



# Facts

Join us this month in Spain! From bull fights to dancing,  
Spain has a colorful culture!



Spain – or the Kingdom of Spain, to give the country its official title – is the second-largest country in the European Union after France. It measures up at around 506,000 square kilometers, including the Canary Islands and the Spanish territories along the North African coastline.

Like many other European countries, what we know as modern-day Spain was once a collection of individual kingdoms. That changed in the 15th century when Fernando of Aragon and Isabel of Castile married and united their respective kingdoms.

Spain has 17 autonomous regions with diverse geography and cultures. Its capital city is Madrid and is home to the Royal Palace and Prado museum, housing works by European masters.

There are an estimated 440 million native Spanish speakers around the world, second only to Mandarin. But while Spanish is the official language of Spain, the regional languages of Catalan, Basque (Euskara) and Galician (Galego) all have official status in their respective regions.

Spain continues to rule the two small port-cities of Ceuta and Melilla making them the only two European cities that reside outside of Europe. Sharing soil with the Moroccan border, these cities are small bastions that lie at the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea. Ceuta is located to the right of the African side of the Gibraltar Strait, and Melilla is located further east, closer to the border with Argelia.

Spain has hundreds of tiny communities with their own language, culture and cuisines! The best known are probably the Basque Country and Catalonia.





# Cultural Facts

Spanish culture and traditions are steeped in religion. For example, Día de Reyes is a Spanish equivalent to Christmas where the three wise men leave gifts for well-behaved kids who set their shoes in the window sill the night before. Another celebration includes Semana Santa. Semana Santa is the Spanish celebration for Holy Week leading up to Easter, which dates back to the 16th century when the Catholic Church decided to present the story of the Passion of Christ in a way that the layperson could understand.

Spain is the home of two of the most popular fútbol teams in the world: Real Madrid and FC Barcelona. These two teams have been competing for centuries, nipping at each other's heels and hosting some of the best players the world has ever seen.

In Spanish culture, instead of the tooth fairy, a magical rodent "El Ratón de los Dientes" or "El Ratón Pérez" provides a small gift or coin in exchange for the child's tooth in Spanish-speaking regions of the world.

Dancing is perhaps one of the most expressive forms of Spanish culture and traditions. Many images of passion and love are nurtured by dances such as Flamenco, Fandango, Jota, Copla, Paso Doble, and Muñeira.

Spain boasts that it produced the first "modern" novel, a book translated into more languages than any other except the Bible, and the one that claims the title of best book in history. Written by Spaniard, Miguel de Cervantes, it is "Don Quixote" and it was written in 1605.

Thanks to the Spanish efforts to establish colonies in the Americas and due to their relations with North Africa, today we can all enjoy oranges, avocados, cacao, potatoes and sugar.

