



IAESTE SPAIN
The International Association for the Exchange
of Students for Technical Experience

SPAIN



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General overview

Spain in the world

Geographical situation

Spain is placed in southern Europe sharing the Iberian peninsula with Portugal and Andorra. A few kilometers southward, crossing the Gibraltar strait, one lands in the African continent. Northward and crossing the Pyrenees mountains, one arrives to France. The eastern part of Spain is bathed by the Mediterranean sea and the western one touches Portugal. The Atlantic ocean baths the northern and the southwestern part of the country. The Mediterranean sea meets the Atlantic ocean at the Gibraltar strait. The Canary islands are in this ocean quite in the south. The capital, Madrid, placed in the very center of the peninsula is $40,24^{\circ}$ N and $3,41^{\circ}$ W.

Political situation

Spain is a European Union (EU) member since 1986. Every EU state member contributes with a certain number of deputies to the European Parliament. This one is in charge of elaborating directives that must be accepted and applied by the state members. Spain voted “yes” to a project of a brand new European Constitution that was afterwards refused by other countries and that is now in a stand-by stage. The EU capital is Brussels.

Due to historical facts, Latin America is one of the priorities of the Government in foreign policy. Also northern Africa is one of the concerns of the Government.

Economical situation

Spanish economy is in good shape and is growing steadily. It is actually one of the best performing economies of the Euro zone. However, there is still a gap between Spain and the European core (Germany, UK, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, ...). The EU gives funds to Spain in order to change this situation and balance the economies. Next years, however, Spain will not be a receiver anymore and will have to contribute to these funds that now will aim the new incoming states to the EU. The currency used in Spain is the Euro.





Inside Spain

Geography

Spain offers a wide variety of landscapes ranging from desert zones to greenish mountains. The Pyrenees are the most important mountains but one can find mountains in the center of the peninsula and also in the south. The highest peak, however, is the volcano Teide (3718 m) that is located in the Canary Islands.



Climate

It is obvious that our planet is warming up and the Iberian peninsula does not escape this effect. Therefore, the temperatures which were already high are now even higher.

During the summer it is not an exception reaching the 40° C at noon. One must be cautious and wear light clothes, drink lots of water and not expose too long to the Sun. The evenings are very pleasant and people go out to bars' terraces and walking around.

The winter can be really cold in high zones. A pullover and a coat must be worn all over the country to put up with the low winter temperatures. However, it hardly snows in most of big cities for the temperatures rarely go below 0° C.

Spring and autumn temperatures are very pleasant and bearable.

Rain is growing rare in Spain and the lack of water is becoming a serious problem. Therefore one must reduce water consumption and use it rationally.

Politics

Constitutional Monarchy is the Spanish system. The king Juan Carlos I represents the state and must approve the laws elaborated by the Parliament that is directly elected by the citizens every four years. The King is also the higher responsible of the army.





The Prime Minister, now Zapatero, is elected by the Parliament. His party, in coalition with smaller ones, is carrying out left-wing policies. Some of them (Iraq's war withdrawal, normalization of gays and lesbians rights, removal of Franco's statues,...) have shaken the national and international panorama.

This government is gradually federalizing the state giving more power of decision to the autonomias (shown on the map below).



Economy

Tourism is one of the main engines of Spanish economy. Building companies have also a big share of it. Specially nowadays that the country is growing in population and is updating infrastructures such as motorways, fast trains, etc.

Industry and technology are also very important for the economy. There are not lots of huge corporations but there are plenty of mid-sized industries. Car building is probably the most important industry sector.





Recent history

After losing all colonies in South America in the end of the 19th century, Spain got into a crisis that led to the second Spanish Republic proclaimed in a democratic way (1931-1936). The King Alfonso XIII had to leave the country. In 1936 a coup d'état by Franco led to the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Franco, supported by Hitler and Mussolini, won the war against the Government and set a tough dictatorship that ended with his death (1975). Franco arranged that Juan Carlos I (grandson of Alfonso XIII) would take over the country. The King stabilized the country and it successfully followed the transition period to a full democracy.

Nowadays society

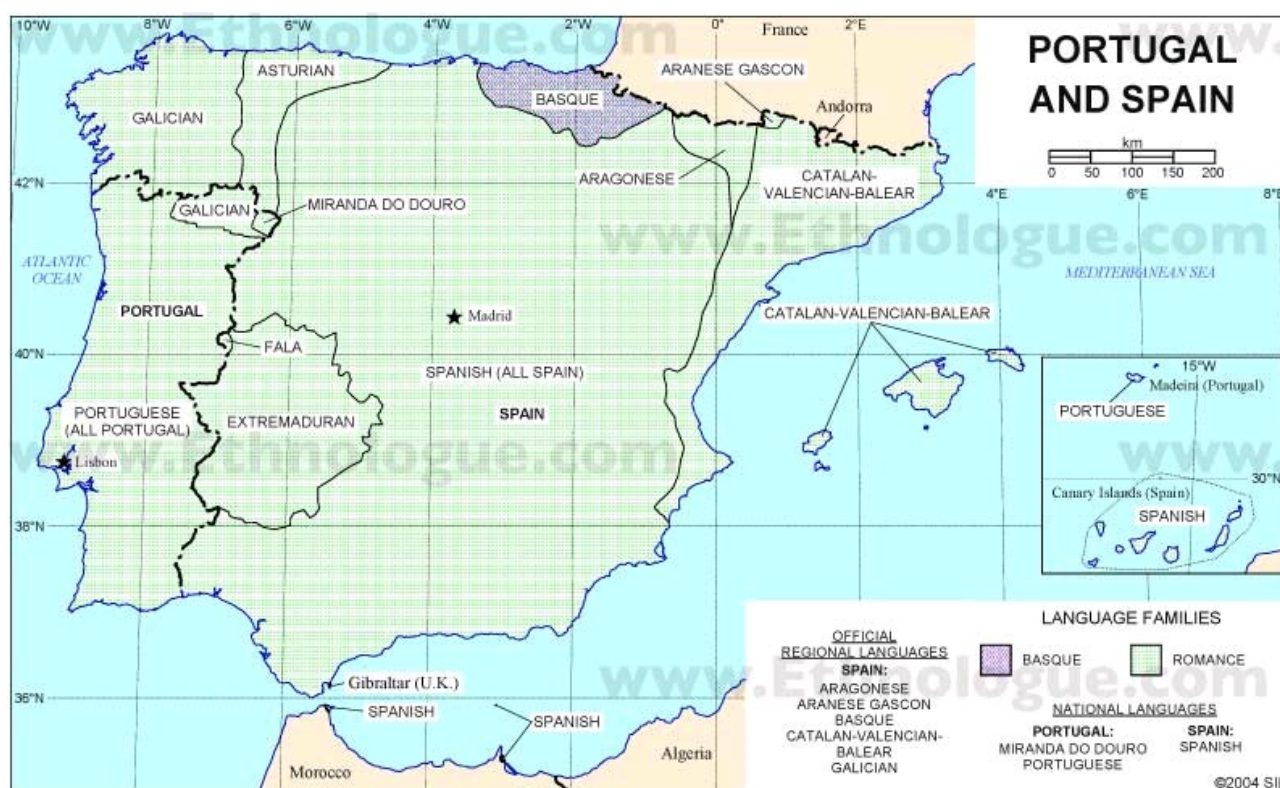
Some say that Spanish society is still divided in the two parts that fought during the Civil War. It is partly true but the fact is that today the society is changing incredibly fast. Spain is receiving lots of people from worldwide (specially from Africa, South America, eastern Europe and China) that are changing the streets of the cities and also villages from all over the country. Unlike in other EU countries such as France or the UK, immigration is a new phenomena for Spanish people. It is curious that some of them had been émigrés during the Civil War and are now on the other side receiving people. This fact might make Spaniards more sensitive to this incoming people.





Languages

Some people are confused when coming to Spain about the language issue. It is very simple: in Spain everybody can speak Spanish and it is the official language all over the country. Some regions use another language as official and their inhabitants are therefore bilingual (Catalonia, Valencia, Balearic Islands, Basque Country and Galicia). The map below shows it very clearly.



Culture

Spain is a really varied country in which several languages are spoken, different dances are danced and different dishes are cooked according to the region you are in. It is even discussed now if it should be called a nation of nations. Therefore, the visitor will find much more than bullfighting, flamenco, paella and sangria. The diversity of the country is so rich that one could spend ages to discover it all.





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Practical info

Visa

Visa: Spain belongs to Shenguen zone. Check with your country's foreign office to know if you need a visa for the staying period.

Money

Currency: Euro (€).

How much to bring: 600 € to spend the first month before the pay.

Some prices: depending strongly on the location. Coffee 1€, beer 1.50€, meal 10 €, city bus ticket 0.60€, cinema 5€.

Credit Cards: accepted in most places. Cheques never used.

Buying your tickets

Plane: if flying from Europe check low cost companies. Flying from elsewhere check your favorite airline and Spanish ones: Iberia, Spanair, Air Europa. Within Spain also check Vueling, Clickair, Ryanair. www.aena.es for info on airports.

Train: www.renfe.es.

Bus: from Europe check www.eurolines.com. Once in Spain www.alsa.es.

Ferries: many destinations (www.viamare.com). To northern Africa (www.ferrimaroc.com, www.euroferrys.com), Italy (www.grimaldi-ferries.com), UK (www.brittany-ferries.co.uk, www.directferries.co.uk). Within Spain (www.trasmediterranea.es, www.balearia.com).

Private transport: www.guiacampsa.es for roads map.

Packing the bag

If staying in winter bring pullover and heavy coat. In summer shorts, T-shirts, sandals, bathing suit, sunglasses. To go to work and out at night light trousers, T-shirt and shoes. No umbrella or raincoats. Bring bedclothes and towel.

Arrival

We will receive you and take you to your flat upon your arrival.





Spaniards and the English language

Young Spaniards can answer you in English but don't take for granted everyone knows it. Older ones rarely speak English. Bring a dictionary and learn some useful expressions before your arrival.

Lodging

You might share a flat with other IAESTE trainees or local people. It depends on the availability of rooms.

Price: ranges from 120 to 350 €/month depending on location.

Electricity: 230V 50Hz - european plugs.

Water: drinkable.

Telephone and Internet: very seldom.

TV and DVD: quite often.

Communications

Mobile: calling card and phone for around 50€. Also cards separately. Check Movistar, Vodafone, Orange, Yoigo.

Phone: you can use a booth telephone (only using a card you can buy in some shops – usually cigar stores).

Internet: Free in most libraries. Cibercafés for 2€/hour. At work.

Buying food

You will find plenty of supermarkets. Cheap ones: Mercadona, Dia, Lidl.

Also, in cities, food from worldwide. Buy in markets and small shops fresh and quality things.

Health

Vaccines: No special vaccines needed.

Insurance: you need one. If EU citizen you can use the European Health Card.

Sex: have safe relations using condoms.





Drugs

No drugs save alcohol and tobacco can be consumed in Spain. Alcohol and tobacco from aged 18.

Emergencies

Call 112.

Media

Papers: www.elmundo.es, www.elpais.com , www.elperiodico.com, www.abc.es,
www.lavanguardia.es, www.larazon.es

Radios: www.rne.es, www.cadenaser.com, www.los40.com, www.europafm.com,
www.radiointernet.es, www.cope.es, www.kissfm.es

Alternative: www.indymedia.org , www.nodo50.org

Free days all over Spain

January 1st (new year's day)

January 6th (epiphany).

April (easter friday)

May 1st (labour day)

August 15th (assumption)

October 12th (national day)

November 1st (all saints day)

December 6th (constitution day)

December 8th (immaculate conception)

December 25th (christmas day)





Some celebrations

February 26th (aberri eguna – Basque national day)

March 12th-19th (las fallas – carnival figures and fireworks in Valencia)

April (feria de abril – andalusian traditions and party – Sevilla)

April 23th (sant jordi – book/rose exchange between lovers – Catalonia)

June 24th (san juan – fires, fireworks and party at the shortest night)

July 6th-14th (sanfermines – running bulls in Pamplona)

July 25th (fiesta santiago – 2 week celebration - Santiago Compostela)

The tourism link

www.spain.info





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