## SPECTACULAR SUNSETS

Spanish beaches are the ideal place to succumb to the magic of the moment the sun goes down. You can see unforgettable sunsets from the coast in Huelva or from a cove in Ibiza, where you can watch the sun as it sinks behind the majestic rock of Es Vedrá. You can watch a sunset bathed in a golden light with the **Cíes Islands** as a backdrop in Galicia, mirrored in the sea in La **Albufera** in Valencia, or in a secluded corner of the **La Caleta beach** in Cadiz. You'll be amazed at the volcanic jet black of **Lanzarote** in the Canary Islands, and you'll get an idea of what the Mediterranean was like before the arrival of humans in **Cabo de Gata** in Almería.





# SPORTS AND ACTIVE TOURISM

Over 8,000 kilometres of coastline, two seas and one ocean, several mountain ranges, and numerous places that are ideal for hiking, skiing, sailing and golf. And all with an exceptional climate. Whatever your sport or hobby, you'll be able to indulge in it here.

## CYCLING

Take a deep breath and get ready to discover Spain by bike: from the **Way of Saint James** to the **Greenways** –former railway lines reconverted into bike routes–, to island trails and routes through nature reserves. The main Spanish cities also offer cycle-touring routes that will enable you to explore them in a different way and enjoy their natural spaces.

## HIKING

Grab your rucksack and a pair of sturdy boots, because in Spain you'll find **thousands of kilometres of certified trails**. The Spanish climate is perfect for walking and enjoying the outdoors, and the views are guaranteed. Prepare yourself to see vast lakes, volcanoes, gorges, wildlife and much more. The routes are classified **in several types** and are **signposted** in different colours according to how many kilometres they are. The long-distance routes (GR) are red, the short routes (PR) are yellow, and finally the local paths (SL) are green, with distances of less than 10 kilometres. These are the best for hiking with children or people with low levels of physical fitness.



▲ ZAHARA DE LOS ATUNES  
CÁDIZ





You'll ride the waves in some of the best swells and breakers in the world.

## SURFING

A warm climate with all types of different winds and currents; an abundance of schools, companies and accommodation tailor-made for surfers make Spain an irresistible destination. You have plenty of places to choose from: Los Locos beach, Mundaka, Yerbabuena, El Quemao and many others await you. If you're after a particular surfing style (*bodyboard, kneeboard, skimboard, stand-up paddle* or longboard), you'll find everything you need.

## KITE SURFING

Do you love performing twists and turns and taming the air and sea with just a sail? Then you're in luck. In some parts of Spain the wind and the mild temperatures are practically guaranteed all year round. Enthusiasm for this sport is growing in Spain thanks to its recent achievements: Tarifa was the international venue for this sport, and the Spanish athlete Gisela Pulido has now won nine world championships. The best places are the Atlantic coast in Andalusia, the island of Fuerteventura in the Canaries, and the Mediterranean coast.

## SCUBA DIVING AND SNORKELLING

Submerge yourself in the waters of the Mediterranean, the Cantabrian or the Atlantic, and discover a unique biodiversity. Over 20 marine reserves and all the infrastructure you need for this activity –a perfect combination of sport and nature– guarantee that your dives will be memorable. Discover sunken treasure and shipwrecks in **La Palma**, dense meadows of seaweed in **Cabo de Gata** and seabeds teeming with life in the Balearic Islands. Come and explore the **Cabo de Palos and Hormigas Islands**, marine reserve, a protected natural underwater space in Murcia, or the volcanic seabeds in **El Hierro**, and see the incredible variety of species that inhabit Spain's seas.

## SAILING

Whether you're an experienced sailor or setting sail for the first time, you'll find the ideal conditions for this sport in Spain. Spain has demonstrated its experience in this sport in regattas like the **Ciutat de Palma Trophy**, the **Canary Islands Olympic Sailing Week** and the **Barcelona International Boat Show**. Spain has over 30 marinas and is one of the preferred destinations of recreational sailors.





## GOLF

Get out your clubs, work on your swing and enjoy one of Europe's most popular golfing destinations. Discover over 500 courses designed to suit everyone: on the coast, in the mountain, in big cities... The excellent transport connections, the **exceptional climate**, the wide range of **quality accommodation** on offer and Spain's **spectacular landscapes** mean you can always go sightseeing if you ever tire of playing golf.



## SKIING

If you haven't ventured to take up skiing yet, Spain's slopes are ideal for anyone beginning in this sport. You can take the plunge in one of the **34 resorts** to be found up and down the country from the **Pyrenees** to the **Sierra Nevada**. In addition to their continued renovation and improvement (new runs, snowboard zones, recreational areas with sleds, freestyle territories...), they also have **state-of-the-art facilities**, top-quality snow and winters with frequent sunshine.

Watch a match and experience all the thrills of the king of sports!



## FOOTBALL

The best league in the world, some of the leading clubs and footballers on the planet, a world champion national side, European championship winners, Olympic Games and much more. Spain is the Mount Olympus of football. Come and visit the **Santiago Bernabéu** stadium in Madrid, or the **Camp Nou** in Barcelona, halfway between museums and temples to football that will take your breath away.



## FESTIVALS

Very few countries can boast such a quantity and quality of music, theatre and film festivals, including some of the most prestigious in the world.

You can experience them in all their intensity wherever you go in Spain.

### MUSIC

Thrill to leading figures on the international pop-rock music scene in **Primavera Sound** in Barcelona, the **FIB** in Benicàssim and the **Mad Cool Festival** in Madrid. These are the frontrunners in a boom which every summer makes Spain the ideal destination for music lovers. At

**Bilbao BBK Live** you can enjoy a line-up featuring the best of modern alternative music.

Dance to the beat of electronic music, the real star of the summer season, with various events you won't want to miss, headed by **Sónar**, which serves as a focus for the best experimental musicians, multimedia art and avant-garde performances. The **Álamos Beach Festival** is a chance to enjoy music on the beach itself on the Costa del Sol, and at **Dreambeach** in Almería you'll be treated to the sound of some of the world's best DJs.

Whatever your style of music you'll find a festival in Spain, from the reggae of **Rototom Sunsplash** to the **Celtic Music Festival** in Ortigueira – a free event in the folk tradition–, and the chance to see top names in jazz at the festivals in **Vitoria** and **San Sebastián**.





## THEATRE

Spain means theatre. Experience it like never before: in a Roman amphitheatre, an open-air theatre, or a mediaeval cloister.

The **Mérida Classical Theatre Festival** is a chance to experience the outstanding setting of a Roman theatre dating from the first century BC. Its imposing stage is perfect for performing Greek and Latin texts, but it's also open to the performing arts in general, including music and film.

Discover the Corral de Comedias open-air theatre in Almagro, built four centuries ago, at the **International Theatre Festival** held in this town in La Mancha in July. You can watch performances by authors like William Shakespeare and Lope de Vega and take part in courses and workshops for theatre lovers in the **Olimedo Clásico** competition in Valladolid.

Without forgetting the classics, but now veering towards other disciplines such as dance, circus and music, the **Grec Festival** in Barcelona takes place in a captivating setting on the top of Montjuic mountain.

## FILM

Rub shoulders with stars and filmmakers, attend world premières and discover small independent film treasures in the prestigious festivals that are held up and down the country.

Discover the **San Sebastián Film Festival**, one of the most prestigious in the world and the oldest of its kind in Spain, and immerse yourself in the seventh art. The photocalls with actors and directors overlooking the bay in the city are a classic feature of this festival.

Passionate cinephiles won't want to miss the **SEMINCI** in Valladolid, which each year schedules some of the best international "ciné d'auteur". The **Gijón International Film Festival** and the **Seville European Film Festival** are the perfect excuse to discover two beautiful cities that will captivate you with their long-standing film tradition.

If you like intense emotions, get ready for the terrifying experiences on offer each year at the **Sitges International Fantastic Film Festival**, one of the most important in the horror film genre in the world. And you can't miss the Sitges Zombie Walk, a stroll among the living dead in the centre of in this coastal town near Barcelona.

▼ MERIDA CLASSICAL THEATRE FESTIVAL  
Photo: Juan Aunin/123rf.com





# PRACTICAL INFORMATION

## REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTERING SPAIN

### EU CITIZENS

The documentation required to travel to Spain varies according to your country of origin. If you're from the **European Union, Switzerland, Iceland, Norway** or **Liechtenstein**, you only need a valid passport or ID document.

recommend you contact the Spanish Consulate or Embassy in your country to confirm these requirements before starting your trip. You can also check which countries require a visa on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, [www.exteriores.gob.es](http://www.exteriores.gob.es).

### OTHER COUNTRIES

You'll need your **passport** or a **valid visa** in the case of countries without any special treaties. You can also use a **residence permit** or a **long-term visa** issued by another EU country, or by Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein. The maximum stay in Spain is 90 days. We

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Always keep **the documents to justify your trip** within reach, like plane tickets or hotel reservations. You'll also need to prove that you have the **financial resources** for your stay in Spain. It is advisable to have travel insurance to cover any unforeseen circumstances.



# MEANS OF TRANSPORT

## AIRPORTS

In most Spanish airports there are airline companies offering connections to major cities all over the world. The airports offering the greatest number of international connections are **Adolfo Suárez Madrid-Barajas, El Prat (Barcelona), Palma de Mallorca, Malaga, Gran Canaria, Alicante and Tenerife Sur**. The seven Canary Islands all have their own airport, whereas in the Balearic Islands there are airports on Mallorca, Ibiza and Menorca.



## TRAIN

The Spanish National Railway Network (RENFE) links all the country's main cities and regions. The unquestionable stars of the system are the **AVE high-speed trains** which serve 25 tourist destinations, with Madrid as their main hub. To give you an idea: you can travel from Madrid to Valencia in only 95 minutes, or from Madrid to Barcelona in two and a half hours. As a tourist we recommend the **Renfe Spain Pass**, valid on all the long- and medium-distance AVE routes. The AVE network also has a **Renfe-SNCF** service that links Madrid and Barcelona with the main cities in France.







## TOURIST TRAINS

Slow down, and enjoy the countryside and the good food on board one of these unique trains. You're sure to love the **Transcantábrico**. You'll be able to discover Green Spain aboard a veritable railway gem: trains equipped with spacious suites with ensuite bathrooms, hydrosauna, turbomassage, steam bath and much more. You'll stop in unique destinations like Leon with its cathedral, the Peine de los Vientos sculpture in San Sebastián, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, the coastal city of Santander, the Altamira Caves in Santillana del Mar, the Picos de Europa National Park in Asturias, and the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.

Another option is the **Al-Ándalus train**, an opportunity to travel around different areas in Spain on board a genuine palace on rails. Its décor in the style of the *belle époque*, its luxurious rooms and spacious saloon cars from the 1920s and its mouthwatering cuisine will ensure that your trip is unforgettable. There are several routes to choose from: in Andalusia and Extremadura.

## CRUISES

Spain is the gateway to the Mediterranean and one of the European countries with the greatest amount of cruise traffic. In addition to the stopovers in various places of interest, another popular option is cruise packages that combine stays on land. **Barcelona** and **Mallorca** are two of the destinations preferred by travellers for spending a few days before going back on board, or after completing their cruise. There are also other points on the Mediterranean coast of Spain that are common stopover places on cruise routes: **Ibiza, Menorca, Santander, Gijón, Valencia...** There is an extensive network of ferries offering regular service between the mainland and the islands, between the islands (inter-island ferries), and other ferries sail between Spain and some of Europe's most important coastal cities.

## VEHICLE HIRE

You can hire a vehicle and tour Spain at your own pace. Book online and pick it up at the destination of your choice. Most vehicle hire companies require a minimum age (between 21 and 25, depending on the model of vehicle chosen) and for you to have had a driving licence for at least one year, in addition to a credit card. If you come from a non-EU country you must have an International Driving Licence.



# ACCOMMODATION

## HOTEL NETWORKS

You'll find over 200 hotel chains and around 4,000 hotels in Spain. The prices vary according to the category of the hotel (from 1 to 5 stars) and the season. If you're travelling with your family, you can choose hotels designed to serve as genuine holiday complexes, with a whole range of facilities specially for children. You'll also find hotels specialising in business meetings, senior citizens, the LGBTI community and much more.

## PARADOR HOTELS

Parador hotels are distinctive establishments located in natural or historic sites of outstanding beauty. Palaces, monasteries, convents, castles and more. These places are not only interesting from the point of view of tourism, but also offer excellent gastronomic options, with all the best flavours of traditional cuisine.

Discover them all at [www.parador.es](http://www.parador.es).

Rural tourism gives you the opportunity to discover up close all the charms of these areas in far-flung places away from the big cities. For more information on rural houses and apartments, check out the websites for each autonomous region.





## TIMES

### BUSINESS OPENING HOURS

Spain has very long opening hours: shops usually open from Monday to Saturday from 9:30 am to 1:30 pm and from 4:30 to 8 pm. Department stores and shopping centres stay open all day from 10 am to 10 pm. There are no restrictions on opening hours in the big cities, so many establishments also open on Sundays and public holidays.

### LUNCHTIME

The time zone in Spain is **Greenwich Mean Time (GMT)**, except in the Canary Islands, where it's one hour earlier. Spanish **mealtimes are rather later** than in other countries. Breakfast tends to be **between 8 and 10 am**. Lunch is served **from 1 to 3:30 pm**. Dinner in Spain is eaten **between 8:30 and 11 pm**.



## CLIMATE

Spain is one of the warmest countries in Europe, and has over 3,000 hours of sunshine a year. The predominant climate is the temperate Mediterranean, which ensures dry summers and winters with even temperatures. The weather in the north tends to be rainier and with mild summers. The Canary Islands have an

excellent climate with year-round sun and an annual average temperature of 22°C. In areas with higher altitudes like the Sierra Nevada and the Cordillera Cantábrica mountains there is a frequent presence of snow from early winter to late spring.



## CURRENCY

The currency in Spain is the euro, the same as in most other European Union countries. You can change money in bureaux de change and some banks. This service is also available in many hotels and travel agencies.

Payment with international credit cards (accompanied by a passport or identity

document) is accepted almost everywhere. Businesses, restaurants and hotels usually announce this on the door of the establishments.

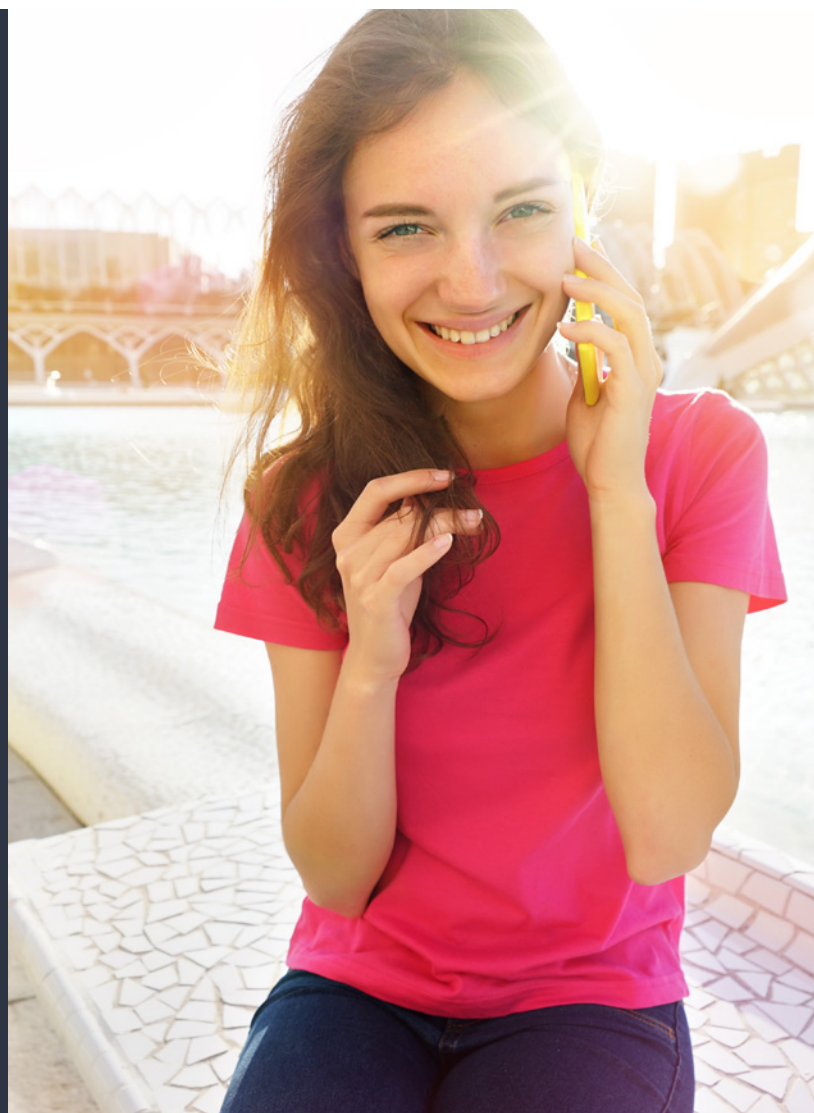
Tips are not obligatory. However, –depending on the amount– it is common practice in bars and restaurants to leave a tip of between 5% and 10% of the total.

## TOURIST OFFICES AND EMBASSIES

We are at your service throughout your trip.

Find the nearest Tourist Office or your Embassy here:


<http://www.spain.info/en/informacion-practica/oficinas-turismo-embajadas/>







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