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DEC 2023  
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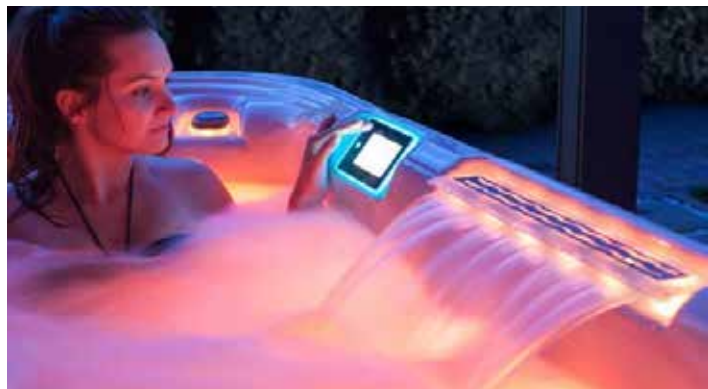
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## Let's Learn Spanish



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# A Life in SPAIN

## Welcome to the December edition of ALIS.

It's Christmas!!! Although the shops would have us believe it has been Christmas since September. In a few days time they will be reducing the Christmas stock, and no doubt setting up for Easter

Whether you love Christmas, like me, or are a bah humbug, you cant help loving the jovial atmosphere when you are out and about.

This edition of ALIS is based around Christmas in Spain, and includes the Christmas festive calender and festivities

Next year will see some exciting news for ALIS and CCC readers. Find out more next month.

Don't forget to hang your stockings up, and have a great Christmas and New Year

Enjoy!

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# Christmas in Spain

## *Calendar of Christmas in Spain*



December 8th – Red Day - This is the public holiday of Inmaculada (Feast of the Immaculate Conception) which marks the beginning of the religious Christmas celebrations. Most notable in Seville.

21st December – In a few cities including Granada the celebration of Hogueras (bonfires) takes place. This date marks the winter solstice (shortest day) and where it is celebrated involves people jumping through fires to protect themselves against illness.

22nd December – All over Spain people never stray far from a TV or radio as the Christmas lottery is drawn over a period of many hours. Everybody in Spain buys tickets for this lottery in the hope of winning El Gordo (the fat one) and the winning number usually means that a good number of people from the same village become a lot better off overnight. Besides the big three prizes there are thousands of smaller prizes shared by people all over Spain. You can buy Spanish Christmas lottery tickets online.

24th December – Christmas Eve is called Noche Buena in Spanish (Goodnight) and it is the most

important family gathering of the year. In the evening people often meet early for a few drinks with friends then return home to enjoy a meal with the family. Most bars and restaurants close in the evening. Prawn starters followed by roast lamb would be a typical meal rounded off with a typically Christmas sweet called turrón which is a nougat made of toasted sweet almonds. Another typical festive sweet is called Polvorones which is made from almonds, flour and sugar. Cava, Catalan champagne, would be the chosen drink for the Christmas toast though plenty fine Spanish wines will also be consumed with the meal.

25th December – Red Day - Children may receive a small gift on Noche Buena or this morning but the day for presents is 6th January, Epiphany, when the Three Kings bring gifts for the children. Christmas Day is a national holiday in Spain so shops are closed yet it is not a day of great celebration but rather a calm day when people go out for a walk, drop into a bar, etc. Another large family meal at lunchtime is common though it's becoming more common to see families eating out on the afternoon of Christmas day.

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28th December – This is the day of Santos Inocentes (Holy Innocents) and is the equivalent of April Fools' Day when people play practical jokes on one another. Often the national media will include a nonsense story in their broadcasts. In some villages youngsters light bonfires and one of them acts as the mayor who orders townspeople to carry out civic tasks such as sweeping the streets. Refusal to comply results in fines which are used to pay for the celebration.

31st December – New Year's Eve is known as Noche Vieja. It is a big celebration all over the country with street parties and special nights in hotels and clubs everywhere. Until midnight people tend to stay at home and on the stroke of midnight it is traditional to eat 12 grapes, one on each stroke of the clock to bring good luck for the new year. In Madrid and other main cities revellers congregate in the main square (Puerta del Sol in Madrid) and eat the grapes along with a celebratory bottle of cava then head out into the night until after sunrise.

1st January – Red Day - A low key public holiday with plenty of people sleeping off their excesses.

5th January – There are processions all over Spain this evening where sweets are thrown from the floats to all the people who come out to watch. Every town has its own variation such as in the Sierra Nevada where the Three Kings (Wise Men) can be seen to ski down to the village.

6th January – Red Day - This is the Feast of the Epiphany (Día de los Reyes Magos) when the Three Kings arrived in Bethlehem. For Spanish children this is the most important day of the year when they wake up to find that Los Reyes Magos (the Three Kings/Wise Men) have left gifts for them in their house. Santa may leave them a token gift on December 25th but the Three Kings are their favourites, especially Baltasar who rides a donkey and is the one believed to leave the gifts. During the day of 6th the Three Kings continue their good work and are seen distributing gifts to children in hospitals all over Spain.

7th January – The day after receiving their gifts children return to school, their parents go back to work and Christmas in Spain is all over for another year.



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# Let's Learn Spanish

## Sports

### Phrases

Do you like winter sports?	¿A ti, te gustan los deportes del invierno?	Ah teataygoo stan loss day portays del in vee yer no
Is there an ice-rink here?	¿Hay una pista de hielo aquí?	Eyeoo nah peastah day yell oh ack key
Where can I play ice hockey?	¿Dónde puedo jugar hockey sobre hielo?	Don day pwehdoh who garhock key sob ray yell oh
How far away are the slopes?	¿A qué distancia están las pistas?	Ah kaydistan sea yahesstanlasspeastass
Can I hire skis here?	¿Puedo alquilar esquís aquí?	Pwehdoh al key laheskeys ack key
I take a size 40 ski boot	Tomo una bota de esquí talla 40	Tommoo nah boh ta dayesskeythai yah cwarrentah
How much is this snowboard?	¿Cuánto cuesta esta tabla de snow?	Kwan toe kwestahesstahtablah day snow
Where can I book ski lessons?	¿Dónde puedo reservar clases de esquí?	Don day pwehdoh res err varclassses day esskey

### Vocab

Go skiing	Ir a esquiar	Ear are ess key are
Go cross-country skiing	Ir a esquiar campo través	Ear are ess key arecampohtrahvés
Go snowboarding	Ir a hacer snowboard	Ear are athairsnow board
Go sledding	Ir en trineo	Ear en tree nay oh
Play snowball	Jugar a tirar bolas de nieve	Who garare tea are rahbol lass day knee ev eh
Make a snowman	Hacer un muñeco de nieve	Athairoon moon yeahkoh day knee ev eh
Go skating	Ir a patinar	Ear are pat teen are
Play ice-hockey	Jugar a hockey sobre hielo	Who gararehock key sob ray yell oh
Play snow-volleyball	Jugar a voleibol de nieve	Who gar a vol lay bol day knee ev eh
Snowflake	Un copo de nieve	Ooncop oh day knee ev eh
Ice	El hielo	El yell oh
Icicle	Un carámbano	Oon car ram ban oh



### Now try our wordsearch:

D J T I C T R I N E O W F H S A  
P L K D R A N I T A P D N X E E  
E G M E E U R F S N B I H J S E  
W M K O E Z I A P X H H L Q G H  
E I O L O V U N M O B O U S T W  
S H P E P S E H A B L I C G M G  
G N O I W J Q I M A A X L K P R  
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*South Town...*

# LORCA



**Lorca, was declared a Town of Historical and Artistic Interest in 1964 and is described as “the baroque city” due to the important baroque heritage of its historical centre. One of the most important in the Region, and the historical events that have shaped modern Lorca from the Iron Age to our time.**

# LORCA

Mention must be made of the numerous archaeological sites, the Columna Miliaria dating from Roman times, the Espolón Tower and the Alfonsina Tower, a Christian construction dating from after the Reconquest; the “Porche de San Antonio”, the gate through the old wall that surrounded the city (in the 10th century), the numerous churches and convents dating from different periods and built in different styles (15th century to the 18th century), the baroque palaces and stately homes, such as the Guevara Palace, the Palace of the Counts of San Julián or Casa de la Mula, the military fortress that restructures the medieval castle on an inexpugnable site, or the paved streets around Plaza de España, with popular architectural buildings imbued with strong traditional character, such as La Zapatería y La Cava.

The people of Lorca are the protagonists of, and the driving force behind, the changes that are taking place in the town, and aimed at designing a strategy that will help to interpret, establish themes and communicate its rich heritage, and with which will help to bring visitors to the historical, cultural, architectonic and artistic values of Lorca, in an attractive, interesting and unique way.

If you want adventure then Lorca “Workshop of Time” will give you as a visitor what you are looking for: the adventure of immersing yourself in everything that Lorca signifies. Its streets, its wealth of monuments and its urban atmosphere can all be appreciated via the following four Cultural Itineraries which when finally completed reveal a multiple, diverse and historical world;

“Entre el cielo y el suelo” (Between Heaven and Earth)

“Tiempo de contratiempos” (Timed and mistimed)

“La ciudad de los cien escudos” (The city of the one hundred coats of arms)

“Tiempo de devoción” (A Time for Devotion).

Your visit to the Archaeological Museum will bring to fulfillment your knowledge and enjoyment of the rich history of this city.

Lorca, “Workshop of Time” is also proposing a new Visitor Activity Centre in the recently restored Convent of Lorca building. The abundant historical evidence which remains from Lorca’s frontier times and from the time of the Moors and Christians has made Lorca one of the most important historical centres in the whole of Eastern Spain. Its castle with its imposing appearance is being converted into a theme area to be known as Fortress of the Sun. Here the visitor will be able to live out “an experience through the periods of History”.

You will also find centuries worth of craft traditions still being enjoyed; expert hands which can transform nature into hand-produced rugs, embroidery and pottery. In addition to all of this, Lorca, “Workshop of Time” displays things from Easter week and other examples from its full annual calendar of traditional festivities:

The Feria Chica (Small Fair), in September, which pays homage to the Virgin of the Huertas (the agricultural country around Lorca)

The Day and Night Fairs, which greet the end of the summer and fill the streets with local snacks, wine and folklore

The Moors and Christians festival during San Clemente, with its horses, troops, armies and medieval markets.

Visitors are always made more than welcome in Lorca, and its year-round good weather, restaurants, hotels and first-class tourist infrastructures, all combine to add to the rural tourism on offer in the largest district in the Region of Murcia. The city and its nearness to its many mountain chains and areas of great natural beauty make Lorca a place to really have a good time.

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# La Rioja

## *The Wine Region*

Of course, everyone knows the wines from La Rioja. This area of Spain has over 500 wineries and is internationally famous for the quality of its wines. As well as wine tasting, a visit to this region also offers a range of activities which take place in and around the extensive vineyards, including horse-riding, hot-air ballooning, 4x4 routes...

This region is also closely linked to the famous Way of Saint James pilgrim route, and has a whole host of cultural attractions. Apart from its capital, Logroño, you'll be able to explore other places such as Santo Domingo de la Calzada and its cathedral, San Millán de la Cogolla, site of the Suso and Yuso monasteries, declared World Heritage Sites by the UNESCO, and known for being the birthplace of the first written words in the Spanish language.

Culture and wine together make an unbeatable combination. And add to that some amazing natural attractions... In La Rioja you'll find Mediterranean forests, high-mountain areas, lunar landscapes... And don't miss the Sierra de Cebollera Nature Reserve or the Arnedillo Biosphere Reserve.

### **Rioja Wine Harvest Festival**

Logroño goes all out to celebrate the Rioja Wine Harvest Festival, known traditionally as the festivities of San Mateo.

The town is filled with colour and fun in a celebration where wine and grapes take centre stage. There are numerous activities on offer, including traditional foot-crushing of grapes and the offering of the first must to the Virgen de Valvanera. Bull-running with young bulls, parades of floats, music, popular meals and ball games are a few of the other options in this special festive programme. For more information: check the website of the Logroño town council .







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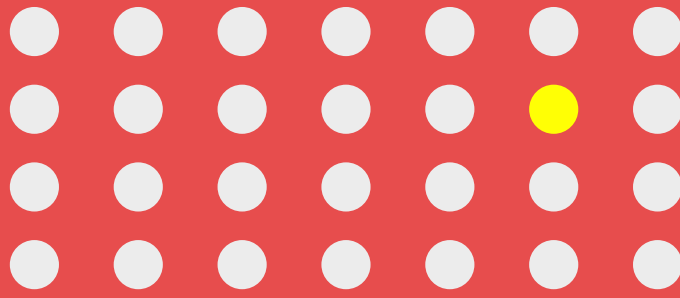
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# Spain's Events Calendar



**In Spain, January is a relatively quiet month in terms of major festivals and celebrations. However, there are a few notable events that take place during this time. Here are a few examples:**

**Three Kings' Day (Día de Reyes Magos) - January 6th:** This is a significant holiday in Spain, especially for children. It celebrates the arrival of the Three Wise Men who brought gifts to baby Jesus. On the eve of January 5th, there are processions in many cities and towns, with participants dressed as the Three Kings. Children traditionally receive gifts on this day.

**Sant Antoni Abat - January 17th:** This festival is celebrated in various towns and cities across Catalonia, particularly in Barcelona and the island of Mallorca. It honors Saint Anthony, the patron saint of animals. The festivities often include parades, bonfires, traditional dances, and blessings of animals.

**Festival of San Sebastian - January 20th:** This festival is celebrated in the city of San Sebastian, located in the Basque Country. It is held in honor of the city's patron saint, San Sebastian. The festivities include processions, traditional dances, live music performances, and a firework display.

**Calçotada Festivals - Various dates:** Calçotada is a traditional Catalan gastronomic celebration that takes place during the winter months, typically in January and February. It revolves around the consumption of calçots, a type of grilled green onion, usually served with romesco sauce. These festivals often include outdoor feasts, music, and dancing.

**Fiesta de la Candelaria - February 2nd:** While technically in February, this festival is worth mentioning as it takes place shortly after January. It is celebrated in various parts of Spain, particularly in the Canary Islands, where it is one of the biggest festivals of the year. It includes processions, traditional dances, music performances, and fireworks.

It's important to note that some of these celebrations may vary in terms of dates and specific traditions

depending on the region of Spain. Additionally, local events and smaller-scale festivities may also take place throughout the country during January.



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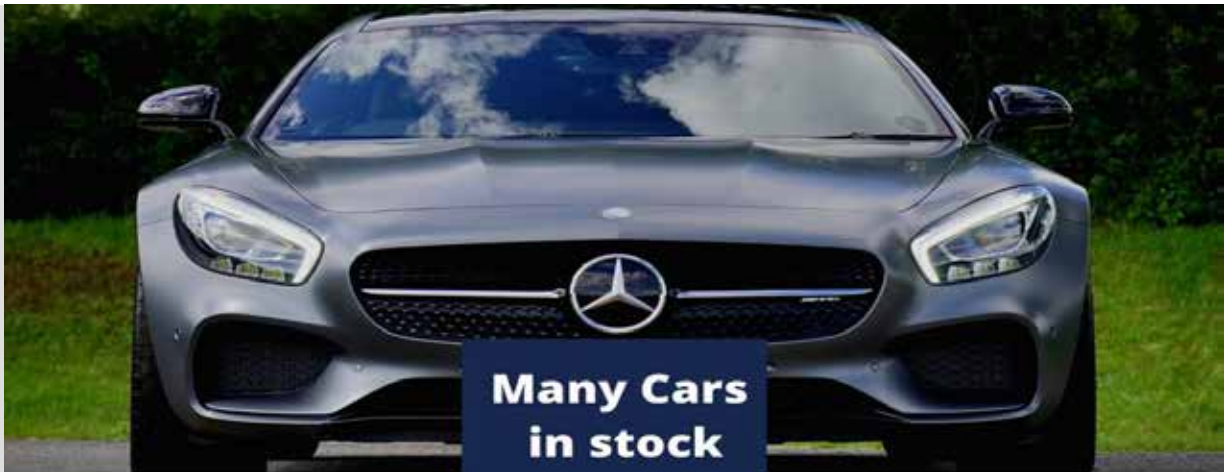
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Antoni Gaudí, born in 1852 in Reus, Catalonia, Spain, was a renowned Catalan architect known for his unique and distinctive architectural style. Gaudí's works are considered to be some of the most remarkable examples of the Art Nouveau movement, with a blend of Gothic and curvilinear Art Nouveau forms combined with his own creative and innovative ideas. Gaudí's architecture is characterized by its organic shapes, intricate details, colourful mosaics, and a deep connection with nature.

Perhaps the most famous and iconic of Gaudí's works is the Sagrada Família in Barcelona. This colossal basilica is still under construction and is expected to be completed in the early 21st century. The Sagrada Família showcases Gaudí's unique vision, with its soaring spires, intricate facades depicting biblical scenes, and a harmonious combination of natural elements and religious symbolism.

Another notable work by Gaudí is Casa Batlló, located in Barcelona. This residential building is characterized by its undulating facade, reminiscent of the waves of the sea. Gaudí used colourful ceramic tiles, curved lines, and wrought iron details to create a visually stunning and imaginative design.

Park Güell, also located in Barcelona, is a public park designed by Gaudí. It features an array of vibrant ceramic mosaics, playful architectural elements, and sculptural features that integrate seamlessly with the natural landscape. The park offers breathtaking views of Barcelona and showcases Gaudí's ability to create a harmonious environment that blurs the boundaries between architecture and nature.

Casa Milà, also known as La Pedrera, is another notable work by Gaudí. This apartment building in Barcelona is renowned for its undulating stone facade, ornate wrought iron balconies, and rooftop chimneys that resemble surreal sculptures. The building's interior exhibits Gaudí's attention to detail and his ability to create functional yet aesthetically pleasing spaces.

Gaudí's architecture reflects his deep religious faith, love for nature, and a desire to create a unique and harmonious relationship between the built environment and the natural world. His innovative use of materials, structural techniques, and imaginative designs have made him one of the most influential architects of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Gaudí's works continue to inspire architects, artists, and admirers of his unique architectural style to this day.





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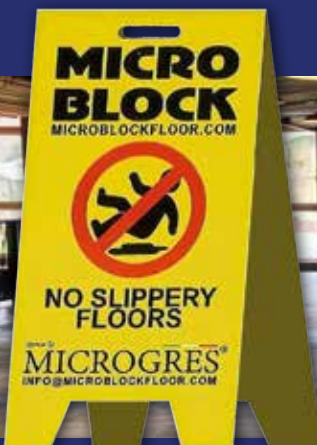
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# Christmas in Spain

## Sangria

It's hard to avoid summer sangria these days even at Christmas. Bubbly sangria, rosé sangria, Hennessy sangria, red, white, blue sangria, the Spanish wine punch has deviated so far from its simple origins it's nearly unrecognizable. For years, sangrias have been gracing red and white picnic cloths and restaurants with outdoor seating. Sangria seems endlessly adaptable, vaguely Spanish, and unmoored from any set traditions. But traditional sangria goes back, way back, as wine mixed with whatever is nearby.

Early Greeks and Romans mixed their wine with sugar, spices, and whatever was on hand (sound familiar?). It was called "hippocras," and it was sometimes heated like mulled wine. Hippocras is likely the common ancestor of both sangria and mulled wine, and was drunk everywhere because water was bacteria-filled and unsafe to drink. A touch of alcohol made the liquid drinkable, and mixing the watered-down wine gave it flavour. People who lived in modern-day Spain were doing something similar with grapevines planted by the Phoenicians around 1,100 B.C., and then with vines planted by the Romans after.

But in the 700s, the Spanish wine business, and by extension the Spanish sangria business, faltered. Islamic Moors conquered the peninsula in 711 A.D. Sangria didn't return until the Moors' rule ended in 1492, and with the return of wine there was the return of sangria.

Variations on house sangria — which means blood in Spanish, in reference to the red wine used — ruled in Spain. Traditionally, it's been made with Spanish Tempranillo and other wine from Rioja with added citrus fruit. But even then, no Sangria was made the same.

In the 1700s and 1800s, a style of sangria was made in England and France using traditionally French grapes. There was also white sangria, sparkling sangria, and sangria made with peaches, which was called zurra. The drink in all its forms had flashes of popularity in the U.S. in Spanish restaurants and certain city alcoves.

The current craze for sangria in the U.S. dates back to the 1964 World's Fair in New York City. Spain's sponsored pavilion featured the drink, and Americans have been thirsty for sangria ever since.

Today, under European law, all sangria must be made in Spain or Portugal and have less than 12 percent alcohol by volume. The best sangria, however, is homemade. .



# Christmas in Spain



Most people in Spain go to Midnight Mass or 'La Misa Del Gallo' (The Mass of the Rooster). It is called this because a rooster is supposed to have crowed the night that Jesus was born. Christmas Eve is known as Noche Buena. In the days before Noche Buena, children might take part in 'piden el aguinaldo' where they go and sing carols around their neighbours hoping to get some money!

Most families eat their main Christmas meal on Christmas Eve before the service. The traditional Spanish Christmas dinner was 'Pavo Trufado de Navidad' which is Turkey stuffed with truffles (the mushrooms, not the chocolate ones!) or 'Pularda asada' (a roasted young hen), although they are not commonly eaten now. In Galicia (a region in north-west Spain, surrounded by water) the most popular meal for Christmas Eve and for Christmas Day is seafood. This can be all kinds of different seafood, from shellfish and molluscs, to lobster and small edible crabs.

Popular deserts and sweets include 'mazapán' (made of almonds, sugar and eggs), 'turrón' (made of honey and toasted almonds) and 'polvorones' (made of flour, butter and sugar).

After the midnight service, one old tradition was for people to walk through the streets carrying torches, playing guitars and beating on tambourines and drums. One Spanish saying is 'Esta noche es Noche-Buena, Y no Es noche de dormir' which means 'Tonight is the good night and it is not meant for sleeping!'

A few different languages are spoken in different regions in Spain. In Spanish Happy/Merry Christmas is 'Feliz Navidad'; in Catalan it's 'Bon Nadal'; in Galician 'Bo Nadal'; and in Basque (or Euskara in basque) 'Eguberri on'. Happy/Merry Christmas in lots more languages.

December 28th is 'Día de los santos inocentes' or 'Day of the Innocent Saints' and is very like April Fools Day in the UK and USA. People try to trick each other into believing silly stories and jokes. Newspapers and TV stations also run silly stories. If you trick someone, you can call them 'Inocente, inocente' which means 'innocent, innocent'. 28th December is when people all over the world remember the babies that were killed on the orders of King Herod when he was trying to kill the baby Jesus.

New Year's Eve is called 'Nochevieja' or 'The Old Night' in Spain and one special tradition is that you eat 12 grapes with the 12 strokes of the clock at Midnight! Each grape represents a month of the coming year, so if you eat the twelve grapes, you are said to be lucky in the new year.

Apart from Christmas, there is another festival that is celebrated in Spain that is about the Christmas Story. It is called Epiphany and is celebrated on 6th January. In Spanish, Epiphany is called 'Fiesta de Los tres Reyes Magos': in English this means 'The festival of the three Magic Kings'. Epiphany celebrates when the Kings or Wise men brought gifts to the baby Jesus.



Children have some presents on Christmas Day, but most are opened at Epiphany. Children believe that the Kings bring presents to them at Epiphany. They write letters to the Kings asking for toys and presents. And on Epiphany Eve (January 5th) they leave shoes on windowsills or balconies or under the Christmas Tree to be filled with presents. Gifts are often left by children for the Kings, a glass of Cognac for each King, a satsuma and some walnuts. Sometimes a bucket of water is left for the camels that bring the Kings! If the children have been bad, the Kings might leave pieces of coal made out of sugar in the presents!

Some big towns and cities have Epiphany Parades with each King having a big float that is shaped like a camel. Sometimes there are also real camels in the parade. The Three Kings in the Spanish Epiphany are:

Gaspar, who has brown hair and a brown beard (or no beard!) and wears a green cloak and a gold crown with green jewels on it. He is the King of Sheba. Gaspar represents the Frankincense brought to Jesus. Frankincense is sometimes used in worship in Churches and showed that people worship Jesus.

Melchior, who has long white hair and a white beard and wears a gold cloak. He is the King of Arabia. Melchior represents the Gold brought to Jesus. Gold is associated with Kings and Christians believe that Jesus is the King of Kings.

Balthazar, who has black skin and a black beard (or no beard!) and wears a purple cloak. He is the King of Tarse and Egypt. Balthazar represents the gift of Myrrh that was brought to Jesus. Myrrh is a perfume that is put on dead bodies to make them smell nice and showed that Jesus would suffer and die.

### Christmas in the Basque Country

In the Basque country (which is a part of northern Spain and southern France), on Christmas Eve, children's presents are delivered by a magical man called Olentzero. He's a big, overweight man wearing a beret and smoking a pipe. He dresses like a Basque farmer.

### Christmas in Catalonia

In the Catalonia province of Spain there's a Christmas character called 'Tió de Nadal' (the Christmas log) or he's sometimes known as 'Caga tio' (the pooping log!). It's a small hollow log propped up on two legs with a smiling face painted on one end. From the 8th December (the Feast of the Immaculate Conception) Catalan families give the log a few morsels of food to 'eat' and a blanket to keep it warm. On Christmas Day or Christmas Eve, the log then 'gives out' small gifts! People sing a special song and hit the log with sticks to help its 'digestion' and the log drops sweets, nuts, and dried fruits. When garlic or an onion falls out of the log, all of the treats are finished for the year.

A special cake called 'Roscón' is eaten at Epiphany. Roscón means 'ring shape roll'. It is very doughy and is bought from a bakery on Epiphany morning. Roscón can be filled with cream or chocolate and contain a little gift.

### Christmas in Spain

The first thing that the visitor will notice is that Christmas in Spain is not as huge a commercial occasion as is the case in many other western countries. Christmas lights are usually lit in the main cities in the first week of December by which time the shops are fully stocked with Christmas supplies. Nothing like the US and UK where the end of summer marks the build up to Christmas.

Christmas trees are common in the home but again they don't appear until the second half of December. Also in the home there are intricate, miniature nativity scenes called Belénes which depict life in the village where Jesus was born. The Belén always include the baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph as well as the Three Kings, Baltasar, Melchior and Gaspar.



Turrón is a very old, traditional sweet of Moorish (Arabic) origin. It has been a popular sweet for centuries, even outside Spain's borders. It is said that the Moors invented turrón over 500 years ago in Jijona, a small town about 30 miles or so north of Alicante.

Jijona's economy is still focused on the production of turrón and there is even a museum of turrón that chronicles the process and history of the sweet. In addition, it is located within the factory that makes both "El Lobo" and "1880" brands of turrón. If you visit the museum from mid-June to mid-December, you can watch the turrón production from a balcony high above the factory floor.



### Types of Turrón

There are two traditional, basic types of turrón: soft Jijona or turrón blando, which is so smooth it has the consistency of peanut butter, and hard Alicante or turrón duro, which is like a thick almond nougat candy, similar to the texture of peanut brittle.

Turrón is made with honey, and the wildflowers that bloom in the mountain sides all around the town of Jijona, and are food for the bees that produce it. The honey, together with the almonds from nearby orchards forms delicious turrón in the hands of artisan candy makers, called turroneros. In 1939 a Denomination of Origin for turrón from Jijona was created, and in 1991 the rules of the denomination were revised.

### Alicante and Jijona Turrón

Alicante or turrón duro is made by roasting, then chopping the almonds and mixing with honey. The mixture is then simmered over heat and stirred constantly with large wooden spoons. Egg whites are added to bind the mixture and it is cooled. Once cooled, it is cut into pieces that resemble bricks, wrapped in a paper-thin wafer, sealed in plastic and packed.

Jijona or turrón blando takes more work. Once the turrón duro is cooled, the blocks are ground up with almond oil to form a sticky paste. Then, it is reheated and beaten for hours until it forms a soft, even mix. Egg white is then added as a binding agent and cooled in square metal containers to be cut into thick slices and packed in plastic.

The world of turrón is much larger than just Alicante and Jijona turrón. There are so many different flavours of turrón, it is hard to keep up. For example, new varieties include yema or egg yolk, praline, chocolate, and even kiwi!

### Qualities of Turrón

Rules strictly control whether a turrón may be labelled with "Suprema" or "Extra." The best quality is "Suprema" and to wear that label, the soft turrón must contain at least 60% almonds and the hard, 64% almonds. After that, there is "Extra," "Estándar" (standard) and "Popular." Most factories only produce turrón "Suprema" or "Extra." The typical Spanish housewife will be looking for those words on the package label when she goes to the supermarket to buy for her Christmas dinner. Chocolate turrón deserves a little more description, not only because it is delicious, but because it too has qualities including "Extrafino," "Fino" and "Popular," depending on the percent of cocoa and milk it contains. It is made from a base of cocoa butter, extracted from the cocoa beans. Some of the chocolate turrón also has dried fruits and nuts mixed in the centre.





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## *Wine Regions - The Mediterranean Coast*

The warmth of the coast from the French border to Almería can be mitigated by high altitudes, whether in Cataluña or in Valencia.

Throughout most of this area, world-class wines are appearing in places such as Priorat and Montsant, as well as established areas such as Penedés. Cava, the most famous sparkling wine in the world after Champagne.

This massive area includes much of present day Cataluña; there is a DO by that name as well that encompasses many of the top areas. These vineyard areas, whether near or far from the coast, share exposure to the warm winds of the Mediterranean. Many of the vineyards can be fairly moderate in climate and coastal, as in Alella, or remote and mountainous, as in Priorat. In Cataluña, elevation and proximity to the sea are crucial to understanding what is made there and why.

Alella offers some delicious whites from the Pansa Blanca grape (known as Xarel-lo in Cava country); it can be aromatic and expressive. White wines prosper in a number of sites along the Mediterranean, though not as frequently as the reds. Empordá makes some generous and textured Garnacha Blanca based wines, as do Montsant and Priorat. The Penedés region, home of 95% of the country's Cava, is awash in white grapes: Parellada, Macabeo (or Viura) and Xarel-lo (or Pansa Blanca).

As throughout most of Spain, the greater number of prized wines are reds. DO's such as Conca de Barbera, Costers del Segre, Empordá, Pla de Bages and Terra Alta have a dizzying array of wines from both international and indigenous grapes. Garnacha is far more planted than is Tempranillo; heat is a stronger factor in these regions and Garnacha a more forgiving grape. Syrah and the Bordeaux varieties show up in more elevated and protected sites.

The great success story in recent years is in and around the Tarragona region where some vines end up as Cava and some harbor red grapes. Priorat and its baby

brother Montsant have unquestionably changed Spain's wine landscape; these craggy hills and mountains allow Garnacha, Cariñena, along with small amounts of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah to bake into powerful, heady wine, especially when coaxed from the old vines found throughout.

For some, Montsant is "poor man's Priorat," but that does a disservice to the area's burgeoning reputation. Its elevations and terrains are not as extreme as Priorat, and Priorat's famed licorella soils give way most often to limestone. But the quality/value ratios are absurdly stacked in the drinker's favour.

The prices charged for some Priorat wines are as lofty as the stark pinnacles above these mountainous vineyards. Twenty years ago this entire area and its wines were nearly forgotten. In the early 1980s, a group of mavericks—René Barbier, Rioja's Alvaro Palacios, Carlos Pastrana, Dafne Glorian, and José Luis Pérez moved to Priorat. They created fantastic wines almost from the beginning, and they continue to improve the wines of the region.

The fame and pricing have attracted some to the region, but a quick buck is unlikely. As Alvaro Palacios of L'Ermita is quick to point out, the region itself is so difficult to work that only small amounts of very high-quality wine can be made. Anyone seeking to make wine through compromise will likely fail. The quality in Priorat, and the prices, shall remain high.





These wines are powerful and warm, if not occasionally hot, but they carry a fresh and even slightly racy core that gives them shape and complexity. The landscape too is distinct; the licorella soil mix of granite and slate adds a firmly mineral note that underpins every wine, regardless of the grapes.

Closer to the coast, Penedés is home to more than Cava, but sparkling wine is the 800-pound gorilla among the vines. The region is broken into the Alt-Penedés, Mitja-Penedés, and Baix-Penedés, reflecting the disparities in elevation within Penedés, with some vineyards planted in sites higher than 2,500 feet. All the grapes (especially the dominant three, Macabeo, Xarel-lo, and Parellada) at those altitudes can be intensely tart, akin to the raciness of Champagne.

Many American consumers see Cava as limited to the wildly successful grocery-store brands. But there are complex and layered versions of Cava, as well as rich rosado styles to be discovered. Nine months of aging on the lees is required for standard Cava; Reservas must stay 18 months on the lees, and Gran Reservas require 30 months.

Further southwest down the coast, the average temperatures go higher, and the opportunity to make light wines is baked away. Instead the Levante, an area around Valencia and Murcia, is wholly dependent upon water, and the grapevines suffer without it. Areas such

as Alicante, Bullas, Utiel-Requena, Valencia and Yecla do good work where the producers are dedicated to quality, and where the vineyards are elevated enough to provide cooling night time temperatures.

One of the stars here is Jumilla, which is not so different from its neighbours except in its track record. The last two decades Jumilla has crafted delightful wines, whether from Monastrell (or Mourvèdre, as the French call it), Garnacha or blends with other grapes. But most wines are very reasonably priced and are often rich and delicious. The Bobal grape is exciting too but prospers more often in Utiel-Requena.



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*North Town...*



# LA MARINA

La Marina is located on the Costa Blanca South between Santa Pola and Guardamar del Segura. La Marina is basically split into two distinct parts, the old coastal town and beach area, and the purpose built residential development (urbanisation La Marina), a short distance inland on the other side of the main coastal road the N-332.

# LA MARINA

The coastal part of the town has some fantastic sandy beaches, which even in the peak season are so big that they never get packed, and you can always find a spot away from the crowds to enjoy the sunny weather.

La Marina is a small town in an area of protected pine forests and it comes alive during the summer months when people fill the town to enjoy the small but busy beach tourist resort. Clearly, La Marina is a great location for a beach holiday, if that is all you want from a holiday then you won't need to go anywhere else, as everything you need for a great family holiday in the sun is right here in La Marina.

Enjoy a traditional Spanish experience by visiting the street markets which are held every Thursday and Sunday from 8am to 2pm. Here you will find stalls selling local produce including fruits, vegetables, leather goods such as handbags, shoes, belts and purses. Road access to La Marina is very good. The AP-7 autoroute (motorway) comes down from Alicante airport and goes south to Murcia Corvera airport.

Also the N-332 goes directly past the outskirts of the urbanisation of La Marina and this also goes from Alicante airport in the north all the way down to Murcia Corvera airport to the south.

To the south of La Marina are urbanisation Bella Vista and urbanisation Las Pesqueras, then comes Guardamar del Segura, a much larger coastal town with great beaches. To the north of La Marina is Santa Pola with its miles of sandy beaches and a large town centre. Also just north of La Marina are lots of salt lakes such as Salinas del Brac del Port which create a very healthy atmosphere for people suffering from health problems such as allergies or arthritis.

## La Marina Urbanisation

La Marina is a popular place where many people live all year round especially in the growing La Marina urbanisation which is slightly inland off the coast (and separate from the actual town of La Marina)

and just off the N-322. It has plenty of shops, bars and restaurants so you have plenty of facilities on your doorstep that you can easily walk to. There are four supermarkets including SuperValue (the tourist office is opposite here). There is also a newsagent, optician, bank, and an ice-cream parlour.

In Spanish, the word urbanisation is urbanizacion and means a housing development. La Marina is broken down into three main areas: La Marina, La Escuera and El Oasis. The post code (in Spanish 'códigos postales') is 03170.

You may also see it referred to as Marina Oasis and smaller parts include the blocks of Marina Sol, Marina del Mar 1, Urb. Jazmin, Urb. Oasis, Isla Christina, Lo Grane and Residencial Oasis. It is well-designed with plenty of parks and green zones where you can play football or walk dogs.

The La Marina urbanization has all its own amenities, making it pretty much self sufficient, and of course there are a glut of rental properties in the area. There is a local bus service which will take you to the shops, bars and restaurants on the urbanisation. The Vega bus goes to the beach 2km away. A good option is to rent a villa with pool. This means that for most days you can simply laze by the pool, cook on the barbeque and make the most of the superb weather conditions that are enjoyed here throughout the year.

With a car you will be able to get out and about and visit the numerous coastal resorts, as well as attractions like the Rio Safari park between Santa Pola and Elche. You can also get to local golf courses, of which there are plenty in the area. Don't forget a trip into the city of Alicante where the best shopping area can be found. Likewise for culture, maybe a visit to the Santa Barbara Castle is also ideal.





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# Christmas in Spain

## Roscon de Reyes

With religious origins, the Rosca de Reyes is a traditional Spanish bread in the form of a ring, representing the Wise Men's search for the King of the Jews. It is believed that Melchior, Gaspar and Balthazar, the Three Kings from the East, travelled to Jerusalem following a star. On meeting with King Herod, they asked him where the new King had been born. King Herod, frightened by these words, asked the wise men to search for the child and bring word once they had found him, so that he may also go and worship the new king. Because Herod was afraid that the child might threaten his throne, he ordered the killing of every single baby under the age of two years old. The day when the wise men found the Baby Jesus is known as Epiphany, which is precisely the event represented by the Rosca de Reyes.

The dried and candied fruits that adorn the bread symbolize the crowns of the Kings, while the traditional figurines placed inside the bread represent Mary and Joseph fleeing to Egypt to escape from Herod's attempts to kill their baby. The tradition of eating Rosca de Reyes actually started in France, in the 14th century. The way it was eaten was almost a ritual in itself. A slice of bread was first given to a poor person or stranger, then the next slices were intended for those serving in the King's army, and the rest of the bread was distributed among the other guests. This tradition soon expanded to other countries in Europe and later to Latin America.

Nowadays, in France, the tradition involves the Rosca de Reyes being placed on a table, under which a child sits or they are blindfolded, so that when the bread is divided they are asked "Who shall receive this share?" and the child names someone. One lucky recipient will find the trinket, normally a bean although sometimes even a coin. The person who finds it is named "King" for the day.

In Mexico, the tradition of sharing the bread is slightly different, as little plastic babies are placed inside it to symbolize the baby Jesus. Guests then randomly take a share of the bread, and whoever finds the figurine automatically becomes his godparent. Then he or she has to make a party with tamales and atole on the following February 2nd.

Godparents usually dress up a statue of Jesus using traditional costumes. Sometimes they dress him as Saint Francis of Assisi or the Holy Child of Atocha and other typical depictions of Jesus. February 2nd is a very important day, when many Christians celebrate the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin, also known as the Feast of the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple. This feast also honors Our Lady of Candelaria, a depiction of the Virgin Mary, and includes the blessing of water and candles. Far more than a quaint tradition, the Rosca de Reyes can help believers remember that God can turn darkness and bitterness into light and sweetness!







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# Spanish Regional Capitals

## Toledo



### There are 44 regions in Spain. Here we highlight Toledo

Toledo is a historic city located in central Spain, about 70 kilometers (43 miles) south of Madrid. It is the capital of the province of Toledo and has a rich cultural and historical heritage. Known as the “City of Three Cultures,” Toledo has been influenced by Christian, Muslim, and Jewish civilizations throughout its history.

The city of Toledo is situated on a hill overlooking the Tagus River. It is known for its well-preserved medieval architecture and is a UNESCO World Heritage site. The historic center of Toledo is enclosed by ancient city walls, and its narrow streets and alleys are filled with architectural treasures, including churches, synagogues, mosques, and palaces.

One of the most prominent landmarks in Toledo is the Toledo Cathedral, a magnificent Gothic structure dating back to the 13th century. It is considered one of the greatest Gothic cathedrals in Spain and houses numerous works of art, including paintings by El Greco, a famous Spanish Renaissance painter.



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Toledo is also renowned for its synthesis of different architectural styles. The city features Mudejar-style buildings, which blend Islamic and Christian elements, as well as examples of Renaissance and Baroque architecture. The Alcázar of Toledo, a fortified palace that served as a royal residence, is another significant landmark in the city.

Throughout history, Toledo has been a melting pot of cultures and religions. The Jewish quarter, called the Judería, is a testament to the city's Jewish heritage. The narrow streets and ancient synagogues in this area offer a glimpse into Toledo's multicultural past.

Toledo is famous for its traditional craftsmanship, particularly in the production of steel blades and swords. The city's sword-making tradition dates back centuries, and you can still find shops where skilled artisans create and sell swords and other metalwork.

In addition to its historical and cultural attractions, Toledo offers stunning panoramic views of the surrounding countryside. The Tagus River flows through the city, and its banks provide scenic spots for visitors to enjoy.

Toledo is easily accessible from Madrid by train or bus, making it a popular day trip destination for tourists. Exploring the city's labyrinthine streets, visiting its iconic landmarks, and immersing oneself in its rich history and culture make Toledo a must-visit place in Spain.

*Spanish recipe*

# Spanish Picadillo

*Ingredients...*

*How to cook it...*

Ingredients for 2 people:

250 grams pork mince  
3 or 4 cloves of garlic  
1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon of hot or smoky paprika  
1/2 to 1 teaspoon of sweet paprika  
pinch of salt  
olive oil for frying

Preparation:

- 1 Drizzle a little olive oil into a frying pan and throw your garlic cloves in. Don't peel them though
- 2 Fry over a medium heat until the skins are crispy
- 3 Peel the garlic and then mash it in a pestle and mortar with a pinch of salt
- 4 Mix the paste in with the mince and add the two types of paprika.
- 5 Keep stirring and mixing... and when you think you've stirred enough, stir more. Do it with your hands if you like... you want it really well mixed
- 6 Pop into a bowl, cover and refrigerate for at least 8 hours. I do ours in the morning, and then it's ready for that evening
- 7 Bring the bowl out of the fridge about half an hour before you're ready to cook so that it comes up to room temperature
- 8 Drizzle a small amount of olive oil into a large frying pan (perhaps a tablespoon full) and brown the mince
- 9 Keep stirring until it's cooked. Make sure you break the mince up





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# Taquilla Tickets

## By Taquilla Tickets

We love to take you on adventures. For us, each trip we take with you, our very loyal customers, is an adventure in its own right. Together we have been on many adventures and, with a New Year not far away, we sincerely hope that Taquilla Tickets will be taking you on many many more!

Well, we are on the verge of Christmas 2023 and a brand new 2024!! Will you be saying "yes to new adventures" in 2024?

The whole team at Taquilla Tickets wishes every single one of our guests, whether you are an existing guest or will be going on adventures for the very first time, a fantastic Christmas and a brilliant New Year.

We have been to lots of amazing places: Cities, Towns, Villages, Concerts and Shows. However, none of this would have been possible without the "Ever Present" MATEO COACHES.

Yes, we can come up with ideas of where to go (and we would like to hear where YOU would like to go too), and we can book the venues, buy the tickets, and whatever else we need to do BUT, we can't get you to these places without the help of our very good friends at MATEO COACHES.

So, on behalf of all of our guests, Taquilla Tickets says THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU to everyone at MATEO COACHES for all of your hard work in getting us to where we needed to be in 2023, FELIZ NAVIDAD!!

As 2024 races towards us, we will draw your attention to January the 5th 2024. Of course the stars of January the 5th will always be "Los Reyes Magos" or the "Three Wise Men". Although a lot of Spanish Families have embraced the "Santa" tradition, it is "Los Reyes Magos" who are the most important. According to Christian tradition, three wise men came to visit the newborn baby Jesus. Their names were Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar, and they arrived with gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh.

The three wise men have been honoured in various European countries since the middle ages. The tradition of Santa Claus bringing gifts to children on Christmas Day became very popular, and Spain followed suit but they used "Los Reyes Magos" as the gift bringers. Some Spanish children do get gifts on the 25th of December AND January the 6th. However, it must be said that "Three Kings Day" is the most important of the two. On the 5th of January, parades take place in every Province, City, Town, and village in the whole of Spain. If not a parade, then certainly a celebration.

With this in mind, Taquilla Tickets will be maintaining its yearly activity, and taking our guests to the beautiful city of Cartagena to see this wonderful parade in all its splendour and colour. If you have never seen the "Three Kings Parade" then you are in for a treat. So, come with us and enjoy the spectacle for yourself.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Christmas (Or Plum) Pudding is the traditional end to the British Christmas Dinner. Christmas Pudding originated as a 14th-century porridge called "frumenty", and was made up of beef and mutton.

After the wonderful "Three Kings Parade", we embark on what will be Taquilla Ticket's biggest and most spectacular

adventure. We have called it our "Cinco City Break" (Five City Break). Yes, ladies and gentlemen, we are visiting five of the most beautiful cities in the whole of Spain. And, on top of that, we will take you to the "Picture Postcard" town of Aracena. Our five cities are: Granada (what a beauty), Seville (Stunning), Jerez de la Frontera (WOW!), Cadiz (Superb) and, last but not least, Cordoba. Around the stunning city of Cordoba, you will see the biggest Olive Groves in Europe. They are simply stunning, and a sight to behold.

The town of Aracena is one of the most beautiful within the Province of Andalusia and has a few secrets to share with you.

You know where we are going, but do you know what each place is famous for? See if you can find out which place is famous for the following: A Moorish Castle that dominates, The Grotto of Marvels, A Grower of Sugar Cane, The Spanish Centre for the Exploration of the New World, and Calle Sierpes is the Commercial Heart of this place. The Dinagsa Festival. A place so very well known for its Flamenco, Wines and Horses. You can see the remains of a Visigoth Church in this place!

In no order at all the place names are: Aracena, Granada, Seville, Jerez de la Frontera, Cadiz, Cordoba. They just happen to be the places that our "Cinco City Break" will be visiting.

There is not much more that we can say about this fabulous trip except "Come and Join Us" for what will be an amazing trip.

After our "Cinco City Break" we will be hitting the road again on the 24th of January, and going to the stunning Sierra Nevada mountains. Bring your camera for this one because this is a "Picture Postcard" place. Even with the skiers going down the mountain, you can easily pick up a suntan!! Oh yes, you can! On the 28th of January we will be taking our guests for a day out in Benidorm. Never been? You have to say that you have been to Benidorm!! Come with us and see the Old Town, Tapas Alley, and the beaches. We have to say that the shops are pretty good too.

And so, why don't you "Say yes to new adventures" and join us as we visit some new, as well as, some old favourites in 2024?

You can contact us as usual by popping into our office within the Al Kazar complex on Condado de Alhama. Or see Nigel at CATS Bar on Camposol A.

You can call or WhatsApp Sally on 0034 657346445  
Nigel on 0034 642501568

You can email us on: [taquillaticketscondado@gmail.com](mailto:taquillaticketscondado@gmail.com)

Whichever way you want to contact us, we will be pleased to hear from you.

Please, everybody, take care and a massive FELIZ NAVIDAD from all of us and make 2024 your very own "Say yes to new adventures"



# Taquilla



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# 4 Great weekend trips in Spain

Avila and Segovia

Part 1



These 2 great cities will allow you will see everything from Roman aqueducts to Gothic cathedrals. Why not stay in Segovia, and visit Ávila for a day trip.

Ávila is known for its religious significance and its role as the birthplace of iconic female mystic, Saint Teresa. Once you arrive in Ávila, soak in the incredible views from the vantage point of Cuatro Postes. Then, make your way to the most popular religious structures in the city: The Gothic Avila Cathedral and the Romanesque San Vicente Basilica. Amble along cobblestone streets, snapping as many pictures as possible of the famous medieval walls and the towers dating back to the 11th century.

There is a walkway 1,700 metres long on top of the iconic city walls of Ávila, open to the public. The views of the cathedral, the Plaza del Mercado Grande and the countryside around the city are well worth the walk. The cathedral was originally fortified and is attached to the city walls. It is believed to be Spain's first Gothic cathedral. The other symbol of the city is Saint Teresa de Jesús, whose presence is everywhere in the city, from the statues in her honour to the name of Ávila's most famous sweet: yemas de Santa Teresa.

You can visit the Convent of Santa Teresa, built on the site of the house where she was born. The Museum of Saint Teresa stands next to it. The Real Monasterio de Santo Tomás, the Basilica of San Vicente and the Basilica of San Pedro are also interesting religious sites. To learn more about Christian mysticism and its representatives in Ávila, we recommend visiting the Mysticism Interpretation Centre.

Segovia. Learn about this medieval city, its Roman history and its magnificent location between the Clamores and Eresma Rivers. When you arrive, start by basking in the sheer engineering skill and beauty of the Roman aqueduct, which boasts two tiers and is one of the best preserved landmarks left by the ancient Romans in Spain.

After the initial amazement at this magnificent feat of engineering, with 167 arches held together only by the balance of forces, it's time to visit towers, Romanesque churches, synagogues, Renaissance palaces, convents, gardens, hidden courtyards, a fortress which could have inspired the creators at Disney... In Segovia you don't need a bus to see them all. You can enjoy each step and make the most of the walk.



Next up is the Alcazar, a brilliant castle dating from the 11th century that served as inspiration for today's Cinderella Castle at Walt Disney World. A guided tour through Alcazar lets you get close to the stunning turrets and see the exact spot where Queen Isabella herself was crowned in the 15th century.

Apart from its monuments, the city of Segovia has a wide range of cultural attractions all year, and its streets and other spaces always have music, dance, theatre or literature to enjoy. Its best known festivals include Titirimundi, the Segovia Music Festival and the Hay Festival. As well as traditional museums like the Antonio Machado House-Museum (the famous writer lived here from 1919 to 1932), surprising new spaces are emerging, like La Cárcel, a former prison which now offers exhibitions, film seasons, microtheatre, and so on.

If you want something traditional for lunch, the most famous local dish is suckling pig in the legendary Mesón Cándido or in some new restaurant contributing a touch of modernity. If you prefer, you can visit a Michelin starred restaurant like Villena.



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# Hobbies

## *Paddle Boarding*

Spain offers numerous fantastic locations for paddleboarding (also known as SUP, or Stand-Up Paddleboarding) due to its stunning coastline, vibrant cities, and beautiful lakes. Here are some of the best places for paddleboarding in Spain:

**Costa Brava:** The rugged coastline of Costa Brava in northeastern Spain is a popular destination for paddleboarding. With its crystal-clear waters, hidden coves, and dramatic cliffs, it provides a picturesque setting for SUP enthusiasts.

**Mallorca:** The largest Balearic Island, Mallorca, offers a diverse range of paddleboarding opportunities. Explore the breathtaking coastline, paddle through sea caves, or enjoy the calm waters of secluded bays like Port de Pollença or Cala Major.

**Ibiza:** Known for its vibrant nightlife, Ibiza also boasts beautiful beaches and excellent paddleboarding conditions. Take your board to Talamanca Beach or head to the quieter Cala Martina for a serene paddleboarding experience.

**Tarifa:** Located at the southernmost tip of Spain, Tarifa is a paradise for water sports enthusiasts. It's renowned for its strong winds, making it an ideal destination for paddleboarding and even SUP surfing. The Playa de Los Lances is a popular spot.

**Barcelona:** Combining a cosmopolitan city atmosphere with beachfront beauty, Barcelona offers fantastic paddleboarding opportunities. Head to Barceloneta Beach or the nearby Garraf coastline to enjoy paddling with a backdrop of the city's iconic landmarks.

**Costa Blanca:** The Costa Blanca region in southeastern Spain is dotted with charming coastal towns and stunning beaches. Jávea, Moraira, and Calpe are some of the spots where you can paddleboard in calm waters and admire the picturesque landscapes.

**Menorca:** As one of the quieter Balearic Islands, Menorca offers pristine beaches and tranquil bays, perfect for paddleboarding. Explore the turquoise waters of Cala Macarella, Cala en Porter, or Son Bou for a serene SUP experience.

**Mar Menor:** Located in the Murcia region, Mar Menor is a large saltwater lagoon with shallow and warm waters. This area is ideal for beginners or those who prefer calmer conditions. The lagoon's calm waters make it an excellent spot for paddleboarding.

Remember to check local regulations and weather conditions before paddleboarding in any location. It's always a good idea to ensure your safety and have appropriate equipment while enjoying this water activity.





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**SPAIN** 45



# Why Spain! BY

“My contribution to A Life In Spain aims to share my personal experiences in deciding, planning, moving and now living in Spain. My hope is that someone finds it useful, helpful, insightful or helps anyone considering moving to Spain (or another country), the courage to follow that dream.”



Welcome to the Happy (Lecrin) Valley!

Months before arriving in Spain, I became more and more captivated by the Granada province, specifically the Sierra Nevada Mountain range, the villages surrounding it, and, in particular, the Moorish history from the 8th to the 15th century of Granada city, the Lecrin Valley, and the Alpujarra.

The Lecrin Valley is an area of outstanding natural beauty. Agricultural activities underpin the region economically, as has been the case since the 8th Century. It was once the food bowl of the Alhambra. It's mostly about the almonds and olives but also, grapes, pomegranates, oranges, lemons, patatas, and more. It's where the Moors initially retreated to in 1492 after surrendering Granada and effectively ending their 711 years of rule. After the Lecrin Valley, the Moors retreated to the Alpujarra and after that, most were eventually forced to return to Morocco.

You will find lots of quintessentially Spanish villages dotted every couple of kilometers around the Valley. Walking from village to village is a very cool experience. Each village has something slightly different on offer. Some villages are perched high on hills and mountains while others can be found deep in the valleys. There are no traffic lights. No traffic jams. The freeway to Granada and Malaga is excellent.

It's on the cusp of the Sierra Nevada Mountain range, just 25 minutes south of Granada and only thirty minutes to Costa Tropical. A one-hour drive to the Sierra Nevada ski resort, important given my penchant for the snow and skiing. The acequia (irrigation system designed and built during Moorish rule) keeps the valleys and orchards lush and green all year round with its delicious clean, cold Sierra Nevada Mountain water. Mondujar and Talara villages combined are considered the centre hub of the Lecrin Valley and are often referred to as Lecrin.

Only two and a bit weeks into my planned Andalucian-wide traveling roadshow to find, buy and establish a guesthouse business I am quickly learning that (a) I've bitten off way more than I am comfortable chewing in terms of travelling and living in a classic camper and (b) the availability, suitability, and affordability of properties appears far more robust from afar on social media and the internet than it does on the ground. A harsh realisation for me and my plans. I have no doubt now that I won't have my guesthouse business up and running this year. At best, I can hope to open around February or March 2024.





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# CHANTAL WIESSNER

FB: Moving to Spain (Our Journey in Spain)



I have four nights left in the valley. I love it. I've already met some awesome people. People here are kind, welcoming and helpful. I've only seen one of the eight properties I shortlisted. It's taking much longer to organise property viewings, each of them with a different agent of course.

I am not ready to leave the Valley on Friday. There's more for me to do and see here.

And suddenly it struck me like a lightning bolt. Why am I so beholden to this plan I conceived on paper from far away? I don't have to leave the Valley on Friday. Even the best well-thought-out plans need to evolve as circumstances on the ground do.

So that's that, we're staying in the Leccrin Valley for the next couple of months or so. Why not. Let's throw the plan out and see what happens. Vex (my dog) and I are done with trying to find joy in travelling and living in Vera, our classic camper. It's not for us. Time to accept this and move on. We need a place we can call home, even if it's only for the short term. Much respect for all the solo ladies out there who do have the courage, tenacity, and persistence to embrace the challenges inherent to enjoying this kind of lifestyle. Too scary for me. It's also much easier to navigate all the bureaucratic steps necessary when moving countries to have fixed place of residence.



Time to find affordable pet-friendly accommodation in the Leccrin Valley. Establishing my life legally in Spain and here in the beautiful Leccrin Valley, even for the short term, is my next priority. I only have 67 days left to complete my EU Registration in Spain and a host of other bureaucratic requirements.

This decision feels right on all levels.

Onwards and upwards.

Happy to be staying in the Happy Valley, for now anyway.



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