

Spain

Facts and Statistics

Location: Southwestern Europe, bordering the Bay of Biscay, Mediterranean Sea, North Atlantic Ocean, and Pyrenees Mountains, southwest of France

Capital: Madrid

Climate: temperate; clear, hot summers in interior, more moderate and cloudy along coast; cloudy, cold winters in interior, partly cloudy and cool along coast

Population: 40,280,780 (July 2004 est.)

Ethnic Make-up: composite of Mediterranean and Nordic types

Religions: Roman Catholic 94%, other 6%

Government: parliamentary monarchy

The Spanish Language

The official language is Spanish, also called Castilian, and is the first language of over 72% of the population. Galician is spoken in the region of Galicia and Basque by increasing numbers of the population of Euskadi, the Spanish Basque Country. Catalan is spoken in Catalonia and the Balearic Islands, and the closely-related Valencian in the Valencia region. All these languages have official regional status. Other minority languages including Aragonese and Asturian are not officially recognized.

Why not learn some useful Spanish phrases?

Spanish Society & Culture

Spanish Family Values

- . The family is the basis of the social structure and includes both the nuclear and the extended family, which sometimes provides both a social and a financial support network.
- . Today, it is less common than previously for family members to work in a family business, as personal preferences are important and university education is general
- . The structure and the size of the family vary, but generally, people live until longer lives, have fewer children than before, and fewer people live in their homes with extended family.
- . Familial networks have become less tight. The greatest changes have occurred inside families, between men and woman, and the parents and children because the values that inspire these relations have changed.

Machismo

- . Machismo is the word for male dominance, and the culture of old men who created it has changed dramatically.
- . Spain is a very equalitarian society, the birth rate is the one of the lowest in Europe, and women are present at university and work.

Religion in Spain

- . The majority of Spaniards are formally Roman Catholic, although different religious beliefs are accepted.
- . During the history of Spain, there have been long periods of where different religious groups have coexisted, including Muslims, Jews and Christians.

- . Still some traditions manifest more like a cultural event than a religious one.
- . During Holy Week, many participants of the processions wear peaked, black hats as the sign of a penitent and walk barefoot, carrying a burden of some kind.
- . Religious history is apparent in every small town, where the most grandiose building is typically the church. In the large cities the Cathedrals are almost museums.