

COUNTRY INTRODUCTION

Spain



Welcome to Spain!

Before we dive in, meet Archie and his friends, the Intrepid Explorers. They are five adventurous Aussie kids who travel the world on missions to recover stolen artefacts or protect endangered species. This time, they are headed to Spain.

Before landing, they have decided to read up on the country's geography, history, and wildlife, and we hope you have fun learning with them!

And the adventure does not stop there. On our website, www.thelittleexplorersjournal.com, under the resources page, we've also shared fun resources from their journey, including landmarks, more wildlife facts, quizzes, games, and activities to keep your kids learning and having fun every step of the way.



Welcome to Spain!

Spain is a country located in the southwest of Europe, on the Iberian Peninsula. It shares borders with Portugal to the west and France to the northeast, and it is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Spain also includes island territories such as the Balearic Islands and the Canary Islands. The capital city is Madrid, which lies near the centre of the country. Spain has a population of around 48 million people, making it one of the most populous countries in Europe. The official language is Spanish, also known as Castilian, although several regions also speak other languages such as Catalan, Basque, and Galician.



About Spain



Capital City: Madrid
Population: Approximately 48 million (2024)
Currency: Euro
Official Language: Spanish



Geography of Spain

Spain has a wide variety of landscapes, which is one reason it is such an interesting country to explore. You can find everything from tall mountains and forests to sunny beaches and even a dry desert! In the north, the Pyrenees form a huge mountain chain that creates a natural border with France. Some peaks rise more than 3,400 metres high, and in winter many people go there to ski.



Geography of Spain



Spain is also surrounded by water on two sides. To the east lies the Mediterranean Sea, famous for its warm, clear water and sandy beaches, while to the northwest the country meets the Atlantic Ocean, where the waves are often much bigger. Spain has more than 8,000 kilometres of coastline, which is why beaches are such an important part of Spanish life. Spain is also home to one of the only deserts in Europe, the Tabernas Desert!



History of Spain



Spain has a fascinating history that stretches back thousands of years, with many different civilizations shaping the country we know today. Around 2000–1000 BCE, the Iberians and Celts lived on the Iberian Peninsula. They built villages and started farming, laying the foundations for later societies.

In 218 BCE, the Romans arrived during the Second Punic War and gradually took control of the peninsula. They stayed for over 600 years, building roads, aqueducts, temples, and cities. Many Roman ruins, like the Roman aqueduct in Segovia, are still standing today.



History of Spain



In 711 CE, the Moors from North Africa invaded and ruled much of Spain for nearly 800 years. They built beautiful palaces, mosques, and gardens, including the famous Alhambra in Granada. Their influence is still visible in Spanish architecture, language, and food. In 1492, a huge change happened. The Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile, completed the Reconquista, driving the Moors out of Spain. That same year, Christopher Columbus sailed across the Atlantic, opening the way for Spain to explore and colonize the Americas. From the 16th to 18th centuries, Spain became one of the largest empires in the world, with territories in the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia. Spanish explorers, soldiers, and settlers helped spread Spain's culture, language, and traditions across the globe.

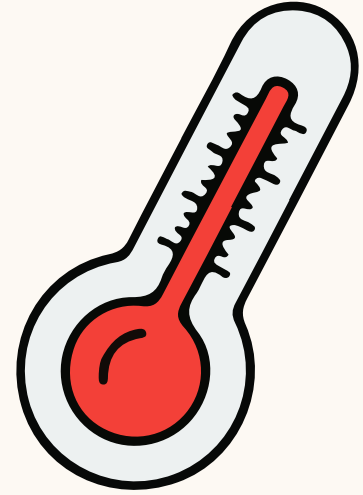


Famous Landmarks

Spain is home to many world-famous landmarks that attract millions of visitors every year. La Sagrada Família in Barcelona is an iconic basilica designed by architect Antoni Gaudí. Not far from there is Parc Güell, a colourful park full of mosaics, winding paths, and whimsical sculptures. The Alhambra in Granada is a stunning palace and fortress dating from the Moorish period and offers a glimpse into Spain's rich history. The Prado Museum in Madrid houses one of the finest collections of European art. The historic city of Toledo is renowned for its medieval architecture and fascinating history.



The Climate of Spain



Spain has very different climates depending on the region!

In the north, near the Bay of Biscay and mountains, winters are cool and rainy and summers are mild, with lush green forests everywhere.

In the centre, around Madrid, summers can be hot, over 35°C (95°F), and winters cold, below 0°C (32°F), so people experience all four seasons.

In the south, along the Mediterranean coast and islands like the Balearic Islands, summers are hot and dry and winters mild and rainy, perfect for beach holidays.



Wildlife in Spain

In the forests and mountains, you might find the Iberian Lynx, one of the world's most endangered cats, with beautiful spotted fur and sharp eyes. High in the skies, the Spanish Imperial Eagle soars gracefully, showing off Spain's natural beauty. Along Spain's coasts, the waters are full of life. Dolphins leap through the waves, and you might even spot whales swimming far out at sea. Watching them in the wild is an unforgettable experience! Spain also has numerous national parks and nature reserves, like the Doñana National Park, which protect its forests, mountains, wetlands, and wildlife. These parks make sure that animals like lynxes, eagles, and countless other species can live safely in their natural homes.



Spanish Culture

Spain is full of music, dance, and exciting traditions! One of the most famous Spanish dances is Flamenco, where dancers move with passion while guitars strum and hands clap in rhythm. Festivals are an important part of Spanish culture, and some are very lively and fun. At La Tomatina, people throw tomatoes at each other, creating a huge, messy tomato fight! In Pamplona, the Running of the Bulls is a daring tradition where people run in front of bulls, and it attracts visitors from all over the world.



Spanish Food

Spanish food is delicious and full of flavour! One of the most famous dishes is paella, a colourful rice dish usually made with seafood, chicken, or vegetables. Spaniards also love tapas, which are small plates of tasty snacks that are perfect for sharing with friends and family. And for a sweet treat, there are churros, fried dough sticks often dipped in chocolate



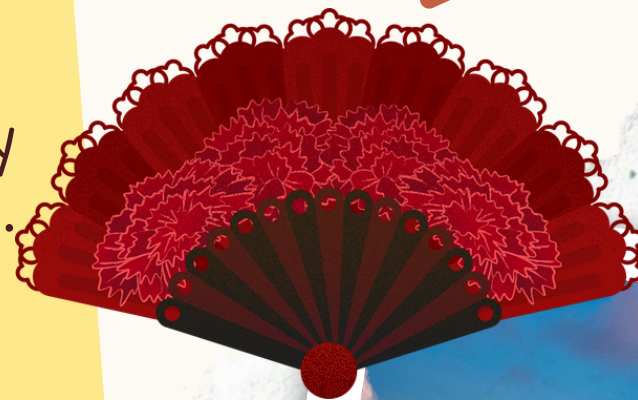
Sports in Spain

Sports play a big role in Spanish life! The most popular sport is football (soccer), and two of the most famous teams in the world are FC Barcelona and Real Madrid. People of all ages love playing and watching football, and matches are full of excitement and cheering. Basketball is also very popular, and Spanish teams and players have enjoyed success in international competitions. Traditional sports like bullfighting are part of Spain's history, though they are more controversial today. Spain also has regional traditions that show its cultural diversity, like Basque rural sports and Castells, where people build amazing human towers at festivals.



Fun Facts about Spain

Spain's official name is the Kingdom of Spain, reflecting its rich history and monarchy. Spanish is the second most spoken native language in the world. Spain is famous for its siesta, a midday nap that many Spaniards still practice. The country has more UNESCO World Heritage Sites than any other country except Italy and China, highlighting its cultural and historical importance.



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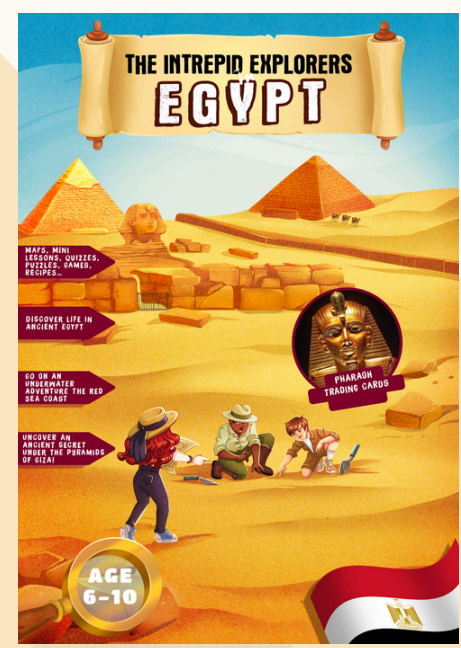


JAPAN!

Discover Japan with the Intrepid Explorers!

In the Japan digital country unit, join Violet, Archie, and Ruby on an exciting adventure in Japan, as they land in Kyoto and solve a mysterious puzzle!

AUSTRALIA!



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