

Spain Travel & Accommodation Guide

A world of contrast and continuity.



The vast territories of Spain offer a world of contrast and continuity. From the rugged mountain ranges of the Pyrenees in the north to the deserts in south eastern Andalusia, the country's regions, cities and towns showcase their many distinct idiosyncrasies with pride, and yet share one thing very much in common: they are citizens of a country of merrymakers, whose lust for life is arguably unparalleled.

Spain has a number of autonomous regions reflecting divergent histories and cultural heritage, which travellers are encouraged to respect. These include the Basque country, Galicia, Catalonia, Pais Valencia, the Balearic Islands (who speak Catalan) and Andalusia. But there is a great deal of joint history and cultural interchange and, on the whole, there are many shared characteristics throughout the nation.

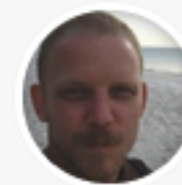
A celebratory lifestyle is one of them, the delicious trappings of this lifestyle another. Mornings spent downing coffees on sundrenched alfresco tables in glorious renaissance plazas; witnessing man against beast is the charged atmosphere and delicate dance of a bullfight; tapas, washed down with local wines or refreshing beers; nights in one of the country's thousands of nightclubs; and cold weary mornings, in the company of the equally affected, warming insides with soft, sugary churros dipped in divine hot chocolate sauce.

Almost all Spaniards are crazy about football. So for a true taste of Spanish passion, check out a match at Santiago Bernabéu Stadium in Madrid, one of the most prestigious football venues in the world. For altogether different moves, however, nothing expresses the Spanish zest for life, like Flamenco. Professional Flamenco dancers perform throughout the country, but for the real deal, head to Andalusia, the land and culture of its origin.

Spain has been blessed geographically, architecturally, gastronomically and culturally. Medieval castles and towns decorate hilltops throughout the interior; across the south, the Sierra Nevada mountain range is wild and untameable; 5,000 miles of coastline are littered with beautiful beaches, while the deserts of Andalusia delight. And throughout the country, Spanish food, especially its many variations of tapas, is always tasty. The secret, perhaps, is in the sauce. Spanish olive oil is considered the best in the world and almost every dish includes it – leading one to conjecture: could this be the true source of Spanish passion?

Art Museums, some of the best in Europe, in cities across the country, guide you on journeys through the unconscious landscapes of hundreds of years of great European artists, giving potent taste of lives lived and mythologies experienced. And architectural delights abound: The magic of Moorish architecture in the south, from Granada's majestic Alhambra to the white washed villages clinging to the hillsides of the Alpujarras further south: the twisted organic gravity defying creations of Gaudi in Barcelona; Frank Gehry's tremendous Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao; and the ancient offerings of the fort city of Toledo, to name but a few.

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