



SPAIN



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	1	Contact Addresses
	2	General
	3	Passport
	4	Money
	5	Duty Free
	6	Public Holidays
	7	Health
	8	Accommodation
	9	Resorts & Excursions
	10	Sport & Activities
	11	Social Profile
	12	Business Profile
	13	Climate
	14	History and Government
	15	Overview

1 CONTACT ADDRESSES

Location: Western Europe.

Dirección General de Turismo
Jose Lázaro Galdiano 6, 28036 Madrid, Spain
Tel: (91) 343 3500. Fax: (91) 343 3446. E-mail: info@tourspain.es
Web site: <http://www.tourspain.es>

Secretaría de Estado de Comercio, Turismo y Pymes
Castellana 162, 28071 Madrid, Spain
Tel: (91) 582 9313. E-mail: infopyme@ipyme.org
Web site: <http://www.ipyme.org>

Spanish Embassy
39 Chesham Place, London SW1X 8SB
Tel: (020) 7235 5555. Fax: (020) 7259 5392.
Web site: <http://www.embspuk@mail.mae.es>

Spanish Consulate
20 Draycott Place, London SW3 2RZ
Tel: (0900) 160 0123 (recorded visa information; calls cost 60p per minute) or (0906) 526 6630 (to order visa applications). Fax: (0906) 554 0809. Opening hours: 0930-1200 Monday to Friday (closed Spanish national holidays).
Consulates in: Manchester and Edinburgh.

Spanish National Tourist Office
22-23 Manchester Square, London W1M 5AP
Tel: (020) 7486 8077 or (0906) 364 0630 (brochure request line; calls cost 60p per minute). Fax: (020) 7486 8034. Opening hours: 0915-1615 Monday to Friday. Web site: <http://www.tourspain.es>

British Embassy
Calle de Fernando el Santo 16, 28010 Madrid, Spain
Tel: (91) 700 8200. Fax: (91) 700 8272.

British Consulate

2 GENERAL

Marques de la Ensenada 16, 2nd Floor, Centro Colon, 28004 Madrid, Spain
Tel: (91) 308 5201. Fax: (91) 308 0882.
Other Consulates in: Alicante, Barcelona, Bilbao, Ibiza, Las Palmas (Grand Canaria), Málaga, Menorca, Palma, Santa Cruz de Tenerife (Canary Islands), Santander, Seville and Vigo.

Embassy of the Kingdom of Spain
2375 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20037
Tel: (202) 452 0100 or 728 2330 ext. 1403 (visa section). Fax: (202) 833 5670. Web site: <http://www.spainemb.org/information>
Consulates in: Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York (tel: (212) 355 4080), Puerto Rico, San Francisco and Washington.

Spanish Tourist Office
666 Fifth Avenue, 35th Floor, New York, NY 10103
Tel: (212) 265 8822 or (1 888) 657 7246 (toll free; USA only). Fax: (212) 265 8864. E-mail: oetny@tourspain.es
Web site: <http://www.okspain.org>
Offices also in: Chicago, Los Angeles and Miami.

Embassy of the United States of America
Serrano 75, 28006 Madrid, Spain
Tel: (91) 587 2200. Fax: (91) 587 2303.
Web site: <http://www.embusa.es>

Embassy of the Kingdom of Spain
74 Stanley Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1M 1P4
Tel: (613) 747 2252. Fax: (613) 744 1224.
E-mail: spain@DocuWeb.ca
Web site: <http://www.docuweb.ca/spainincanada>
Consulates General in: Montréal and Toronto.

Spanish Tourist Office
2 Bloor Street West, 34th Floor, Suite 3402, Toronto, Ontario M4W 3E2
Tel: (416) 961 3131. Fax: (416) 961 1992. E-mail: toronto@tourspain.es
Web site: <http://www.tourspain.toronto.on.ca>

Canadian Embassy
Edificio Goya, Calle Nunez de Balboa 35, 28001 Madrid, Spain
Tel: (91) 423 3250. Fax: (91) 423 3251.
Web site: <http://www.canada-es.org>
Consulates in: Barcelona and Málaga.

Country dialling code: 34.

General

Area: 504,782 sq km (194,897 sq miles).

Population: 39,371,147 (1998).

Population Density: 78.0 per sq km.

Capital: Madrid. Population: 5,091,336 (1998).

Geography: Spain shares the Iberian peninsula with Portugal and is bounded 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: Constitutional monarchy since 1978. Head of State: King Juan Carlos I since 1975. Head of Government: José María Aznar López since 1996.

Language: Spanish (Castilian), Catalan, Galician and Basque.

Religion: Roman Catholic majority.

Time: Mainland Spain/Balearics: GMT + 1 (GMT + 2 from last Sunday in March to Saturday before last Sunday in October).

The Canary Islands: GMT (GMT + 1 from last Sunday in March to Saturday before last Sunday in October).

Electricity: 220 volts AC, 50Hz. Generally, round 2-pin plugs and screw-type lamp fittings are in use.

Communications:

Telephone: IDD is available. Country code: 34. Outgoing international code: 00. 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, Las Palmas 928, Málaga and Torremolinos 95, Santander 942, Seville 95, Tenerife 922 and Valencia 96.

Mobile telephone: GSM 1800/900 networks available. Roaming agreements exist with all major networks. Coverage is good throughout the country. Main network providers include Airtel (web site: <http://www.airtel.es/principal.htm>), Telefonica (web site: <http://www.movistar.tsm.es/home.htm>) and Retevision.

Fax: Most post offices have services. Facilities are also generally available at 4- and 5-star hotels, especially those catering for the business and conference traveller.

Internet/E-mail: There are a variety of internet cafés in most urban areas. Main ISPs include World Online Empresa (web site: <http://www.readysoft.es/rs>).

Telegram: Facilities are available at main post offices. A 24-hour service is available in Madrid at Plaza de Cibeles; in Barcelona at Plaza Antonio Lopez; in Bilbao at 15 Calle Alameda Urquijo.

Post: There are efficient internal and international postal services to all countries. Airmail within Europe usually takes around five days. Poste Restante facilities are available at main post offices.

Press: The English-language daily is The Iberian Daily Sun. Local newspapers published in English include the Majorca Daily Bulletin and the English-language edition of Sur (weekly). Spanish dailies with large circulations include ABC, Diario 16, El País and El Mundo.

BBC World Service and Voice of America frequencies: From time to time these change.

BBC: MHz17.7112.109.4106.195

Voice of America: MHz15.2121.6611.979.771.20

3 PASSPORT

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

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 6 months including 90 days beyond the planned stay required by all except the following:

- (a) 1. nationals of EU countries with valid national ID cards;
- (b) nationals of Andorra, Liechtenstein, Malta, Monaco and Switzerland holding valid national ID cards.

Note: 2. It is advisable to have a return ticket, but not obligatory. If a visitor is not in possession of a return ticket, proof of sufficient means of support may be required.

VISAS: Required by all except the following for stays of up to 90 days:

- (a) nationals referred to in the chart above;
- (b) nationals of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Brunei, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Korea (Rep. of), Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Poland, San Marino, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Switzerland, Uruguay, Vatican City and Venezuela;
- (c) 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 Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Congo (Dem. Rep.), Ethiopia, Ghana, Iran, Iraq, Liberia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia and Sri Lanka who always require a transit visa). As the preceding list is liable to change at short notice, 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. Short-stay: £15.50 for 1-30 days and £18.60 for 31-90 days (single-entry); £21.70 (double- or multiple- entry). Transit: £6.90. Note: Spouses and children of EU nationals (providing spouse's passport and the original marriage certificate is produced), and nationals of some other countries, receive their visas free of charge (enquire at Embassy for details).

Validity: Short-stay (single- and multiple-entry): valid for 6 months from date of issue for a stay of maximum 90 days per entry. Transit (single- and multiple-entry): valid for a maximum of 5 days per entry, including the day of arrival. Visas cannot be extended and a new application must be made each time.

Application to: Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy); see address section. 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).

Application requirements: (a) 1 application form. (b) 4 passport-size photos. (c) Valid passport with 1 full blank page. (d) Return travel tickets or itinerary and proof of payment for tickets. (e) Proof of purpose of visit. (f) Confirmed accommodation. (g) A stamped, self-addressed, registered envelope if applying by post. (h) Evidence of sufficient funds for stay. (i) Letter from employer; or accountant, solicitor, bank manager or Chamber of Commerce if self-employed. Students should submit proof of attendance. (j) Fee.

Business: (a)-(j) and, (h) Written invitation from company or organisation in Spain.

Note: Requirements for visas vary according to nationality, passport, travel document used and the purpose and duration of the trip. For more information, contact the Consulate (or Consular section at Embassy); see address section.

Working days required: Between 2 days and 6 weeks, depending on nationality. Applications from nationals of the following countries must apply in person, and these applications will take 3 weeks or longer: Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Burundi, China (PR), CIS, Congo (Dem. Rep.), Guinea-Bissau, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Korea (DPR), Lebanon, Libya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sudan, Surinam, Syria, Vietnam and Yemen.

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

4 MONEY

Currency: Peseta (Pta). Notes are in denominations of Pta10,000, 5000, 2000 and 1000. Coins are in denominations of Pta500, 200, 100, 50, 25, 10, 5 and 1.

Single European currency (Euro): The Euro is now the official currency of 12 EU member states (including Spain), although it is currently only used as 'written money' (cheques, bank transactions, credit cards, etc). The first Euro coins and notes will be introduced in January 2002; the Spanish Peseta will still be in circulation until July 1 2002, when it will be completely replaced by the Euro. 1 Euro = Pta166.386.

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. If buying pesetas in advance, note that rates of exchange at many UK banks depend on the denominations of Spanish currency being bought or sold. Check with banks for details and current rates.

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

Travellers cheques: International travellers cheques and Eurocheques are widely accepted. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in Pounds Sterling or a major European currency.

Exchange rate indicators

The following figures are included as a guide to the movements of the Peseta against Sterling and the US Dollar:

Date May '00 Aug '00 Nov '00 Feb

'01 £1.00=276.75 269.72 280.86 264.53 \$1.00=185.37 179.77 194.01 181.15

The following figures are included as a guide to the movements of the Euro against Sterling and the US Dollar:

Date May '00 Aug '00 Nov '00 Feb '01 1 Euro=£0.60 £0.62 £0.59 £0.62 1 Euro=\$0.89 \$0.93 \$0.86 \$0.92

Currency restrictions: The import and export of local currency is subject to declaration if the amount exceeds Pta1,000,000 and the amount exported must not exceed the amount declared on arrival. The import and export of foreign currency is unlimited, but should be declared if the quantity exceeds Pta1,000,000 per person per journey, to avoid difficulties on leaving Spain.

Banking hours: 0900-1400 Monday to Friday, 0900-1300 Saturday (except during the summer).

5 DUTY FREE

The following items may be imported into Spain without incurring customs duty by passengers aged 17 years or older arriving from countries outside the EU:

200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 250g tobacco; 1 litre of spirits if exceeding 22% volume or 2 litres of alcoholic beverage not exceeding 22% volume; 2 litres of wine; 250ml eau de toilette and 50g of perfume; 500g of coffee or 200g of coffee extract; 100g of tea or 40g of tea extract; gifts up to the value of approximately Pta6200 (approximately Pta5000 for children under 15 years of age).

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 15 EU member states. Although 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

The following public holidays are celebrated throughout Spain:

Jan 1 2001 New Year's Day. Jan 6 Epiphany. Apr 13 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 2002 New Year's Day. Jan 6 Epiphany. Mar 29 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.

The following dates are also celebrated as regional public holidays (may vary from year to year): Mar 1 Andalucía and Balearic Islands. Mar 19 all except Andalucía, Asturias, Canary Islands, Cataluña and La Rioja. Apr 5 Cataluña, Valencia, Navarra, País Vasco and La Rioja. Apr 23 Aragón and Castilla-Léon. May 17 Galicia. May 31 Castile La Mancha. Jun 9 La Rioja and Murcia. Jun 24

Cataluña. Jul 26 Canary Islands. Jul 28 Cantabria. Aug 16 Andalucía, Asturias, Canarias, Madrid, Ceuta and Melilla. Sep 8 Asturias and Extremadura. Sep 11 Cataluña. Sep 15 Cantabria. Oct 9 Valencia. Dec 27 Balearic Islands.

7 HEALTH

	<i>Special Precautions</i>	<i>Certificate Required</i>
Yellow Fever	No	No
Cholera	No	No
Typhoid and Polio	No	-
Malaria	No	-
Food and Drink	No	-

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: There is a reciprocal health agreement with the UK. Medical treatment provided by state scheme doctors at state scheme hospitals and health centres (ambulatorios) is free to UK citizens if in possession of form E111. Health insurance is required for private medical care. Prescribed medicines and dental treatment must be paid for by all visitors.

Travel - International

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

AIR: Spain's national airline is IBERIA (IB).

Approximate flight times: From London to Barcelona is 2 hours; to Ibiza is 2 hours 20 minutes; to Madrid is 2 hours 15 minutes and to Málaga is 2 hours 40 minutes. From Los Angeles to Madrid is 13 hours. From New York to Madrid is 7 hours 25 minutes. From Sydney to Madrid is 29 hours 5 minutes.

International airports: Madrid (MAD) (Barajas) is 13km (8 miles) northeast of the city. Coach service departs to the city every 20 minutes (0455-0130) and underground services run every five minutes (0630-0130). Taxi service is available. Airport facilities include restaurants and bars (0700-2400), bank, several car hire offices, hotel reservation and tourist information desks, and outgoing duty-free shop.

Barcelona (BCN) (del Prat) is 13km (8 miles) southwest of the city. Bus service to the city departs every 15 minutes (0700-2300). Rail service is every 30 minutes (0645-1015). Taxi service to the city is available. Airport facilities include 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. Coach service runs to the city (0700-2335). A taxi service is available to the city. There is a taxi connection between Alicante and Valencia Airport. Airport facilities include a duty-free shop, bank, bureau de change, car hire and restaurant.

Bilbao (BIO) is 9km (6 miles) north of the city. A new airport terminal, control tower and other improvements were completed late November 2000. Bus and taxi services to the city are

available. Airport facilities include a restaurant, duty-free shop, tourist information desk and car hire.

Málaga (AGP) is 11km (7 miles) southwest of the city. Buses run every 30 minutes (0700-1030). Train service runs every 30 minutes (0700-1040). Taxi service to the city is available. Airport facilities include duty-free shop, bank, restaurant and car hire.

Santiago de Compostela (SCQ) is 10km (6 miles) northeast of the city. Buses and taxis are available to the city centre.

Seville (SVQ) is 12km (7 miles) from the city. Taxis are available to the city centre.

Valencia (VLC) (Manises) is 10km (6 miles) from the city. Taxis are available to the city centre. Airport facilities include several car hire firms, bank, restaurant, bar and duty-free shop.

SEA: Brittany Ferries (tel: 0990 360 360; web site: <http://www.brittany-ferries.com>) operates a service to Santander (on the north coast) from Plymouth (journey time - 24 hours). P&O European Ferries (tel: 0870 242 4999; web site: <http://www.poef.com>) operates a twice-weekly service from Portsmouth to Bilbao.

RAIL: There are direct trains between Madrid-Paris and Madrid-Lisbon, as well as Barcelona-Paris, Barcelona-Zürich-Milan and Barcelona-Geneva. These services are called Talgo, Estrella or Train-Hotel. On other international services to and from Spain, a change of train is necessary. Motorail services run between Paris and Madrid. Travelling from the UK, the quickest way is to travel by Eurostar through the Channel Tunnel to Paris (travel time - 3 hours) and, from there, to Spain. For further information and reservations contact Eurostar Enquiries, Eurostar House, Waterloo Station, London SE1 8SE (tel: (01233) 617 599; (travel agents) or (0990) 186 186 (members of the public); web site: <http://www.eurostar.com>); or Rail Europe (tel: (0990) 848 848).

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). A number of coach operators offer services to Spain. In the UK, Eurolines, departing from Victoria Coach Station in London, serves more than 20 destinations in Spain. For further information, contact Eurolines, 4 Cardiff Road, Luton LU1 1PP (tel: (01582) 404 511; fax: (01582) 400 694; e-mail: welcomed@eurolinesuk.com; web site: <http://www.eurolines.com>). See below for information on documentation and traffic regulations.

Travel - Internal

AIR: Domestic flights are run by IBERIA (IB), Spanair and Air Europa. Scheduled flights connect all main towns as well as to 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 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 3 hours and runs twice a day. For further information, contact Trasmediterránea (tel: (91) 423 8500; fax: (91) 423 8555; web site: <http://www.trasmediterranea.es>) or their representative in the UK: Southern Ferries (tel: 020 7491 4968; fax: 020 7491 3502).

RAIL: The state-owned company RENFE (web site: <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 Ultima Travel (tel: (0151) 339 6171; fax: (0151) 339 9199); European Rail Travel (tel: (020) 7387 0444; fax: (020) 7387 0888) and Freedom Rail (tel: (01252) 728506; fax: (01252) 728504).

Discount Rail Travel: The Spanish rail system is one of the cheapest in Europe and various discounts are available. Travellers can purchase a Spanish Railways Tourist Card which allows unlimited travel from three to ten days within two months and is valid for on all RENFE long-distance trains, with the exception of high-speed ones (the Ave and Talgo 200). No supplements are payable other than for sleeping facilities on overnight services. There are no selling points in Europe but travellers may obtain the card at major railways stations in Spain, on presentation of their passport. Travellers can also enjoy savings by using any one of the European passes available, such as the Euro Domino Freedom Pass, which enables holders to make flexible travel arrangements. The pass is available in 19 European countries, but must be bought in the country of residence for which a valid passport or other form of ID has to be shown. In the UK, this pass is available from Rail Europe 179 Picadilly, London, W1 (tel: (0990) 848 848). The tickets are valid for 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or 8 days within one month. Also available from Rail Europe, the Inter-Rail Pass allows up to 50% reductions for 2nd class rail travel in 29 countries; the pass is now also available for those aged over 26 (though they pay approximately 40% more than those aged under 26). The Rail Senior Plus card entitles senior citizens to 25% discount on rail travel into and out of Spain even during peak hours. This discount does not apply when only travelling internally. The card is available from most British Rail stations.

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 connects Madrid and Seville in under three hours, with 12 services each way via Córdoba. Some services also stop at Ciudad Real and Puerto Llano (La Mancha). The Talgo 200 connects Madrid and Malaga thrice-daily in less than five hours. Holders of most of the cards and passes mentioned above qualify for discounts, albeit less substantial than the rates quoted above.

Tourist Trains: The Transcantábrico and Andalus Express 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 address section).

ROAD: There are more than 150,000km (95,000 miles) of roads. Motorways are well-maintained and connect Spain north-south. Tolls are in operation on some sections and have to be paid in Pesetas. 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. Car hire: All major car hire companies are represented in major cities. 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'. The speed limit for motorways is 130kph (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: EU pink format licences are accepted. Third Party insurance is also required and a Green Card is strongly recommended.

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, Valencia, Bilbao and Madrid 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 2-3% tip is customary.

JOURNEY TIMES: The following chart gives approximate journey times (in hours and minutes) from Madrid to other major cities/towns in Spain.

	Air	Road	Rail
Barcelona	1.00	8.00	8.00
Bilbao	0.50	5.00	6.00
Canary Is.	2.30	-	-
Málaga	1.00	8.30	7.00
Mallorca	1.00	-	-
Palma	1.10	*6.00	*5.00
Santander	0.50	5.00	6.00
Seville	0.55	6.00	7.00
Valencia	0.50	5.00	4.00

NOTE: *: Plus 9 hours by boat.

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 cafeteria. Detailed information is available from the Federación Española de Hoteles, Orense 32, 28020 Madrid (tel: (91) 556 7112; fax: (91) 556 7361; e-mail: federahoteles@ipf.es).

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 or pensiones, classified from 1 to 3 stars.

The following is an outline of the facilities available in the hotel and hostel categories.

5-star hotels: Air conditioning in all public rooms and bedrooms, central heating, two or more lifts, lounges, bar, garage (within towns), hairdressers, all bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms and telephone, some suites with sitting rooms, and laundry and ironing service.

4-star hotels: Air conditioning in every room, unless climatic conditions require central heating or refrigeration only, the minimum of two hotel lounges, 75% of the bedrooms with en-suite bathroom and the rest with shower, washbasin, WC and hot and cold running water, laundry and ironing service, telephone in every room, garage parking (in towns), lift and bar.

3-star hotels: Permanently installed heating or air-conditioning according to climate, lounge, lift, bar, 50% of the bedrooms have en-suite bathrooms, 50% have shower, washbasin, WC and hot and cold running water, laundry and ironing service, telephone in every room.

2-star hotels: Permanently installed heating or air conditioning according to climate, lounge, lift in buildings of two or more storeys, bar, 15% of rooms with en-suite bathrooms, 45% with shower, washbasin and WC and the rest with shower, washbasin and hot and cold running water, one common bathroom to every six rooms, laundry and ironing service, telephone in every room.

1-star hotels: Permanently installed heating, lift in buildings of more than four storeys, lounge, 25% of bedrooms with shower, washbasin and WC, 25% with shower and washbasin, the rest have washbasin and hot and cold running water, one common bathroom every seven rooms, laundry and ironing service, telephone on every floor.

3-star hostels: Permanently installed heating, lift in buildings of more than four storeys, lounge, 5% of bedrooms with en-suite bathroom, 10% with shower, washbasin and WC, 85% with shower and washbasin and hot and cold running water, one common bathroom to every eight rooms, laundry and ironing service, telephone in every room.

2-star hostels: Permanently installed heating, lift in buildings of five storeys or more, lounge or comfortable lobby, one common bathroom to every ten rooms, all bedrooms with washbasin and hot and cold water, general telephone.

1-star hostels: All rooms with washbasins and cold running water; one bathroom for every 12 rooms; general telephone.

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 direct to the hotels, lists of which may be obtained from the Spanish National Tourist Office (see address section), 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): Each Parador is a hotel 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. Advance booking is advised. For further information, contact Paradores de Turismo, Calle Requena 3, Madrid 28013 (tel: (91) 516 6666 (25 lines); fax: (91) 516 6657/8; web site: <http://www.parador.es>). Alternatively, contact the UK representative, Keytel International, 402 Edgware Road, London W2 1ED (tel: (020) 7616 0300; fax: (020) 7616 0317; e-mail: paradors@keytel.co.uk);.

Hosterias: These are traditional restaurants, decorated in the style of the region in which they are situated and serving excellent meals.

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 numerous campsites throughout the country, again covering a wide quality and price range. Permission from the local police and landowner is essential for off-site camping provided there are not more than three tents/caravans or ten campers in any one place. Regulations demand that off-site camping is in isolated areas only.

The Spanish Federation of Camping has recently opened a new booking centre. For further information, contact ANCE, San Bernardo 9799, 28015 Madrid (tel: (91) 448 1234).

YOUTH HOSTELS: The Spanish Youth Hostel Network (REAJ) is the representative in Spain on the International Youth Hostel Federation and there are currently 188 registered youth hostels throughout Spain. For further information, contact the REAJ central booking network in Barcelona, C Rocafort 116-122, 08015 Barcelona (tel: (934) 838 347; fax: (934) 838 350); or in Madrid, Fernando el Católico 88, 28606 Madrid (tel: (913) 477 700; fax: (914) 020 194), there is a booking and cancellation charge of 725ptas. The YHA international booking office in England, (tel: (01629) 581418), can offer further advice if required.

9 RESORTS & EXCURSIONS

The Kingdom of Spain occupies four-fifths of the Iberian peninsula and is a land of great geographical and cultural diversity with much to offer the tourist. Spain's beach resorts on the south and northwest Mediterranean coasts continue to attract sunseekers, but increasingly tourists are discovering the fascinations of an ancient and beautiful Spain away from the **beaches. There is a huge variety of landscape in Spain:** deciduous and coniferous forests, arid plains, salt marshes, rocky bays, mountains, medieval cities, ancient rivers and mountain streams, and everywhere castles, palaces and other reminders of Spain's rich history.

The wide range of influences on Spanish architecture through the ages makes it difficult to isolate a style and define it as typically Spanish; major influences include Roman, Visigoth, Romanesque, Moorish, Byzantine, Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque and Art Nouveau styles. Throughout Spain a sense of the historical traditions that have shaped the country is reflected in the castles, churches, monuments and houses.

Certain examples defining the pure style of these influences can be seen: Roman remains at Italica, Sagunto, Tarragona, Mérida (theatre and amphitheatre), Segovia (aqueduct) and Alcuia; Moorish architecture at Córdoba (the Great Mosque), Seville (the Alcázar, the Giralda tower) and, above all, at Granada (the Alhambra). The Mudéjar style, developed from the interaction of Christian and Muslim ideas, can be seen in the finely detailed ceramic work at Teruel. Gothic churches from the early, middle and late periods can be found at Burgos, Toledo, León, Barcelona, Girona, Pamplona, Segovia and Seville, and fine examples of the Baroque style at Salamanca and Valladolid.

The majority of castles adopted as the standard image of the country date from the 15th century. The 16th, 17th and 18th centuries saw the construction of many beautiful palaces and religious and civic buildings, adding to an already rich architectural heritage. The 19th and early 20th centuries added only moderately to this heritage, although the work of Antonio Gaudí is exceptional (see Barcelona section).

Spanish wildlife is also enormously diverse. Amongst the more exotic mammals are: bears, ibexes and chamois in the foothills of the great northern mountains; wild boars, lynxes, mongooses and even wild camels on the marshes and sand dunes of the Coto de Doñana (also home to chameleons, tarantulas, scorpions, tortoises and terrapins); and wolves in Murcia and perhaps elsewhere. There are resident populations of flamingoes, ibises, spoonbills, bee-eaters and golden orioles in the Coto de Doñana; hoopoes, bustards, owls and eagles may be seen throughout the country; vultures inhabit the highest peaks, including, in the Pyrenees, rare lammergeiers - large, shy birds that drop scavenged bones from a great height onto rocks to break them open and release the nutritious marrow. Several major migration routes cross Spain and, at the right time of year, the skies are filled with millions of birds of many different species heading north from Africa. The white stork is amongst those that stop to breed and in spring and summer many a church tower is capped by a large, shaggy nest. There are excellent

opportunities for sea and river fishing. Salmon abound in the inlets along the northwest coast and most rivers and streams have healthy populations of trout.

Spain's 52 provinces have, since 1983, been administered as 17 Autonomous Communities, each with a degree of self-government. For the purposes of this section, however, the country has **been divided into eight regions, which do not necessarily reflect political or cultural boundaries:** Andalucia, Ceuta & Melilla, including the Costa de Almería, the Costa del Sol and the Costa de la Luz; Castile/La Mancha & Extremadura; Madrid; Castile/León & La Rioja; The Northern Region, including the Basque Country, Cantabria, Asturias and Galicia; Navarre & Aragon; Catalonia, including the Costa Brava and the Costa Dorada; and Valencia & Murcia, including the Costa del Azahar, Costa Blanca and the Costa Calida.

The regional map below gives the frontiers of these regions; the dotted lines denote Autonomous Communities. There is also a separate section on Spain's Ski Resorts.

Information on The Balearic Islands and The Canary Islands, both integral parts of the Kingdom of Spain, may be found in separate sections.

Andalucia, Ceuta & Melilla

Including the Costa de Almería, the Costa del Sol and the Costa de la Luz.

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.

INLAND: INLAND: 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 and St Ferdinand are buried here. Of great importance also is the Alcázar, the palace-fortress of the Arab kings, together with Giralda and Torre de Oro, reputedly once covered in gold leaf, and the River Guadalquivir. 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: Córdoba to the northeast has further relics of the Moorish Empire, the most spectacular being the 8th-century mosque with painted columns and arches. The building is so magnificent that it has been preserved through the changes of religion.

Granada: Granada contains probably the greatest tribute to the Moorish Empire in Spain, the Alhambra. This fortress palace, home of the Moorish kings, defies accurate description for its sumptuous elegance and beauty. An old renovated Moorish house at the foot of the Alhambra has been converted into old-fashioned Arab baths. It is surrounded by the exquisite gardens of the Generalife, whose ponds and fountains help to cool the hot summer air. The Alhambra is possibly the single most splendid building in a country bearing relics of numerous epochs and civilisations. Granada's magnificent cathedral houses the tombs of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. Granada operates a tourist card system where, for 2,500Ptas, visitors are given access to six major city monuments and free use of local buses.

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 Pradollano (both in the Solynieve region).

Jaén: Jaén, capital of the northwestern Sierra Nevada, is an ancient town rich in historic buildings and art treasures; the Provincial Museum, the Cathedral and the Castle of Santa Catalina are among them. Baeza, 48km (30 miles) from Jaén, displays architectural styles which span Romanesque to Renaissance. Baeza as a whole has an air of nobility and strength; the aristocratic design and countless nobles' mansions are enhanced in appearance by the prevailing golden hue of the stone.

Barely 10km (6 miles) from Baeza and 58km (36 miles) from Jaén lies Ubeda, with Renaissance palaces to be seen on all sides.

COSTA DE ALMERIA: COSTA DE ALMERIA: To the east of the Costa del Sol is the province of Almería. The capital of the same name is a Roman port with many Moorish-style houses, dominated by two castles. It is surrounded by subtropical vegetation and hills and is situated within a wide bay. Attractions in the town include the 16th-century Cathedral, the Church of Santiago el Viejo and the Moorish Alcazaba.

Resorts on the Costa de Almería: Resorts on the Costa de Almería Adra, Roquetas, Cabo de Gata, Aguadulce, Mojácar and San José.

COSTA DEL SOL: COSTA DEL SOL: This extends along almost all of the Mediterranean coast of Andalucía from the Costa de Almería to Tarifa in the south. The Costa del Sol is a densely populated tourist area mainly because of the fine beaches and picturesque towns.

The main city of this area, Málaga, lies only a few miles from the famous tourist resorts of Marbella and Torremolinos. Over 160km (100 miles) of coastline ensure that, despite its popularity, it is still possible to find a relatively uncrowded beach. 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 into the hinterland to the old Spanish mountain town of Ronda, spectacularly situated on a gorge in the Sierra de Ronda.

Resorts on the Costa del Sol: Resorts on the Costa del Sol Calahonda, Torre del Mar, El Palo, Málaga, Nerja, Torremolinos, Benalmádena Costa, Fuengirola/Mijas, Marbella, San Pedro de Alcántara and Estepona.

COSTA DE LA LUZ: COSTA DE LA LUZ: This runs along the southern Atlantic coast of Spain between Tarifa and the Portuguese border, featuring long sandy beaches and unspoilt sand dunes.

From Algeciras, ferries run to Tangier and Ceuta on the north African coast, as well as to the Canary Islands. Taking the road from Algeciras to Cádiz is one of the most enjoyable drives in the country, offering spectacular views of the Straits of Gibraltar, the North African coastline and the Atlas Mountains. Cádiz is characterised by palm trees, look-out towers and white-fronted houses. It is one of the oldest towns in Iberia, founded by the Phoenicians around 1000BC. Less than half an hour away is the sherry town of Jerez, housing the great bodegas whose product has linked the town with England since importation of 'sherris-sack' into this country began in the 16th century.

In the province of Huelva is the town of El Rocío where one of the most important Spanish festivals is held, that of the Virgin of El Rocío. Also of interest are the beautiful stalactite caves of Gruta de las Maravillas in Aracena in the north of Huelva province and the national park, Coto de Doñana (see general introduction).

Resorts on the Costa de la Luz: Resorts on the Costa de la Luz Barbate, Algeciras, Tarifa, Conil de la Frontera, Chiclana de la Frontera, Cádiz, El Puerto de Santa María, Rota, Chipiona, Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Torre la Higuera, Mazagón, Punta Umbría, El Rompido, La Antilla and Isla Cristina.

THE AFRICAN ENCLAVES: Ceuta: 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 by 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: 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.

Balearic & Canary Islands

See separate sections.

Castile/La Mancha & Extremadura

This inland region lies between Madrid and Andalucía. Bordered by mountains to the north, east and south, it is irrigated by two large rivers, the Tajo and the Guadiana, 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: CASTILE/LA MANCHA: To the south of Madrid is the ancient Spanish capital of Toledo. Rising above the plains and a gorge of the River 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 Conde Orgaz, is preserved in the Santo Tome Church.

Guadalajara: 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: 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: 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: EXTREMADURA: This region consists of the provinces of Cáceres and Badajoz. Cáceres was founded in the 1st 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 town of Trujillo, the birthplace of the conquistador Pizarro. Also in this province is Plasencia, founded in the 12th century, which has a beautiful medieval aqueduct, cathedral and a 15th-century convent which 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.

Madrid

The capital city Madrid, in the region of the same name, is a cosmopolitan metropolis with many theatres, cinemas and opera houses and over 50 museums and art galleries. These include the Prado, one of the most celebrated and comprehensive art galleries in the world (see below), and the Royal Palace, set in a luxurious 18th-century garden, housing paintings, tapestries, carpets, armour and an outstanding collection of clocks. The popular centre of Madrid is the Puerta del Sol, from which ten streets radiate. To its south is the site of 'Kilometre Zero', a stone slab from which all distances are measured in Spain. A short walk southwest of the Puerta del Sol leads to the Plaza Mayor, a spacious square surrounded by arcades sheltering small shops. From here one can explore an area which still has some of the flavour of Old Madrid.

The Prado Museum has one of the most remarkable art collections in the world, including many supreme works of art acquired by Spanish monarchs. Works by El Greco, Murillo, Goya, Velázquez, Titian, Raphael, Botticelli, Veronese, Tintoretto, Breughel and Bosch can be found here. Plans are being made to assemble a collection by Spain's most famous 20th-century artist, Pablo Picasso. Guernica, one of his greatest masterpieces - a monument to the people's suffering during the Civil War - has now been returned to Spain and hangs in the Centro Cultural Reina Sofia. The Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum housed in the Villahermosa Palace opposite the Prado Museum is, with its 800 works of art, one of the largest private collections in the world.

EXCURSIONS: There are many places of interest within easy reach of the city. The great Monastery of San Lorenzo del Escorial is situated about 40km (25 miles) north of Madrid, and includes a church, a royal palace, a monastery, a mausoleum and a famous library. The Escorial was built in 1563-84 by Philip II and is now a burial place of Spanish kings and queens. 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 reaching 152m (500ft) into the sky. Franco conceived this dramatic monument as a tribute to those who died in the Civil War, and is buried here. Alcalá de Henares is the birthplace of Cervantes and Catherine of Aragon. Aranjuez is famous for its summer palace and the Casita del Labrador, situated near the banks of the cooling River Tagus, on whose fertile soil are grown the asparagus and strawberries for which the town is also renowned.

September sees the Ferias Mayores (Great Fairs) and the Easter processions of Semana Santa, both typically extravagant and colourful affairs. The Guadarrama region offers winter sports. For further information see the Ski Resorts section.

Castile/León & La Rioja

The inland region of Castile and León lies to the north and northwest of Madrid and occupies the northern part of the Meseta Central, the plateau that covers much of central Spain. As with the Madrid region, Castile and León is hemmed in by high mountains to the north, east and south and is 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.

CASTILE LA VIEJA: CASTILE LA VIEJA: Avila is the highest provincial capital in the country, its medieval quality retained and enhanced by the magnificence of its surrounding walls. The celebrated Convent of St Therese the Mystic is here.

Segovia: Segovia has a working Roman aqueduct, one of the best preserved structures of its kind in the world. There are many unspoilt Romanesque churches, dominated by the cathedral and by the Arab Alcazar. The turrets soaring from its rocky outcrop are said to be the inspiration for Walt Disney's fairytale castles.

The province of Soria has a large number of archaeological remains of the Celtiberian and Roman civilisations, and many of these may 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: Burgos was the birthplace of the great knight El Cid, the embodiment of a strong, romantic tradition of chivalry and honour. His tomb, and that of his beloved Dona Jimena, can be seen in the gothic cathedral in Burgos.

Palencia: 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 cathedral is one of the finest late-Gothic buildings in the country. The city has several other late-medieval buildings and an archaeological museum.

The city of Valladolid is the capital of a province rich in castles and other ancient buildings. It is famous for its lush gardens, which provide a refreshing contrast to the aridity of much of the surrounding landscape, and also for its Ferias Mayores (Great Fairs) in September, and its Easter Procession. Book early if a visit is planned at either of these times. The city is also associated **with four of the most famous names in the history of the Iberian peninsula:** Columbus (although not a Spaniard) died here in 1506, and his house can be visited; so too can the old home of Cervantes, which has now been turned into a museum; and Ferdinand and Isabella were married here in 1469, bringing together the crowns of Castile and Aragon. The wonderfully preserved castle of Peñafiel houses the new wine museum of Ribera del Duero (one of the main regions for wine production) and commands stunning scenic views. The city also has a beautiful medieval cathedral and a university.

LEON: LEON: The 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. 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 7th 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. It is situated on the swiftly flowing Tormes River and has many superb old buildings, weathered to a golden-brown hue. The most famous of these is the Cathedral, built between the early-16th and the mid-18th centuries and reflecting the styles of architecture

prevalent during the various stages of its construction. The university buildings and the fine houses around the Plaza Mayor are also particularly striking. The fiesta in September is very popular and bookings should be made well in advance.

La Rioja: La Rioja is a region 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

Including the Basque Country, Cantabria, Asturias and Galicia.

This region consists of the northwestern part of the country and the northern coastal region stretching to the French frontier. The eastern coastal area adjacent to the French border is now made up of fashionable tourist beaches and picturesque small towns.

THE BASQUE COUNTRY: THE BASQUE COUNTRY: The provinces of Guipúzcoa, Vizcaya and Alava form the Basque provinces, occupying a coastal position in the eastern part of the Cantabrian Mountains. The economy of this fertile region is strongly based on agricultural produce, although recently the area has also become one of Spain's foremost industrial areas. The Basques themselves are a very ancient pre-Indo-European race and the origins of their language have baffled etymologists for centuries. The area managed to maintain a considerable degree of independence until the 19th century.

The main city of the region is Bilbao, founded in the early 14th century. The Old Town has a Gothic cathedral and an attractive town hall. Bilbao's amazing new Guggenheim Museum has been hailed as a masterpiece of 20th century architecture and houses many great works of modern art. 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 San Sebastián and Bilbao and 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.

CANTABRIA: CANTABRIA: Although the region of Cantabria is historically in Old Castile, owing to its position on the coast, it has been included in this section. The historical capital of Santander is 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. The latter makes a convenient base for expeditions to the highest of the Cantabrian Mountains, the vulture-haunted Picos de Europa (actually in Asturias), several attractive beach resorts such as Comillas and San Vicente, and the Caves of Altamira, with detailed wall paintings dating back 13,000 years. Admission is now very limited and must be applied for. However, 100m away there is Neocueva, a new cave offering a true reproduction of the prehistoric original. Solares is a town in this region noted for the therapeutic qualities of its mineral waters. There are several pleasant resorts, including Santillana del Mar, a completely preserved medieval town.

ASTURIAS: ASTURIAS: This formerly independent principality contains two towns of note; Oviedo, the capital, and the port and industrial centre of Gijón. The chief interest in Oviedo is the

small, old central area, dominated by the cathedral. The port of Gijón has a large and very popular beach and there are others nearby.

GALICIA: GALICIA: Comprising the provinces of La Coruña, Lugo, Orense and Pontevedra, 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 at the river-mouths. The dominant building material is granite.

La Coruña: La Coruña (Corunna) is the largest town in this region and was possibly founded by the Phoenicians. Since then it has enjoyed a tempestuous history. Its most attractive feature is the Ciudad Vega on the north spur of the harbour. The famous pilgrimage town of Santiago de Compostela is also in the province; for further information, see below under the section on The Way of St James. 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 6th 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: 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, July 25 (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 which may be followed, both in Spain and elsewhere in Europe.

NORTH ATLANTIC COASTAL RESORTS: NORTH ATLANTIC COASTAL RESORTS: The region's coastline - stretching from the French frontier along the Cantabrian coast to Cap Finisterre and then southwards to the border with Portugal - has many fine beaches which are as yet largely undiscovered. This is at least partly due to the climate being slightly harsher than in the south of the country. The beaches are mostly of fine sand, often surrounded by cliffs and crags. Much of the hinterland is lush, earning the coast of Asturias the title of 'Costa Verde'. In Galicia the rivers have fjord-like estuaries called rías.

Resorts on the North Atlantic Coast: Resorts on the North Atlantic Coast Fuenterrabia, San Sebastián, Orío, Zaráuz, Guetaria, Zumaya, Deva, Motrico, Ondarroa, Lequeitio, Ibaranguelua, Pedernales, Mundaca, Baquio, Gorkiz, Plencia, Sopelana, Algorta, Las Arenas, Abanto y Ciervana, Castro Urdiales, Laredo, Isla, Ajo, Somo, Santander, Santa Cruz de Bezana, Lienes, Miengo, Suances, Cobrecos, Comillas, San Vicente de la Barquera, Pechón, Colombres, Llanes, Ribadesella, Colunga, Villaviciosa, Gijón, Luanco, Salinas, Cudillero, Luarca, Tapia de Casariego, Castropol, Ribadeo, Barreiros, Foz, Ceruo, Jove, Vivero, Vicedo, El Barquero, Ortiguerira, Cedeira, Valdovino, San Martín de Covas, El Ferrol del Caudillo, Cabanas, Mino, Sada, Mera, Santa Cruz, Santa Cristina, La Coruña, Cayón, Malpica, Lage, Camarinas, Finisterre, Corcubión, Carnota, Muros, Noya, Puerto del Son, Santa Eugenia de Ribera, Puebla del Caraminal, Rianjo, Villagarcía

de Arosa, Villanueva de Arosa, Cambados, El Grove, La Toja, Sangenjo, Poyo, Pontevedra, Marín, Bueu, Cangas de Morrazo, Redondela, Vigo, Nigran, Bayona and La Guardia.

MOUNTAIN RESORTS: MOUNTAIN RESORTS: The Cantabrian Range stretches between the Cantabrian Corniche and the Rías Gallegas. The highest peaks are the Picos de Europa (2615m/8579ft), favoured by walkers, climbers and wildlife enthusiasts. Parts of the Cantabrian Range are suitable for winter sports. For more information, see the Ski Resorts section.

Navarre & Aragon

These two former medieval Iberian kingdoms lie southwest of the French border, with the Pyrenees to the northeast. The landscape offers spectacular views from the mountains contrasting with the lush valleys of the lower ground.

NAVARRRE: NAVARRRE: The approximate frontiers of the old strategically placed Kingdom of Navarre still survive in this region of dry, dusty uplands and rich, fertile valleys. Both Navarre and Aragon have been largely ignored by visitors, with a few notable exceptions: one such is Pamplona, once the capital of the Kingdom of Navarre and now the regional capital. It is famous for the Corrida, the 'running of the bulls', at the festival of San Fermín (July). On these days the young men of the town and anyone else who feels sufficiently brave can prove themselves by running in front of a large herd of bulls that virtually stampede through the closed streets of the town. The town was the spiritual home of Ernest Hemingway and is now a very popular tourist attraction. Visitors should book early and expect relatively high prices.

ARAGON: ARAGON: Another old Iberian kingdom, Aragon is geographically a fairly featureless region, with many remote plains. The kingdom rose to prominence in the late 15th century. Many of the kings resided at Zaragoza, now the regional capital. Like most settlements of any size in Aragon, the town is situated in a huerta, a narrow oasis following the course of a river. Zaragoza is a university town, with a medieval cathedral and an excellent museum. 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 on a hill surrounded by the gorges of the Rio Turia. It has a very strong Moorish influence (the last mosque was not closed until ten 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.

THE PYRENEES: THE PYRENEES: There are several mountain resorts in Navarre and Aragón, some of which offer excellent skiing, sometimes for up to six months of the year. For more information, see the Ski Resorts section.

Valencia/Murcia

Including the Costa del Azahar, the Costa Blanca and the Costa Calida.

VALENCIA: VALENCIA: The city of Valencia is famous for its orange groves and is a popular tourist resort with two main beaches, both a short bus ride from the town. The Hemispheric at Valencia's City of Arts and Science Park includes a planetarium, IMAX dome and laserium. The science museum opened at the end of 2000. Valencia also has a 13th-century church which

claims possession of the Holy Grail. The chief attraction is the Fallas (March 15-19), a festival culminating in the burning of papier-mâché effigies satirising famous Spanish figures. There is also a magnificent fireworks display.

THE COSTA DEL AZAHAR: THE COSTA DEL AZAHAR: This extends from Vinaroz along the coast of Castellón province and the Gulf of Valencia to beyond Denia. The region has expansive beaches, but its most outstanding feature is, perhaps, the ancient 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. It is situated on a fertile plain, and is the centre of a thriving trade in citrus fruits.

Resorts along the Costa del Azahar: Resorts along the Costa del Azahar Vinaroz, Benicarlo, Peñíscola, Alcocebre, Oropesa, Benicasim, Valencia, Cullera, Gandia and Oliva.

ALICANTE & THE COSTA BLANCA: ALICANTE & THE COSTA BLANCA: Further south along the coast is Alicante, situated centrally on the Costa Blanca (the White Coast). 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 castles at Elda and Villena, and Elche, where there is a forest of over a million palm trees, Botanical Gardens and the Basilica, where the medieval 'Mystery' passion play takes place every August.

The region of the Costa Blanca has expanded rapidly in recent years and has developed most of the coastal towns between the Peñón de Ifach and Alicante as tourist resorts. Being further south, temperatures are hotter than the Costa Brava and in general the beaches are larger, particularly the beautiful twin bays of Benidorm, the largest and most popular resort. The new theme park at Terramítica attracts a lot of visitors. All resorts are very busy during the summer. One of the many places to visit here is the Peñón de Ifach (Ifach Rock), 5km (3 miles) off the main road past the walled town of Calpe. Approximately 1.5km (1 mile) further on is the 300m (1000ft) monolith of Peñón, surrounded by legend and accessible through a tunnel.

Resorts on the Costa Blanca: Resorts on the Costa Blanca Denia, Javea, Moraira, Calpe, Benidorm, Villajoyosa, Alicante, Los Arenales del Sol, Santa Pola, Guardamar del Segura, Torrevieja, Campoamor, Santiago de la Ribera, La Manga del Mar Menor, Puerto de Mazarrón and Aguilas.

MURCIA & THE COSTA CALIDA: MURCIA & THE COSTA CALIDA: This region lies to the south of Valencia and Alicante and is thinly populated except in the areas around the river valleys. The mountains of Andalucía reach right down to the sea.

Murcia: Murcia, the town, has both a university and a cathedral. During the summer, temperatures can be almost unbearably hot. The most impressive festivals are in Holy Week and during the spring when there is a 'Battle of the Flowers'.

The coastal region of Murcia, the Costa (which is often regarded as being part of the Costa Blanca), has a few resorts. These include Mar Menor, La Unión, Carboneras, Puerto de Mazarrón, Aguilas and the area's main coastal town, Cartagena, founded, as its name implies, by the Carthaginians in 221BC. The museum here has a good collection of Roman and pre-Roman artefacts.

Catalonia

Including the Costa Brava and the Costa Dorada.

Catalonia is a hilly coastal region in Spain's northeast corner, bordering France. It has an ancient culture distinct from those of neighbouring regions and many of the inhabitants speak Catalan, another Romance language. The environs of Barcelona are Spain's industrial and commercial powerhouse, but inland and up the coast, the rocky, forested landscape is largely unspoilt and Catalonia attracts many tourists, mainly to seaside resorts on the Costa Brava and Costa Dorada. Despite its energetic bustle, tourists are also drawn to Barcelona itself, a city of great charm, many fine buildings and a vibrant nightlife. The region is also an important centre for the production of olive oil, wine, almonds and fruit.

Note: The names of cities and sites described in this section are given in Catalan. Where the Spanish (Castilian) name is very different it appears in brackets after the Catalan version.

BARCELONA: BARCELONA: Spain's second-largest city in the country is a major commercial and industrial centre and one of the most important Mediterranean ports. The Barri Gòtic (old town) near the railway station has a museum with a fine collection of Picasso's early sketches. The old cathedral, the Episcopal Palace, the Palau de la Generalitat and the Plaça del Rei have architecture to rival the Baroque splendours of central Europe. The Ramblas, originally the site of the ancient city walls, is now the major promenade area of the city, where one goes to see and be seen. Proceeding from the port towards Plaça Catalunya (the principal square), the atmosphere becomes more sophisticated. The Ramblas are home to food, flower and bird markets and are lined by bookstalls. Beyond Plaça Catalunya, the Eixample (Ensanche), whose name means extension, boasts a wealth of Art Nouveau and Art Deco architecture. Gràcia is a particularly attractive neighbourhood. Museums worth visiting include the Picasso Museum (which has recently been extended to include two medieval palaces of the original site), the Museum of Catalan Art, the Maritime Museum, the Peldralbes Monastery housing a Thyssen collection and the Zoological Museum. Like most towns and cities in Catalonia, Barcelona is famous for its excellent Romanesque art; and of course it contains the most famous examples of the work of the visionary Catalan architect, Antonio Gaudí (see below). The funicular to Tibidabo, the highest of the peaks that enclose Barcelona, and the cable car to Montjuic in the southern suburbs, offer spectacular views over the city. Fun fairs are located on both peaks.

Gaudí was born in the 1850s, and began work at the age of 32 on what is now one of the world's most extraordinary churches, the Sagrada Família in Barcelona. Statues portraying biblical scenes are sculpted into the walls of the building, surrounded by stone palm leaves, strange viney branches and fungus-like vegetation. George Orwell described the church as 'one of the most hideous buildings in the world', and although it is unfinished (Gaudí died while work was still in progress) the people of Barcelona are intensely proud of it. Now a century old, construction still continues. Recent structures added to Gaudí's own work have provoked lively local debate. Other examples of his work are the Casa Batlló (with mask-shaped balconies and an undulating blue roof) and the Casa Mila (an apartment block taking the form of a dragon perched precariously on a melting slab of cheese). Overlooking the city and the port, Parc Güell was conceived as a garden city. It was never completed, but the park features exquisite tiled pavilions and fountains. The walkways stand on curious sculpted pillars and are flanked by throne-like stone seats.

THE COSTA BRAVA: THE COSTA BRAVA: This coast, which begins 65km (40 miles) northeast of Barcelona, is a stretch of spectacular pine-clad rocky coastline interspersed with fine sandy bays and is one of the most famous resort areas in the country. Some places (such as Tossa de Mar) remain relatively unspoilt by the massive influx of holidaymakers and retain the small-town flavour of the original town; others (such as Lloret de Mar), have an intensely developed tourist industry. Summer is very crowded everywhere, but with persistence and a short walk relatively isolated beaches can be found. Coastal ferries operate between most resorts on the Costa Brava. Although most visitors come to the Costa Brava for a relaxing holiday of sun and sea rather than serious sightseeing, there are nevertheless certain points of cultural interest in the area. These

include Girona (Gerona), one of Catalonia's oldest cities with a well-preserved Jewish quarter; Figueres, home of the Salvador Dali Museum; Cadaquès, an enchanting fishing village nestling on the coast about 30 minutes bus drive from Figueres, where Dali lived for many years; and Empúries (Ampurias) with its impressive Graeco-Roman remains.

Resorts on the Costa Brava: Resorts on the Costa Brava Rosas, San Pedro Pescador, San Martín d'Empúries, La Escala, Estarrit, Bagur, Palafrugell, Palamós, Platja d'Aro, S'Agaro, Sant Feliú de Guixols (the market is worth a visit), Tossa de Mar, Lloret de Mar and Blanes.

THE COSTA DORADA: THE COSTA DORADA: This extends south from Barcelona to Tarragona, with fine sandy beaches that are often separated by the road or railway from the interior. The lively and cosmopolitan resort town of Sitges on the Costa Dorada has several museums, in particular the Cav-Ferrat which houses two paintings by El Greco. Off the A2 motorway towards Lleida are two monasteries, the Cistercian Monastery of Santa Cruz dating back to 1159 and, near the ancient medieval town of Montblanc, the Santa María at Poblet. Lleida (Lérida) itself is the capital of a province that includes the wildest, most mountainous area of the Pyrenees. Its wealth of scenery and monuments make it one of the most interesting and attractive areas in Spain. The coastal city of Tarragona is one of the finest examples of a Roman city in existence, virtually built on the Roman plan. The amphitheatre overlooking the sea is well preserved and atmospheric; in addition there is an aqueduct. Just along the coast, Salou boasts the Port-Aventura Theme Park, inaugurated in spring 1995. The town of Manresa has a 14th-century church noted for its stained glass. 60km (37 miles) northwest of Barcelona is Montserrat, the site of a world-famous monastery, the legendary home of the Holy Grail, and the actual home of the famous Black Madonna. Founded in 880, it is set in the 'serrated mountain' landscape 1135m (3725ft) above the Llobregat River valley. There are inspiring views from the monastery and on the mountain walk from the Hermitage of San Jeronimo.

Resorts on the Costa Dorada: Resorts on the Costa Dorada Calella de la Costa, Arenys de Mar, Castelldefels, Sitges, Calafell, Comarruga, Torredembarra, Tarragona, Salou, Cambrils, Miami Playa, Hospital del Infante and San Carlos de la Rapita.

THE PYRENEES: THE PYRENEES: There are several mountain resorts in Catalonia, some of which offer excellent skiing for up to six months of the year. For more information, see the Ski Resorts section.

Ski Resorts

Spain offers many possibilities for a winter sports holiday and in many regions (particularly in the Penibetic Chain) there is a unique opportunity to combine winter sports with coastal sunshine. There are many natural ski-runs and many 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 in particular for winter sports. A brief description of these regions follows, together with a list of major resorts. More detailed information may be found by consulting the many booklets and leaflets published or distributed by the Spanish National Tourist Office, in particular the trilingual (English-Spanish-French) book entitled Guide to Winter & Mountain Resorts and the English-language booklet Winter Sports - Spain. These publications provide invaluable information on individual resorts, accommodation available, transport, etc in greater detail than is possible here.

In the following section, each resort is listed in bold, followed by the province in which it is situated. The nearest airport, the range of altitudes and the area of snow are given afterwards in italics.

Most resorts offer rental or sale of equipment; nightclub; bars; hospital; nursery; a Catholic church; and accommodation either at the resort or within 30km (19 miles). Some offer facilities such as a heated pool; tennis; mini-golf; riding; skeet shooting and bowling. All have ski lifts (apart from the Nordic skiing centres), many have baby lifts and chair lifts, and some also have cabin lifts, cable cars or funiculars. Further details may be found by consulting either of the publications referred to above.

THE PYRENEAN RANGE: THE PYRENEAN RANGE: A region of high valleys allowing steep descents, with most of the resorts concentrated in the Catalanian area. The Aragonese Pyrenees contain the highest altitudes in the range; some are over 3400m (11,155ft). The Navarran Pyrenees have no mountain resorts, and are notable for their gentle slopes and superb forests. Catalanian Pyrenees

Vallter 2000, Girona. Airport: Girona 90km (55 miles). Barcelona 150km (93 miles). Alt: 2000-2650m (6560-8400ft). Snow area: 50 sq km (20 sq miles).

Nuria: Nuria, Girona. Airport: Girona 110km (68 miles). Barcelona 135km (84 miles). Alt: 1960-2920m (6430-9580ft). Snow area: 79 sq km (30 sq miles).

La Molina-Supermolina: La Molina-Supermolina, Girona. Airport: Girona 140km (87 miles). Barcelona 160km (99 miles). Alt: 1436-2540m (4711-8333ft). Snow area: 70 sq km (27 sq miles).

Masella: Masella, Girona. Airport: Girona 160km (99 miles). Barcelona 175km (108 miles). Alt: 1600-2530m (5249-8300ft). Snow area: 43 sq km (16 sq miles).

Rasos de Peguera: Rasos de Peguera, Barcelona. Airport: Barcelona 135km (83 miles). Alt: 1800-2050m (5903-6725ft). Snow area: 15 sq km (6 sq miles).

Port de Comte: Port de Comte, Lleida. Airport: Barcelona 160km (99 miles). Alt: 1700-2380m (5577-7808ft). Snow area: 80 sq km (30 sq miles).

San Juan de l'Erm: San Juan de l'Erm, Lleida (Nordic skiing). Airport: Cerdaña (light aircraft). Alt: 1600-2150m (5249-7053ft). Snow area: 40 sq km (15 sq miles).

Lles: Lles, Lleida (Nordic skiing). Airport: Cerdaña (light aircraft). Alt: 1900-2300m (6233-7545ft). Snow area: 30 sq km (11 sq miles).

Llessúy: Llessúy, Lleida. Airport: Barcelona 258km (160 miles). Alt: 1280-2900m (4199-9514ft). Snow area: 30 sq km (11 sq miles).

Super Espot: Super Espot, Lleida. Airport: Barcelona 270km (167 miles). Alt: 1480-2320m (4855-7611ft).

Baqueira Beret: Baqueira Beret, Lleida (the largest resort). Airport: Barcelona 309km (192 miles). Alt: 1520-2470m (4986-8103ft). Snow area: 40 sq km (15 sq miles).

Tuca-Betrén: Tuca-Betrén, Lleida. Airport: Barcelona 295km (183 miles). Alt: 1050-2250m (3444-6381ft). Snow area: 15 sq km (5 sq miles).

Aragonese Pyrenees

Cerler: Cerler, Huesca. Airport: Zaragoza 227km (141 miles). Barcelona 300km (186 miles). Alt: 1500-2850m (4921-1770ft). Snow area: 24 sq km (9 sq miles).

Panticosa: Panticosa, Huesca. Airport: Zaragoza 168km (104 miles). Alt: 1165-2100m (3822-6889ft).

El Formigal: El Formigal, Huesca. Airport: Zaragoza 167km (103 miles). Alt: 1500-2350m (4921-7709ft). Snow area: 38 sq km (14 sq miles).

Candanchú: Candanchú, Huesca. Airport: Zaragoza 180km (111 miles). Alt: 1450-2400m (4757-7874ft). Snow area: 18 sq km (7 sq miles).

Astún: Astún, Huesca. Airport: Zaragoza 180km (111 miles). Alt: 1420-2400m (4658-7874ft). Snow area: 40 sq km (15 sq miles).

In addition to the above-mentioned resorts, there are other places throughout the Pyrenees which are highly suitable for skiing and where modern facilities will soon be installed to make best use of their excellent natural advantages. Enquire at the Spanish National Tourist Office for up-to-date details of the facilities available. Of these, the main resorts/areas are:

Tossa de Das, Barcelona; Camprodon, Girona; Valle de Farreras, Lleida; Bosost, Lleida; La Maladeta, Huesca; Val de Broto, Huesca; Bielsa, Huesca; Isaba, Navarra and Burguete, Navarra.

THE CANTABRIAN RANGE: THE CANTABRIAN RANGE: Situated in the north of the country, the Cantabrian Range drops sharply towards the Atlantic, but falls away more gently to the south. It is more rugged at its eastern end than in Galicia and has a number of important ski centres. The Enol Lakes are also a major attraction.

Alto Campo: Alto Campo, Santander. Airport: Cantabria 99km (61 miles). Alt: 1515-2150m (4970-7053ft). Snow area: 20 sq km (7 sq miles).

Valgrande-Pajares: Valgrande-Pajares, Asturias & León. Airport: Oviedo 100km (62 miles). Alt: 1350-1834m (4429-6017ft). Snow area: 75 sq km (28 sq miles).

San Isidro: San Isidro, Asturias & León. Airport: Oviedo 70km (43 miles). Alt: 1500-1955m (4921-6414ft). Snow area: 60 sq km (23 sq miles).

Cabeza de Manzaneda: Cabeza de Manzaneda, Orense. Airport: Santiago de Compostela 190km (118 miles). Alt: 1450-1760m (4757-5774ft). Snow area: 20 sq km (7 sq miles).

Other winter sports centres in this region include Riaño-Maraña on the slopes of Mampodre; San Emiliano in the northwestern part of the region; and Leitariegos in the western part of the range.

IBERIAN SYSTEM: IBERIAN SYSTEM: This extends northwest from the Demanda Range in Burgos to the Alcaraz Range on the Mediterranean. Many of the slopes are pine-forested. The highest point in the system is the Moncayo summit at 2313m (7588ft).

Valdezcaray: Valdezcaray, Logroño. Airport: Villafía (Burgos) for light aircraft 100km (62 miles). Alt: 1550-1860m (5085-2821ft). Snow area: 8 sq km (3 sq miles).

Lunada-Espinosa: Lunada-Espinosa, Burgos. Airport: Villafía (Burgos) for light aircraft 100km (62 miles).

Valle del Sol: Valle del Sol, Burgos. Airport: Villafía (Burgos) for light aircraft 100km (62 miles). Alt: 1500-1700m (4921-5577ft). Snow area: 15 sq km (5 sq miles).

Sierra de Gudar: Sierra de Gudar, Teruel. Airport: Valencia 135 km (83 miles). Alt: 1600-2025m (5249-6643ft). Snow area: 15 sq km (5 sq miles).

CENTRAL SYSTEM: CENTRAL SYSTEM: This is also known as the Carpetan Range and runs from northeast to southwest dividing the central Meseta into two parts, although there are several passes which allow lines of communication. The Guadarrama and Gredos ranges are found within this system. The highest peak rises to over 2500m (8202ft). The region is within easy reach of Madrid.

La Pinilla: La Pinilla, Segovia. Airport: Madrid 112km (69 miles). Alt: 1500-2270m (4921-7447ft). Snow area: 15 sq km (5 sq miles).

Valcotos,: Valcotos, Madrid. Airport: Madrid 82km (50 miles). Alt: 1785-2270m (5856-7447ft). Snow area: 30 sq km (11 sq miles).

Valdesqui: Valdesqui, Madrid. Airport: Madrid 85km (52 miles). Alt: 1876-2260m (6154-7414ft). Snow area: 20 sq km (7 sq miles).

Puerto de Navacerrada: Puerto de Navacerrada, Madrid. Airport: 75km (46 miles). Alt: 1700-2200m (5577-7217ft). Snow area: 42 sq km (16 sq miles).

PENIBETIC SYSTEM: PENIBETIC SYSTEM: This is in the south of the country and the range is broken by a fault line dividing it into a northern and a southern block. The southern block contains the main skiing areas and also the highest peaks in the Spanish mainland (Sierra Nevada), reaching to over 3440m. The effect of river erosion has opened deep gorges leading to meadows and beaches on the Mediterranean coast. Some of the ski runs are less than 35km (21 miles) from the famous city of Granada.

Solynieve: Solynieve, Granada. Airport: Granada 34km (21 miles). Alt: 2100-3470m (6889-11384ft). Snow area: 40 sq km (10 sq miles).

10 SPORT & ACTIVITIES

Outdoor Pursuits: 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 capra hispanica 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 horseriding can easily be arranged. Mountain trails, river valleys and the wide plains can all be explored on horseback.

Watersports: Watersports: Water-skiing, swimming, 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 4000 kilometres of coastline, and there are many harbours. Over 100 sailing clubs exist, most of which are located near the Mediterranean.

Fishing: 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, which last year yielded around 5000 catches. Other catches include barbel, perch, pike and tench.

Golf: Golf is becoming increasingly popular. At present Spain has nearly 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's balmy climate allows for a long golf season. Tuition and equipment hire are widely available.

Wintersports: Wintersports: See the Ski Resorts section in Resorts and Excursions for further information.

Spectator sports: 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 horseracing track in Madrid with meetings in the autumn and spring; there is racing in San Sebastián in the summer and in Seville in winter. Motoracing is a popular spectator sport in Barcelona and Cadiz.

11 SOCIAL PROFILE

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. Many of the specialities of Spanish cuisine are based on seafood, although regional specialities are easier to find inland than along the coast. In the northern Basque provinces, there is cod vizcaina or cod pil-pil; angulas, the tasty baby eels from Aguinaga; bream and squid. Asturias has its bean soup, fabada, cheeses and the best cider in Spain, and in Galicia there are shellfish, especially good in casseroles, and a number of regional seafood dishes such as hake à la Gallega.

In the eastern regions the paella has a well-deserved reputation. It can be prepared in many ways, based on meat or seafood. Catalonia offers, among its outstanding specialities, lobster Catalan, butifarra sausage stewed with beans, and partridge with cabbage. Pan amb tomaquet, bread rubbed with olive oil and tomato, is a delicious accompaniment to local ham and cheese. The Castile area specialises in roast meats, mainly lamb, beef, veal and suckling pig, but there are also stews, sausages, country ham and partridges. Andalucía is noted for its cooking (which shows a strong Arab influence), especially gazpacho, a delicious cold vegetable soup, a variety of fried fish including fresh anchovies, jabugo ham from Huelva and many dishes based on the fish which the coast provides in such abundance. Restaurants are classified by the Government and many offer tourist menus (menu del día). Restaurants and cafés have table service.

Drink: Spain is essentially a wine-drinking country, with sherry being one of the principal export products. Its English name is the anglicised version of the producing town Jerez (pronounced kherez), from which the wine was first shipped to England. Today, Britain buys about 75% of all sherry exports. 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). Sanlúcar de Barrameda and Puerto de Santa María are other towns famous for their sherry and well-worth visiting. Tourists are able to visit one of the bodegas (above-ground wine stores) in Jerez. In the Basque Country a favourite is chacolí, a 'green' wine, slightly sparkling and a little sour, rather than dry.

The principal table wines are the riojas and valdepenas, named after the regions in which they are produced. In general, rioja, from the region around Logroño in the northeast, resembles the French Bordeaux, though it is less delicate. Valdepenas is a rougher wine, but pleasant and hearty. It will be found at its best in the region where it is grown, midway between Madrid and Córdoba. In Catalonia the ampurdán and perelada wines tend to be heavy and those that are not rather sweet are harsh, with the exception of the magnificent full-bodied Burgundy-type penedés wines. Alicante wine, dry and strong, is really a light aperitif. Nearby, the Murcia region produces excellent wine. Often it makes a pleasant change to try the unbottled wines of the house (vino de la casa). It is much cheaper than the bottled wines and even in small places is usually good. Similarly, inexpensive supermarket wine is very acceptable. Among the many brands of sparkling wines known locally as cava, the most popular are Codorníu and Freixenet, dry or semi-dry. The majority of Spanish sparkling wines are sweet and fruity.

Spanish brandy is as different from French as Scotch whisky is from Irish. It is relatively cheap and pleasant, although most brandy drinkers find it a little sweet.

Spain has several good mineral waters. A popular brand is Lanjarón which comes from the town of the same name. It can be still or sparkling. Vichy Catalan is almost exactly like French Vichy. Malavella is slightly effervescent and Font Vella is still. Cocktail lounges have table and/or counter service. There are no licensing hours.

Nightlife: Spaniards often start the evening with el paseo, a leisurely stroll through the main streets. A café 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 dance literally 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 has a character all of its own. Catalanian textiles are world 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 of 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.

Shopping hours: 0900-1300 and 1630-1930 Monday to Saturday. However, most commercial stores and malls stay open from 1000-2000.

Special Events: Throughout Spain, folklore is very much alive and there is always some form of folk festival occurring. It is almost impossible for a visitor to be anywhere in the country for more than a fortnight without something taking place. The Ministry of Tourism produces a booklet listing and describing Spain's many national and regional feasts and festivals, of which there are over 3000 each year. Fiestas, Saints' Days, Romerías (picnics to religious shrines) and Verbenas (night festivals on the eve of religious holidays) are all celebrated with great spirit and energy. Holy Week is probably the best time of year to visit for celebrations and it is then that the individuality of each region's style of pageantry is best revealed. For further information contact the Spanish National Tourist Office (see address section). The following is a list of some of the more notable fiestas and other events of interest to visitors in 2001:

Jan 19-20 Tamborrada, San Sebastian. Feb 2-5 Moors and Christians (traditional festival), Bocairente, Valencia. Feb 27 Carnival, throughout Spain. Apr 8-15 Holy Week (religious celebrations throughout Spain). May 1-7 Sevilla Fair. Apr 22-24 Moors and Christians, Alcoy, Alicante. May 3 Cruces de Mayo, Granada. May 4-6 World Motorbike Championship, Jerez de la Montera. May 15-29 Fiestas de San Isidro, Madrid. May Festival of the Courtyards and May Fair, Cordoba. Jun (always around Jun 11) San Bernabe Fair, Marbella. Jun 14-24 San Juan Festival, Javea, Alicante. Jul 6-14 San Fermín (Running of the Bulls), Pamplona. Jul 16 Sea Festival, Fuengirola, Malaga. Aug (throughout) Santander International Festival. Aug 5 Albariño Wine Festival, Cambados, Pontevedra. Aug 15-22 Aste Nagusia (popular festival), Bilbao. Aug 25 La Tomatina (popular festival), Buñol, Valencia. Sep 21-28 La Merced (popular festival), Barcelona. Sep 30-Oct 1 Moors and Christians, Benidorm. Oct 6-12 Fair, Fuengirola, Malaga. Oct 27-29 Saffron Festival, Consuegra, Toledo. Nov Benidorm Festival. Dec 28 The Verdiales (popular music festival), Malaga.

Note: The most famous carnival celebrations are held in the capitals of the Canary Islands - Santa Cruz de Tenerife and Las Palmas de Gran Canaria - where celebrations start around Feb 17 and last for up to two weeks. Barcelona is also set to be the host in 2002 for the International Year of Gaudi.

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. Smoking is widely accepted. 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 cafés and bars it is 10-15%. Tip taxis 10-15% when metered.

12 BUSINESS PROFILE

Economy: Spain is a major industrialised European economy with a large agricultural sector. Until 1975, under the Franco regime, the Spanish economy developed almost in isolation, protected from foreign competition by tight import controls and high tariffs, during which period Spain 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 surprisingly well, and the Spanish economy now ranks eighth in the world by output. Despite the decline of many of its traditional industries, such as ship building, steel and textiles - all of which were badly hit during the world recession - Spain achieved the highest average growth rate in the Community during the 1980s and has returned a steady performance throughout the 1990s. In 1999, GDP growth was just under 5% and inflation just over 2%. Only unemployment - a legacy of structural weaknesses in the Spanish economy which have not been fully tackled - remains stubbornly high at nearly 16% of the workforce (despite a steady fall in the last few years from a high of 23%). Other economic indicators, such as interest rates and budget deficit, are within the limits which allow Spain to join the European Monetary Union in the first wave at the start of 1999. 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, although its approach to international fishing grounds has led Spain into a number of disputes both within and outside the EU. 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. In the service sector, tourism is a major contributor. The EU countries, the USA and Japan are the country's main trading partners.

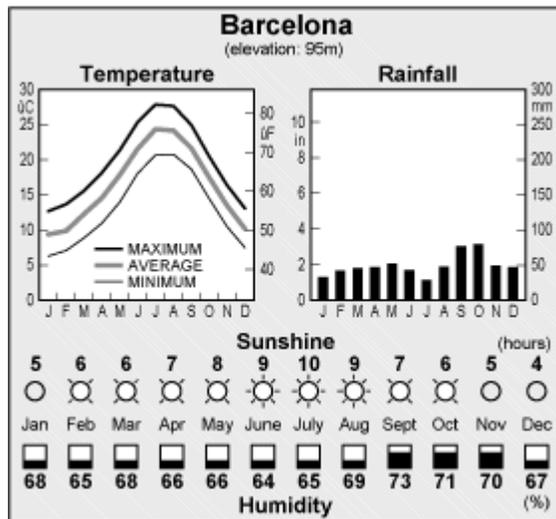
Business: Business people are generally expected to dress smartly. Although English is widely spoken, an interest in Spanish and an effort on the part of the visitor to speak even a few words will be appreciated. Business cards are exchanged frequently as a matter of courtesy and appointments should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

Commercial Information: The following organisations can offer advice: Consejo Superior de Cámaras Oficiales de Comercio,

Industria y Navegación de España, Plaza Independencia 1, 28001 Madrid (tel: (91) 538 3500; fax: (91) 538 3718); or Instituto Español de Comercio Exterior (ICEX), 66 Chiltern Street, London W1M 2LS (tel: (020) 7486 0101; fax: (020) 7487 5586; e-mail: buzon.official@londres.ofcomes.mcx.es; web site: <http://www.icex.es>).

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. Further details can be obtained from Oficina de Congresos de Madrid, C Mayor 69, 28013 Madrid (tel: (91) 588 2900; fax: (91) 588 2930; e-mail: congresos@munimadrid.es; web site: <http://www.munimadrid.es/congresos>); or from the Spanish Tourist Office (see address section).

13 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.

14 HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

History: For five centuries from 218BC, 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, centred on Cordoba and Granada, the region became a centre 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 which burned throughout so much of the medieval period, equivalent to the Islamic concept of Jihad (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 1492, 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 in 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, Lope de Vega, Velazquez and El Greco 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 Civil War of 1936-1939. 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. Domestic politics during the 1980s 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 place of ideology. In 1982 and again in 1986, the Socialists won an absolute majority in the Cortes (national assembly). In October 1989, Gonzalez again went to the country to seek his third successive term. However, disillusion on the left deprived Gonzalez' socialists of many seats, leaving Gonzalez at the head of a minority government. The Gonzalez government's particular achievement in foreign policy was to establish Spain as a valuable and enthusiastic member of the (then) European Community, which it joined in 1986 and from which it has benefited considerably. At the time, there were worries about the long-term effects of membership on some of Spain's heavily protected (a Franco legacy) and uncompetitive industries. Despite an economic recession, mounting allegations of corruption and growing disillusionment with the Government, the PSOE was able to arrange a coalition administration with Catalan and Basque nationalist parties. It was the refusal of Convergencia i Unio (CiU), the main Catalan party, to endorse the Government's budget plans that precipitated an early general election which Gonzalez called for March 1996. At this point, the Spanish nation overcame its historic distrust of the Right, and the PSOE was replaced as the largest party in the Cortes in March 1996 by the right-wing Partido Popular (PP). With 157 seats the PP was short of an overall majority, however, and party leader José María Aznar was forced to emulate Gonzalez by courting the regionalists - in this instance the Catalans and Canary Islands parties - to obtain an overall majority. Some aspects of the incoming administration's programme were highly unpopular, and in 1996-97 Spain suffered a 'winter of discontent' with widespread public sector strikes. While the conservatives struggled in office, at the PSOE congress in June 1997 Felipe Gonzalez announced his resignation thereby abruptly curtailing a 23-year career. Distrust of the PP - whose economic policies proved to be little different from those of its predecessor - waned during its term of office, and the party was able to secure an absolute majority at the closely-fought March 2000 election. Both the PP and the PSOE have taken a relentlessly hard line against Basque separatist paramilitary organisation ETA and endorsed robust and sometimes illegal activity by the intelligence services. After undertaking spectacular attacks in its early years - notably the assassination of premier Admiral Carrero in 1973 - ETA's paramilitary campaign has gradually been diminished by internal splits and attrition by the security forces. By 1998, the campaign was at a low ebb, and may now have ended since the announcement of a ceasefire. The agreement broke down towards the end of 1999, however: ETA attacks resumed and the political future of the province is now highly uncertain. The main outstanding political issue for Spain in Europe remains Gibraltar. The single-minded attachment of the Rock's inhabitants to the UK continued to limit the political options available to both governments (see Gibraltar section). Outside Europe, Spain has special relations with Latin America and the Arab world as a result of historical and cultural ties. Spain has also been a member of NATO since 1982 and continued membership was confirmed in a referendum held in 1986. 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.

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; the 202 senators are chosen by direct election. There are also 17 autonomous regions whose governments are elected every four years.

15 OVERVIEW

Country Overview: Spain shares the Iberian peninsula with Portugal and is bounded to the north by the Pyrenees. The beach resorts on the south and northwest Mediterranean coasts continue to attract sunseekers, but increasingly tourists are discovering the fascinations of an ancient and beautiful Spain away from the beaches. There is a huge variety of landscape: forests, plains, salt marshes, rocky bays, mountains, medieval cities, and ancient rivers.

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.

The Costa del Sol is a densely populated tourist area containing fine beaches and picturesque towns.

Madrid, the capital city, is a cosmopolitan metropolis of theatres, cinemas, opera houses and art galleries including the celebrated Prado.

Barcelona is one of the most important Mediterranean ports. The Barri Gòtic (old town) has a museum with a fine collection of Picasso's early sketches.

Regional specialities include angulas (baby eels) and paella. Wine and sherry are recommended. Tourists should visit one of the bodegas (above ground wine stores) in Jerez. The Spaniards love to party and there is a whole range of nightclubs throughout the country.

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