

welcome to Spain



An Epic Land

Spain's diverse landscapes stir the soul. The Pyrenees and the Picos de Europa are as beautiful as any mountain range on the continent, while the snowcapped Sierra Nevada rises up improbably from the sun-baked plains of Andalucía; these are hiking destinations of the highest order. The wildly beautiful cliffs of Spain's Atlantic northwest are the scene for some of Europe's most spectacular drives, even as the charming coves of the Mediterranean are still the continent's summer destination of choice; despite decades of overdevelopment, numerous unspoiled corners remain. And everywhere you go, villages of timeless beauty perch on hilltops, huddle

in valleys and cling to coastal outcrops as tiny but resilient outposts of Old Spain. Spend as long as you can in places like these.

A Culinary Feast

Food and wine are national obsessions in Spain, and with good reason. Yes, there's paella, tapas, *jamón* and olive oil in abundance, but these are merely the best-known ingredients of a national cuisine that continues to take the world by storm. The touchstones of Spanish cooking are deceptively simple: incalculable variety, strong traditions of recipes handed down through the generations, and an innate willingness to experiment and see what

Passionate, sophisticated and devoted to living the good life, Spain is at once a stereotype come to life and a country more diverse than you ever imagined.

(left) Menorca's prehistoric Cova d'en Xoroi
(below) The colourful Feria de Abril in Seville



comes out of the kitchen-laboratory. You may experience the best meal ever over tapas in an earthy bar where everyone's shouting, or over a meal prepared by a celebrity chef in the refined surrounds of a Michelin-starred restaurant. Either way, the breadth of gastronomic experience that awaits you is breathtaking.

Art Imitates Life

Spain's story is told with endless creativity through its arts and architecture. 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. For all such talk, this is a country that lives very much in the present. Perhaps you'll sense it along a crowded postmidnight street when all the world has come out to play. Or maybe that moment will come when a flamenco performer touches something deep in your soul. Whenever it happens, you'll find yourself nodding in recognition: *this* is Spain.