

# SPAIN

Lecture by Rick Steves

## Introduction to Iberia

Many layers of history: Roman, Moorish, Reconquista, Age of Discovery (and riches), Inquisition and Counter-Reformation, Catholic heritage, Civil War Revolution and present prosperity

Paseo: Evening stroll, bars serve munchies, tapas

Pousadas and Paradores: Expensive, historic, government run hotels, "poorman's paradors"

Private homes: Camas, quartos, casas particulares

Eating: Churros, a breakfast treat? Tapas, portions and rations. Eat with local schedule in mind. Don't fight it.

Economic Crisis: Impact on tourism is negligible

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## Barcelona

Cultural capital of Catalonia: Ramblas Blvd, Sardana Dance, La Boqueria Market, Gaudi architecture, art nouveau, Parc Guell, Sagrada Familia Church, Picasso's museum, Slicked up pretty well after '92 Olympics, Catalan spirit

Side Trips: Montserrat (mountaintop monastery), Dali Land – Cadaques, his home, Figueres for his museum

## Madrid

Puerta del Sol: Madrid's bustling center

Prado: Europe's best collection of paintings. Masterpieces by Bosch, Goya, Velazquez, El Greco

Picasso's Guernica: In Centro Arte Reina Sofia

Royal Palace: Europe's third-greatest palace

Bullfights: Most Sundays and holidays from Easter through October. Bull bars, bull tail stew

El Rastro flea market: Sunday mornings, near Plaza Mayor

Madrid Tapa crawl: See book for step-by-step

Plaza Mayor: Main square, people-watching, drink-sipping

## Near Madrid

Toledo: El Greco, great cathedral tour, Spanish Renaissance, national historic monument town, spend the night to enjoy city without its tour mobs



El Escorial: Huge, gloomy, 16th century Inquisition/counter-reformation palace

Segovia: Roman aqueduct, roast suckling pig

Avila: Best medieval walls in Spain

Salamanca: University town, best Plaza Mayor in Spain, fine art and architecture, university, tuna bands, fun people scene

La Mancha: Windmills at Consuegra sharing a hill with a castle, an hour south of Toledo

## Andalusia

Granada, Alhambra: Europe's best-preserved Moorish palace, Moors (Arabs) ruled Spain from 711 to 1492.

Albayzin – Moorish quarter, Ferdinand and Isabella "Catholic Monarchs"

Costa del Sol: Touristy, Nerja = top Costa del Sol stop, Balcony of Europe

Sevilla: Moorish-designed Alcazar, Cathedral, Plaza de Espana, Virgin de la Macarena – weeping Mary altarpiece, flamenco shows a city with a pulse that's fun to feel, Semana Santa (Holy Week) and April Fair (casetas), Triana District (tapas, gritty), Fine Arts museum – Zurbaran, Murillo

Cordoba: Best Moorish architecture, cathedral in grand mosque, Mezquita

Ruta del Pueblos Blancos: Route of the white-washed hilltowns covers the best of Andalusia, Arcos de la Frontera (south of Sevilla), Ronda (bridge over gorge, oldest bullring)

Tarifa: Just east of Algeciras, charming old town, good one day boat tours to Tangiers (Morocco)

Gibraltar: Walk over the border (air strip) from Algeciras, a little piece of Britain, climb the “rock” for a great view

## North Spain

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San Sebastian: Best tapas in Spain

Guernica: Cultural home of Basque people

Galicia: Santiago de Compostela

Bilbao: Guggenheim Modern Art Museum (Gehry)

Pamplona: Running of bulls, July 6-14 every year

Burgos: Leon, grand Romanesque cathedrals

Camino de Santiago: Ancient pilgrimage route

Santiago de Compostela: Mossy cathedral, percebes (barnacles)

### LEARN MORE

**Read:** *Rick Steves' Spain, Rick Steves' Spanish Phrase Book*

**Watch:** *Rick Steves' Spain DVD*

**Listen:** *Travel with Rick Steves radio podcast archives at ricksteves.com*

**Tour:** *Best of Spain in 14 Days, Best of Barcelona and Madrid in 8 Days, Best of Basque Country of Spain & France in 8 Days Tour, My Way: Spain in 11 Days Tour*

**App:** *Rick Steves' Audio Europe — Free audio tours and radio features organized in geographic playlists, for iPhone and Android*

**Surf:** *ricksteves.com*

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