

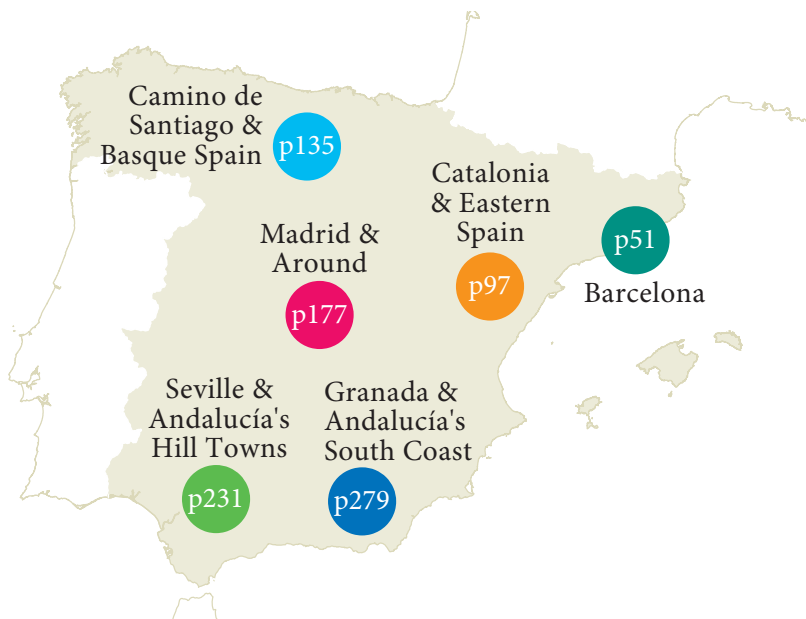


Discover Spain

Experience the best of Spain

This edition written and researched by

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This Is Spain

From soulful flamenco and daring architecture, to delicious food and avant-garde cities, Spain could be Europe's most exotic country. Wherever you venture you'll discover a beguiling land with a mix of stirring and often curious traditions, live-for-the-moment hedonism and a willingness to embrace the future with a relentlessly adventurous spirit.

Spain's dynamic cities are temples to all that's modern and cool. Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and Seville have become bywords for that peculiarly Spanish talent for living the good life, at full volume and all night long. At the same time, most cities promise a daytime feast of more sedate but nonetheless exceptional sites, from world-class art galleries and graceful Islamic-era monuments to *barrios* (neighbourhoods) overflowing with medieval charm, and zany Gaudí flights of fancy.

Spaniards have turned eating and drinking into an art form. From the culinary flamboyance of *pintxos* (Basque tapas) in San Sebastián to steaming seafood-infused paella served under the Valencian sunshine, Spanish food has an enviable reputation. In fact, if you really want to experience the best of Spain the way to do it is not to rush through an endless succession of tourist sights, but rather to slow the pace down and make eating the centrepiece of your day.

Spain is a reflection of its past. Poignantly windswept Roman ruins, cathedrals of rare power and incomparable jewels of Islamic architecture speak of a country where the great civilisations of history have always risen, fallen and left behind their indelible mark. More recently, what other country could produce such rebellious and relentlessly creative spirits as Salvador Dalí, Pablo Picasso and Antoni Gaudí and place them front and centre in public life? Here, grand monuments to the past coexist alongside architectural creations of such daring that it becomes clear that Spain's future will be every bit as original as its past.

“
Spain is a
beguiling
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”



Spain



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Top Highlights



- 1 Barcelona
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25 Spain's Top Highlights



Barcelona

Home to cutting-edge architecture, world-class dining and vertiginous nightlife, Barcelona (p51) has long been one of Europe's most alluring destinations. Days are spent wandering the cobblestone lanes of the Gothic quarter, basking on Mediterranean beaches or marvelling at Gaudí masterpieces across the city. By night, Barcelona is a whirl of vintage cocktail bars, gilded music halls, innovative eateries and dance-loving clubs, with the party extending well into the night. There are also colourful markets, hallowed arenas (such as Camp Nou where FC Barça plays), and a calendar packed with traditional Catalan festivals. Park Güell (p80)

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Tasting Tapas

One of the world's most enjoyable ways to eat, tapas is as much a way of life as it is Spain's most accessible culinary superstar. These bite-sized bar snacks are the accompaniment to countless Spanish nights of revelry and come in seemingly endless variations on the theme. In Andalucía, expect the best jamón or fine Spanish olives. In San Sebastián (p150) and elsewhere in the Basque Country (where they call tapas *pintxos*) tapas are an elaborate form of culinary art.

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