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# **Cultural Capitals of Spain**

## **Land Tour**

*Plus optional extensions in*

**Bilbao; Malaga, Spain**

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**CSP/CBL 2014**

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# Grand Circle Travel

## Cultural Capitals of Spain

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# 1. PASSPORT, VISAS AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

## **Passport Required**

U.S. citizens need a passport for this itinerary. Please take moment to check if your passport meets all of these requirements. If not, you could be refused entry into a country. And if that happens, you might be required by that country to return to the U.S. immediately, **which would be at your own expense.**

### **Your passport should meet these requirements for this itinerary:**

- It should be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- It should have the recommended number of blank pages (see below for details).
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable.

### **Recommended number of blank pages:**

This recommendation is based on a “worst case” scenario. When you are on this adventure, you might use fewer pages, depending on the whims of the Immigration official on duty that day. Since the consequence of having too few pages can be severe—you could be denied entry into a country—we feel that it’s better to be safe than sorry, and we strongly recommend that you follow these guidelines.

- **Main trip only:** 2 blank “Visa” pages.

### **If you need to renew your passport or get extra pages:**

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit their website at **[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)** for information on obtaining a new passport, renewing your existing passport, or for additional pages. You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

**NOTE:** When updating your passport, it is worthwhile to check the prices on all the different services that might apply to you. For example, it might be less expensive to renew your passport than to have pages added, depending on the number of pages you need.

## **Visas Not Required**

For U.S. citizens, a visa is not required for entry into the countries on this itinerary.

## **No U.S. Passport?**

**Non-U.S. citizens or non-U.S. passport holders:** If you are **not** a U.S. citizen or if you possess a passport from a country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate or embassy about possible visa requirements. For your convenience, we recommend the services of PVS International. Or, contact your local consulate.

**PVS International**  
Passport & Visa Services  
1700 N Moore Street  
Rosslyn Center, suite 310  
Arlington, VA 22209  
Telephone: 1-800-556-9990

## **Backup Photocopies**

The smartest security precaution you can take is to make photocopies of your passport's personal information pages, your air tickets, your traveler's check serial numbers (if you're using them), and your credit cards. Also, bring extra passport-sized photos. Make a list of the phone and fax numbers for reporting lost credit cards, your travel protection plan company (if you have an optional travel protection plan) and medical emergency network. Keep these documents separate from the originals, and they can save you immeasurable time, money, and trouble if your originals are lost or stolen as you travel. In addition, scan these photocopies and email them to your email address; you can then print out replacement copies if necessary.

## **2. YOUR HEALTH**

### **Keep Your Abilities In Mind**

We've worked closely with our local Program Directors and regional associates to identify the aspects of this adventure that you should be aware of, from physical requirements to cultural factors. **Please carefully review the information below prior to departing on this trip.**

#### **Pacing**

- 3 locations in 14 days

#### **Physical Requirements**

- Not accessible for travelers using wheelchairs or scooters
- Travelers using walkers, crutches, or other mobility aids must travel with a companion who can assist them throughout the trip
- You must be able to walk 3 miles unassisted and participate in 2-3 hours of physical activities each day, including stairs

#### **Climate**

- Daytime temperatures range from 51-91°F during touring season
- June-August are the warmest months
- February, March, and December weather can be unpredictable and change quickly within a short period of time

#### **Terrain**

- Travel over uneven walking surfaces, including ruins and archaeological sites, unpaved paths, hills, stairs, and cobblestone

#### **Transportation**

- Travel by 45-seat motorcoach

#### **Cuisine**

- Meals will be based on the local cuisine

### **Health Check and Inoculations**

If you have any ongoing medical conditions or concerns about your health, we highly recommend that you schedule a checkup with your personal physician at least six weeks in advance of your departure date. Discuss with your doctor any aspects of your international itinerary that may affect your health and be guided by his or her advice. A loose filling or developing cavity would be difficult to remedy while you are traveling — you may want to have a dental exam before your trip. Feeling healthy and confident of your mobility is essential if you want to fully enjoy your trip abroad. For your comfort and safety, we recommend this program only to individuals in good physical condition.

If you take medications regularly, be sure to pack an ample supply that will last your entire trip, as obtaining refills of your medication can be difficult during your trip. Pack these medications in your carry-on bag, and keep them in their original, labeled containers. To be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications, you should also bring copies of the prescriptions, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name.

## **Vaccinations:**

**Check with the CDC:** To ensure you receive any needed vaccinations we suggest that you check the current recommendations of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for your destination. You can contact them at:

**On-line** — if you have access to the Internet, we suggest you visit the CDC's Web site at **[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)**, where you will find comprehensive information about preventing illness while traveling.

**By phone**—at the CDC's Hotline toll-free at **1-800-232-4636** 24 hours a day. Please note that automated information may be arranged topically by disease, rather than by country or region.

**Consult your doctor:** After checking the CDC's recommendations we strongly suggest that you consult your family physician concerning any vaccinations or medications that you may need on this trip. At the time of print there were no specific vaccinations required for entry into any of the countries on your itinerary.

### 3. LUGGAGE REGULATIONS

#### Size, Number and Weight Restrictions

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on bag per person
Weight restrictions	Varies by airline. The current <b>standard</b> is <b>50lbs for checked bags</b> and <b>15 lbs for carry-on bags</b> .
Size restrictions	Varies by airline. Measured in linear inches ( <i>length+width+depth</i> ). Generally, <b>62 linear inches is the checked bag limit; carry-on limit is 45 linear inches</b> .
Luggage Type	A sturdy, fabric-sided suitcase with built-in wheels and lockable zippers is recommended.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
The extensions have the same luggage restrictions as the main trip.	
REMARKS / SUGGESTIONS	
<p><b>One suitcase and one carry-on bag per person:</b> Due to the space limitations on bus transfers, you'll be restricted to one suitcase and one carry-on bag per person. This is to ensure that we have room for everyone's luggage. We ask that you abide by this limit to avoid inconveniencing your fellow travelers and prevent additional airlines luggage fees (which are your responsibility). Most airlines now charge to check more than one suitcase per person for flights to Europe and other international flights.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Enforcement of published restrictions by countries and airlines is a matter of governmental and corporate policy. Enforcement may include spot checks and may be inconsistently applied. Expect penalties and fines to be imposed immediately, however, when and if enforced. Before you choose to ignore the published restrictions you should ask: <i>Do I feel lucky?</i> And, even if you answer yes, you should make sure that you have the ability to pay the fine.</p>	

#### Should I confirm luggage restrictions with my U.S./international airline(s) before departure?

Absolutely, confirm current restrictions about a week or so before your departure. You should take this step no matter if your vacation has a lower limit than the average international flight or not, because there may be recent changes, such as new security regulations, or an update to the standard weight/size allowances. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our webpage in the *FAQ* section.

**You should also check with the airlines on luggage fees—many airlines charge to check luggage,** even on international flights. Others may charge a fee if you bring a second carry-on item, like a purse or a laptop. **These fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines. If you are making a connecting flight, you should also confirm if your luggage can be checked through to your final destination. For more information about air travel, see the “Air Travel” section of your *Important Information* booklet.

## **Luggage Suggestions**

**Consider a duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase for your checked luggage.** Due to space limitations on our motor coaches, you are allowed one piece of checked luggage per person. Porterage at airports and hotels is provided for **one** bag per person. All bags should have luggage tags.

**Consider a daypack or small backpack as your carry-on bag.** It will do double duty during excursions and walking trips. A daypack leaves your hands free and distributes its weight onto your back. Packed with daily travel needs (sweater, camera, rain/wind jacket, water bottle, etc.), it will compress to fit the storage space of foreign motorcoaches, and yet still have room for an impulse buy at a local street market.

***Tip:** Bring a second, empty lockable bag folded into your main suitcase, with a luggage tag and small lock. Use this to carry souvenirs home – but remember that you may incur extra luggage fees. If you're traveling with a companion we recommend “cross-packing,” i.e., pack 2 outfits of your clothing in your companion's luggage and vice-versa, in case one bag is delayed.*

## **Airport Security/TSA**

**Restrictions on what can be included in your carry-on luggage may change.** To avoid inadvertently packing restricted items in your carry-on, we suggest that you consult the Transportation Security Administration website at [www.tsa.gov/public](http://www.tsa.gov/public), which keeps a current list of restricted items. From the main website click on *Our Travelers*, then *Air Travel*, and then you will see a link for *Prohibited Items*.

**Liquids and your carry on:** Follow the **TSA's 3-1-1 rule:** Liquids must be in a 3.4 ounce or less (100ml) bottle (by volume); all bottles must be in a 1 quart-sized, clear, plastic, zip-top bag; 1 bag per passenger placed in screening bin. One-quart bag per person limits the total liquid volume each traveler can bring. The 3.4 ounce (100ml) container size is a security measure. Note that this rule is used increasingly in Europe, as well.

### **Locking your luggage:**

To reduce the risk of damage to your luggage, *either* do not lock your bags when checking in for flights that originate in the U.S. *or* use TSA-approved locks. (These are locks that TSA screeners can open and relock with a special tool, avoiding damage to your luggage or lock if a physical inspection is required. Look for the words “TSA” or “TSA-approved” on the lock's packaging.) Outside of the U.S., we strongly recommend that you lock your luggage as a preventative measure against theft.

## 4. WHEN YOU ARRIVE

### Your GCT Program Director

During your Grand Circle Vacation, your group of up to 42 travelers will have reliable assistance available at all times from an on-site Grand Circle Travel Program Director. Your Program Director is a resident of Spain who is fluent in English and can give you an inside perspective on your destinations. While in Spain your Program Director is supported along the way by local tour guides, who guide you expertly through particular sites and cities. Note that this trip includes walking tours that involve walking for two hours or more.

Grand Circle Program Directors are graduates in tourism. In addition, they receive specialized training directly from Grand Circle, training that is based on what we've learned from thousands of past travelers about how to make the trip most enjoyable. Your Program Director offers both a deep knowledge of the region and a commitment to make this a very pleasant, informative, and rewarding travel experience for you.

Your Program Director will provide sightseeing trips, handle all travel details, reserve optional tours you choose to take, oversee your Discovery Series events, and provide any other assistance you may need. You will be in the company of the Program Director throughout your Land Tour.

### GCT Air Travelers

**U.S. Departure:** If you are among a group of ten or more GCT travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have a GCT Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, the Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.

**Europe Arrival:** At the beginning of your base program or your optional pre-trip extension, a GCT Representative will meet you at the airport after you exit customs and assist you with your transfer to the hotel.

***Important note:*** Airport porters are NOT allowed in the customs hall area. On arrival, you must take your luggage off the baggage carousel and load it onto a cart. You will then move your cart through customs, and when you exit customs, you'll handle your cart until reaching your motorcoach. Your motorcoach driver will load your luggage onto your motorcoach.

**U.S. Return:** At the end of your base trip or optional post-trip extension, you'll be transferred by motorcoach to the airport for your return flight to the U.S. If you are among a group of ten or more GCT travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, a GCT Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. Again, it is our goal to have our GCT Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.

**Flying with a Travel Companion**

If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.

**Please note:** *If you plan on booking your own international flights or arranging with our air department to arrive/depart on an earlier/later date than standard for your program, airport transfers will NOT be included in your program price. Transfers must be purchased separately, as an optional add-on, and are subject to availability. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Traveler Support team at 1-800-321-2835. For more information, please see your Important Information booklet.*

## 5. MONEY MATTERS

### How to Carry Your Money

The European financial infrastructure is as developed and modern as America's – sometimes even better developed. Currencies vary and banks have different names, but most are allied with global institutions and offer the same services you use daily. You can expect to have ready access to ATMs (to get local currency from your account), to have major credit cards accepted at most popular tourist sites, restaurants, and major stores, and to exchange US dollars for local currencies. There will be localized exceptions and perhaps some limitations on availability and amounts, and don't forget the fees. However, a little forethought can make juggling currencies a fairly painless process.

While there is no need to obtain local currency before your trip, many travelers do exchange \$50 to \$100 or so into the currency of their first destination. This can smooth your arrival should you run into closed banks/exchanges or broken ATMs. Otherwise, rely on a mix of credit/debit cards and ATM use (for ready access to cash) as the best way to manage your money as you travel. U.S. cash should be mixed into the blend, but it's wise to minimize how much you carry. Just as at home, carrying large amounts of cash can be risky. It's generally wise to have spending money in the local currency rather than to rely on American dollars.

You can exchange money at banks, some hotels, and money exchange offices (to do so, you'll likely need your passport). Be aware, however, that torn, dirty, or taped U.S. bills will *not* be accepted for exchange. **New** (in terms of use *and* issue date – post 2004) and large bills (\$100) will *usually* be accepted by banks and onboard ships; **old** \$100 bills (again, in age and condition) will *not* be accepted. Money in smaller denominations is much more universally accepted, but even there, new bills are preferred. Note that U.S. currency is not an accepted form of currency in Europe.

**Traveler's checks—*not recommended*:** We urge you not to rely on traveler's checks for your personal expenses. They can be *extremely* difficult (sometimes impossible) to exchange and the commission fee for cashing them is quite high. It's most practical to view any traveler's checks you might bring as a last "cash" resort in the event of a special situation.

**U.S. dollars** have an advantage. Cash is more readily exchanged and accepted than traveler's checks, and sometimes commands a better exchange rate.

#### **Credit Cards**

Though major American credit cards (American Express, Visa, and MasterCard) are accepted abroad, always inquire if your type of credit card is accepted before deciding on your purchase. It is also wise to notify the credit card company that you will be using your cards abroad so that they may remove any security block. When using a major credit card you may receive a different exchange rate than if you pay with cash; inquire about the rate first. Please be aware that credit cards might not be accepted for small purchases or in the markets. Note that the Discover credit card is not widely accepted outside the U.S. Keep your receipts in case you have questions about the conversion or exchange rate. Also, keep your receipts as proof of purchase for items to be shipped home.

**TIP:** Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company or bank that you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. You should also double-check what phone number you should call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1-800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** European countries have been phasing in a new type of credit card technology, called a “smartcard” or a “chip-and-PIN” card. These cards have an embedded computer chip instead of a magnetized strip, and the card owner authorizes a purchase by entering a four digit numerical PIN (Personal Identification Number) instead of signing a slip. Some businesses in Europe have already switched to the new system completely; some can process both smartcards and regular cards; and some haven't switched at all.

This new technology is not common in the U.S., so occasionally there may be machines that can't read U.S. cards. Or the machine can read the card, but asks for a PIN. Although it is not common for U.S. credit cards to have PINs (and some providers will not even be able to provide one at all), requesting one prior to your departure is recommended. In some shops you will still be able to sign a slip as usual if you inform the vendor at the point of sale. And if the shop in question requires a smartcard, you can always try a different form of payment, like a debit card or cash. (U.S. debit cards usually have a PIN, so sometimes they work when credit cards don't.) Since there is no way to predict in advance what each shop will do, we recommend that you bring more than one type of payment when you go shopping. For example, a mix of a couple different credit cards, a debit or ATM card, and some cash is ideal—you'll be prepared for anything.

**Please note:** Optional tour payments made by credit card may take up to 3 months to process. For this reason we ask that you use a credit card that will not expire until three months following your trip. Because our headquarters are in Boston, charges may appear to be from Boston or might be labeled as "**OPT Boston**" (depending on your credit card company).

**Debit/ATM cards** give you a reliable payment method and ready access to local currency. We recommend you use a debit card for withdrawals at ATM machines when you need cash, as it will allow you the flexibility of accessing money at your convenience without relying on bank hours for money exchanges.

### **ATMs**

When traveling, typically PLUS, Cirrus, and other bank networks are available throughout large cities and small towns. Always notify your bank before you leave home that you are going abroad so that they may remove any blocks on your account and also ask them about the number of withdrawals you may make abroad. For cash withdrawals, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's 4-digit PIN (Personal Identification Number), as many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their numeric keys, they only display digits. Many banks have begun imposing a fee ranging from \$1 to \$5 every time you use an ATM in a foreign city. You may want to limit the number of withdrawals that you make. Your Program Director/Hospitality Desk Representative can advise you on locations, but when to exchange money is left to your discretion.

## Currency

The euro is the official currency of Spain. Euro banknote and coin denominations are as follows:

- Banknotes: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, and 500
- Coins: 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 cents; 1 and 2 euro

There is no need to obtain local currency before your trip. However, in most cases, if you do not have a relationship with a local bank, you will need to use an exchange office for currency exchanges — most their clients to exchange U.S. dollars to Euros currency in Spain. (Please note that torn, dirty, or taped bills may not be accepted.) The most convenient way to get euros is via ATM machines, which are widely available in Spain. You will need to remember to have your PIN available.

Currency exchange rates fluctuate daily. Your Program Director will advise you of the exchange rate upon your arrival. For current exchange rates, please refer to the our website, or the financial section of your newspaper. On our web site select the region and then the country you'll be visiting. A link to a currency converter is included on each country page menu.

## **Banking Hours**

### **Spain**

Banks are typically open Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 2 pm.

## Shopping

There is **no** requirement to make a purchase during stops at local shops or markets, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. **Grand Circle Travel cannot be responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.**

We recommend that wherever possible you carry your purchases home with you, especially if they are valuable or fragile. (Remember to leave some extra space in your luggage when you are packing for your trip, so you can fit in your vacation purchases.)

If you plan a major purchase, we strongly recommend that you research the prices and quality available at home before your trip. Just one visit to an import shop or gold dealer will put you way ahead when you go shopping. This is the only way to know if you are getting a good price

Leather goods, from supple suede gloves and elegant calf handbags to wineskins that require careful curing (*botas*), are excellent purchases. Other good buys are shoes, from classical calf pumps to provincial cloth espadrilles; porcelain by *Lladro* and pottery by regional craftsmen; and wool rugs made by tapestry makers or simple cotton-rag throws. Basque *txapelas* (berets) are famous worldwide and make fine gifts. Best when waterproofed, they'll keep you warm in rain and mist. *Botas* are the wineskins from which Basques typically drink at bullfights or during fiestas. The art lies in drinking a stream of wine from a bota held at arm's length -- without spilling a drop, if you want to maintain your honor (not to mention your shirt).

**Siesta:** Throughout Spain, most stores and offices close between 1:30 pm and 5 pm. Then they reopen until 8:30 pm (many close even later). Restaurants generally remain open during siesta. In the larger cities you may find that big department stores will stay open from 10am – 10pm.

**Local shop hours:** Most shops in your area are open Monday through Friday, 10 am–1:30 pm and 5–8 pm; Saturday, 10 am–1:30 pm. Also nearby are markets, hairdressers, pharmacies, and other conveniences.

**Value Added Tax:** Known in Spain as the IVA, Value Added Tax is levied on most articles, services, and meals. The IVA ranges from 7% to 33% (luxury items, cars). Depending on how much you spend on certain goods, you may be eligible for a partial refund of this tax. Ask the shopkeeper or salesperson about the VAT at time of purchase, or talk to your Program Director about it before you shop. Be sure to save all receipts and forms for Customs.

## Barcelona

Barcelona is a shopper's delight: from the high-end stores on Passeig de Gràcia to the soup-to-nuts jumble of stores in the Born-Ribera district – there's something for everyone. Leather is one of the best buys in Barcelona — shoes, belts, jackets, and coats are all available. You'll find good buys in both high-end stores and at smaller shops; the quality and value of leather goods is generally superb. High design is also widely available, from decorative objects and housewares, particularly at shops around the MACBA and the Museu Picasso. Artisan/craft work, such as ceramic tiles, gifts and earthenware bowls and plates, are cheap and plentiful; cookware, crockery, wine glasses, and utensils in general are great buys.

## Valencia

Across the street from La Lonja, the silk exchange that dates to 1482, you'll find the 1920s Mercado Central on the Plaza del Mercado in the city center. Both the Mercado Central and La Lonja deserve a visit: the silk exchange is a lovely example of Gothic architecture. The Mercado Central is in a huge railway station-like building, sells everything, and is properly the envy of any supermarket in the world.

The best streets for local shopping include Plaza del Ayuntamiento, Calle Don Juan de Austria, Calle Colón, and the streets thereabouts. Sunday mornings you'll find an open-air market at Plaza Redonda, near the cathedral, where vendors sell traditional local handicrafts, including ceramics, ironwork, silver items, and inlaid marquetry as well as goods from other regions of Spain. Also on Sunday morning there's a flea market on Avenida de Suecia near the soccer stadium.

The Mercado de Colón is a Gaudí-inspired fantasy, circa 1916, that's central to many modern cafes, restaurants, craft shops, and flower stalls. Streets around the market also draw crowds for popular smaller shops.

Hours: Shops are general open from 10am until 2pm and 4:30pm until 8:30pm. Larger shopping centers open from 10am until 9:30pm.

## Malaga

In addition to the chain, fashion and souvenir stores, Málaga is home to plenty of small idiosyncratic shops, some of which have been in the same family for several generations and seem to charmingly thrive on selling just one or two specialties.

If shopping is a passion you can visit El Cortes Ingles (on Avenida de Andalucia), Spain's famed department store. Or find Málaga's uptown shopping street, Marqués de Larios where you'll enjoy glossy marble pavement and expensive shops. And Atarazanas, Malaga Central Market deserves a stop, as well.

Leather goods are not quite the bargain they were in the past, but you can find some lovely pieces at reasonable prices. Spanish ceramics always make good gifts or souvenirs and Cerámica Fina (Caller Coronel 5) shows everything from hand-painted thimbles to decorative plates, tiles, religious plates and wall lamps.

## **U.S. Customs Regulations and Shipping Charges**

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, [www.cbp.gov](http://www.cbp.gov) has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the *export* duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the *import* duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.
- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection  
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20229  
Tel. **1-877-227-5511**  
[www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/)

## **Problem with a Purchase?**

The best way to address a problem with a purchase is to not have one in the first place! So don't forget to examine merchandise before paying for it, check contracts or agreements before signing, and review your receipt before leaving the shop. For major purchases, don't hesitate to ask in advance about the return policy—local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up.

But what if you do discover an issue with an item later on? In that case, your best recourse is to contact the vendor directly. For this reason we recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. due to delays in communication, the complexities of international shipping/customs duties, and even cultural differences in how business is conducted.

## **To Tip or Not to Tip**

Sometimes *that* is the question. The good news is twofold: we're fresh out of Shakespearean soliloquies, so no thesauri will get hurt here; and the answer to the question “**to tip or not to tip** (and how much to tip if you so choose)” is *always* a personal decision. Tipping is a common practice both at home and abroad and we offer these guidelines to answer requests for appropriate tipping amounts. It can be useful to have this information on site – when the question *must* be answered – and ahead of time for travel budgeting purposes. Tips below are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency (usually preferred) or in U.S. dollars (personal/traveler's checks should *never* be used for tips).

**GCT Program Director:** It is customary at the end of your trip to express a personal “Thank You” to the Grand Circle Program Director or the hotel Hospitality Desk Representative, especially if he or she has provided you with individual assistance. We recommend \$4-\$6 per person, per day. Please note that tips for our Program Directors can only be in the form of cash, and local currency is appreciated.

**Airport/Hotel/Pier Porterage & Transfers:** When using GCT transfer services, tips to hotel, airport, and pier porters are included in the cost of your trip. Tips to the motor coach driver for your airport/hotel/pier transfers are also paid by GCT.

**Included Group Meals:** Your Program Director will tip waiters for the included meals when the group dines together.

**Time at Leisure:** During the times that you explore independently, you may dine in a local restaurant, take a taxi, or avail yourself of some other service where tipping is customary. In Spain, restaurants do not normally include service charges on bills and it is customary to leave a 5%-10% tip (10% in a better restaurant, less in a humbler establishment). When ordering snack foods or *menus del dia*, round the bill off to the nearest euro; if you've received exceptional service, leave more at your discretion. The waiters in a hotel cocktail lounge can expect a tip of about 60 euro cents. In cafés and bars, leave small tips for barmen and waiters; a few small change coins—less than one euro—is sufficient. The practice of tipping taxi drivers in Spain varies from city to city in some cities it is expected and in others it is discretionary. Your program director can advise you what the practice is in each area that you visit.

**Tours & Excursions:** During your vacation, you have the opportunity to participate in included and optional ours. (Note that optional ours can only be paid for with a credit card). A tip to your motorcoach driver (and local tour guide, if one accompanies the tour) is customary. Suggested tip amounts: \$2 per person for each half-day tour, \$3 per person for each full-day tour.

## 6. PACKING FOR YOUR TRIP

### In General

**Travel light.** A good rule of thumb is to gather together everything you want to bring; then take half of that. Eliminate all but the essentials and start packing a few days before you leave. That way, you'll have time to think—not fret—about what you might be forgetting. To have a varied travel wardrobe, yet keep your luggage light, we recommend you select a color scheme and pack color-coordinated clothing items that can be mixed to create different outfits.

**Pack casual clothes.** Comfortable, informal apparel is acceptable at each of your destinations. Basic pants, shirts, walking shorts, sportswear, everyday dresses and skirts, supportive shoes, and functional outdoor clothes that are relatively easy to care for are recommended. At dinner, you will not need to don "dressy" clothing; men do not need jackets or ties and women do not need fancy dresses. You may want one or two "smart casual" outfits for the Welcome Reception or Farewell Dinner, but it's completely up to you. You would only need nicer dress if you plan to dine at a deluxe city restaurant on your own.

**Winter (November-February):** For travel during winter months, take cooler weather gear—warm pants and socks, fleece top or wool sweater, and windproof jacket. Lows can drop to the 30 degree range. The most practical travel wardrobe consists of items that you can wear in layers, adding or removing a layer as necessary. Your outer jacket should be roomy enough to comfortably fit over a sweater or fleece top. A warm coat is advisable for travel at this time of year.

**Summer (May, September, and October):** In Spain's interior temperatures will be similar to the U.S. during these months, and changeable. In parts of southern Spain (i.e. Malaga, on the optional extension) these months can be summer-like, with warm temperatures. Summer outfits are appropriate, with a light sweater for and a windbreaker for evening breezes. In October, temperatures drop quickly after sunset, so it's a good to have some warmer clothes as well.

**Early Spring/Late Fall (March and April):** Some days may be quite sunny and warm, others may be on the wet and windy side. Pack an assortment of seasonal garments: light pieces and cotton sweaters for daytime; and slacks, long-sleeve shirts, warmer dresses, and a heavy sweater or fleece jacket for evenings.

**Comfortable, supportive walking shoes:** These are essential. The country's magnificent churches, museums, markets, palaces, and shops truly invite exploration by foot. But walking on the cobblestone streets and rather uneven sidewalks can be a challenge—even for the most surefooted traveler.

**Rain gear:** Regardless of your month of travel, rainfall is certainly a possibility. We suggest you bring a folding umbrella and waterproof shell. Water-resistant walking shoes are advantageous in case heavy downpours pass through.

### Packing Your Carry-On

Using a daypack as a carry-on bag for your flights is a smart solution. We **strongly urge** you to pack your carry-on with at least one full change of clothes, your camera gear, medications, changes of socks and underwear, your important travel documents, and other irreplaceable items, in case your checked bags go astray. Store camera gear and important papers in plastic bags to protect them from dirt and moisture. With a daypack you can then remove these items on arrival and load your bag with the gear you'll need on walking tours and excursions.



**What not to pack:** do not pack aerosol cans, as they tend to leak during air travel. Avoid packing glass bottles; use plastic containers instead. Leave at home checkbooks and any credit cards not essential for your trip, valuable jewelry, and anything that you would hate to lose.

## Clothing Options

The luggage weight and size restrictions imposed by travel realities today have made traveling light an absolute necessity. With modern fabrics – Gore-Tex, Polarfleece, polypropylene, etc. – lightweight packing for comfort and protection through a wide range of weather is easy. A visit to any on-line or local sporting goods/outdoor stores (L.L. Bean, REI, EMS, etc.) will yield a treasure trove of lightweight, specialized, and fashionable clothing and gear that is readily adaptable to your itinerary.

## Travel Gear Suggestions

Though it's often fun to do things as the locals do, it can be frustrating when daily necessities or conveniences from home aren't available. To travel wisely these days you must juggle your personal needs and preferences against the physical constraints of your transportation—whether it's an international airplane, a transfer motorcoach, a small ship or a day-long trek on a camel. You'll have to distinguish between what you **must** have, what you'd *like* to have, whether you can zip your suitcase closed, and what you can reasonably expect to wrestle through airport hallways and security checkpoints. Consult the following items to create your personal checklist – ignoring what you don't need and making the tough decisions over borderline cases. Remember that many airlines today will charge you extra for added luggage.

## Consider ...

- Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, shampoo/conditioner, shower cap, body soap, etc. (body soap is not a standard amenity in Spanish hotels)
- Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses and your prescription
- Sunglasses with a neck strap
- Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- Insect repellent with DEET
- Travel money bag or money belt
- Moisturizer, lip balm
- Swimsuit
- Compact umbrella
- Wide-brim sun hat or visor (seasonal)
- Pocket-size tissues
- Moist towelettes (packets) and/or anti-bacterial "water-free" hand cleanser
- Flashlight, extra batteries/bulb
- Photocopies of passport, air ticket, credit cards
- Extra passport-sized photos

## Medicines

- Your own prescription medicines
- Vitamins
- Cold remedies: Sudafed/Dristan
- Pain relievers: Ibuprofen/naproxen/aspirin
- Laxatives: Senokot/Ex-Lax
- Stomach upset: Pepto-Bismol/Mylanta
- Anti-diarrheal: Imodium
- Band-Aids, Moleskin foot pads
- Antibiotics: Neosporin/Bacitracin

## Other Gear

- Travel alarm (or rely on wake-up calls)
- Compact binoculars
- Hanging toiletry bag with pockets
- Washcloth (*not* a standard amenity in Spanish hotels)
- Beach towel (not provided by hotel)
- Handkerchiefs
- Basic sewing kit
- Small multi-tool (in *checked* luggage)
- Hand-wash laundry soap (Woolite), clothespins/travel clothesline/stopper
- Electrical transformer & plug adapters—see “Regional Electricity” below
- Travel journal/note pad/reading material
- Home address book
- Photos, small gift for home-hosted visit
- Phrase book
- Water bottle for land excursions
- Collapsible walking staff
- Pocket calculator for exchange rates
- Vitamins

## 7. REGIONAL CLIMATE INFORMATION

We can't predict what the weather will be during your travels, but you'll find historical averages and general information on the climate of your destinations below. As your departure nears it's a good idea to visit the *My Account* feature of [www.gct.com](http://www.gct.com), where you'll find monthly temperature averages for the countries you'll visit as well as a current 10-day forecast of local temperatures and conditions. Or check Internet weather sites ([www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com) is very comprehensive) for those forecasts.

**Madrid:** The climate of Madrid fits into that of the interior of Spain. Rainfall is generally rather low over most of the interior. In late summer much of this area has a burnt and barren appearance after the long summer drought. Summers are generally hot. Spring and early summer tend to be the wettest seasons in many places, but the rainfall is light and not very effective as it often falls in short, heavy showers. Winters have frequent cold spells with biting winds blowing off the snow-covered sierras. Dust and hot winds are the most unpleasant features of the summer weather, but low humidity makes the heat more bearable. Sunshine amounts are quite high throughout the year, ranging from an average of five hours a day in winter to as much as twelve hours in midsummer.

**Valencia:** Located in the heart of Spain's eastern coast and blessed with about eight hours of sunshine each day as well as white sandy beaches Valencia is known for its appealing climate. Spring is mild, though rain is more common. Temperatures average 61°F in February and warm up by the end of March. Summers are hot, with June through September daytime temperatures averaging 82°F, with a peak in July and August of 86°F or more. Water temperatures in the Mediterranean reach 77°F, and summer evenings are warm and balmy. Autumn in Valencia can be wet, but is generally mild and sunny. Temperatures in Valencia during September average 77°F, but by early November they have dropped 10 degrees. November, December and January are Valencia's coldest months, although temperatures remain well above 50°F. Swimming is common, but beaches are not crowded.

**Barcelona:** Barcelona has a Mediterranean climate with mild, humid winters and warm, dry summers. Located on the east coast of the Iberian Peninsula Atlantic winds often arrive in Barcelona with low humidity, producing little rain. Barcelona winters tend to be mild. The coldest months are December, January and February; average daily winter temperatures range from 50 to 63 °F. The summer season lasts about six months, from May to October. July and August are the hottest months, with average temperatures around 82 °F during the day. May, June, September and October the average daily temperature is around 74 °F.

**Malaga and the Costa del Sol, Spain (optional extension):** Plenty of warm sunshine and cloudless skies are the norm on the Costa del Sol. There are, nevertheless, seasonal variations worth noting as you prepare for your holiday time. While long stints of dry sunshine are still to be found on the Costa del Sol in autumn and early winter, the normally balmy days may be interrupted by chilly winds from the mountains, as well as light showers. Heavier rains may pass through in the peak winter months of January and February. By March, and certainly during April and May, daytime temperatures remain quite warm; nights are cooler. Between June and September, hot days with low humidity are only occasionally broken by cooler evenings. Temperatures can reach well into the 80s.

**Bilbao (optional extension):** Bilbao has an oceanic-maritime climate, with temperate weather year-round and rare major temperature fluctuations or extremes. Spring has average temperatures of 57°F in February, and 61°F in March. Spring, however, can be rainy. Summer features the city's best weather: clear skies, strong sunshine and temperatures around 72°F. July and August are the hottest months, which highs can sometimes reach 95°F, sometimes accompanied by humidity. The city remains comfortably warm from September to November, with highs around 68°F. Rain is common but the showers often clear quickly. Winters will see some snow, but temperatures average 54°F it doesn't last long.

Here is the data from the weather observation stations closest to our destinations.

<b>WHAT'S THE TEMPERATURE?</b>												
<i>Average highs (taken at 2 pm) and lows (taken just before sunrise) in °F.</i>												
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
<b>Madrid, Spain</b>												
High	50	54	60	64	71	80	88	87	79	66	56	50
Low	37	39	42	45	51	59	65	65	59	50	43	39
<b>Valencia</b>												
High	61	63	66	68	73	79	84	85	82	75	67	62
Low	45	46	48	51	57	64	69	71	66	58	51	47
<b>Barcelona</b>												
High	56	58	61	64	69	76	82	82	78	71	63	58
Low	40	42	44	47	54	60	66	67	62	55	47	42
<b>Malaga (optional extension)</b>												
High	62	64	66	70	75	81	86	87	82	75	68	63
Low	45	46	48	51	56	63	68	69	65	58	51	47
<b>Bilbao (optional extension)</b>												
High	56	58	61	62	68	73	77	78	76	69	62	57
Low	41	41	42	45	50	55	59	59	56	51	46	43

**Please note:** The data cited here reflect *climate* as opposed to *weather* conditions, and serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. A 60 degree *average* high temperature means that days may be as warm as 80 or as cool as 40 – but it's most likely you'll encounter temperatures in the 50 to 70 degree range.

## 8. TRAVEL AND TECHNOLOGY

### In General

Smartphone, tablet, digital camera/camcorder, MP3 player: travel today can involve technology that didn't exist even five years ago. The usefulness of digital devices is enormous: smartphones can keep you connected and offer up-to-the-minute information via your cell plan or a local Wi-Fi connection. With a tablet (or smartphone) you can store multiple country guidebooks, access maps and connect to the internet in a small, lightweight device. (*Tip: you can download **this** document from the Grand Circle Travel website and import it into your tablet or e-reader, many of which can display PDF files.*)

Compact and lightweight, digital camcorders and cameras take high definition movies and still images of the people you meet and places you visit. For robust use a laptop may be effective; for occasional use it's wiser to rely on Internet cafes or a tablet and hotel Internet access rather than shoulder the heft and size of a laptop.

To use these devices you should first consider the services available at your destinations. You'll encounter a range of electrical standards, varied plug configurations to access the local current, erratic availability (electricity and internet access), and differing technological standards.

You'll need to assess your power and data storage needs, and the accessories required to recharge/connect/use these devices. Finally, it's smart to read the owner's manual *before* you depart. Pay particular attention to electrical, power and storage requirements to ensure that you understand exactly what you need. Thorough preparation is the best guarantee that your devices will work up to their potential.

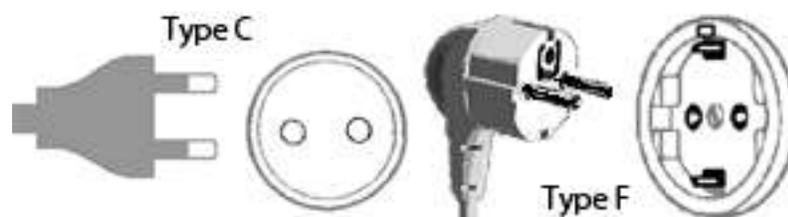
### Regional Electricity

The standard U.S. electrical system — 110V 60Hz current and flat two- or three-pronged polarized plug system — is rare elsewhere. The overwhelming choice for the rest of the world is 220-240V and 50/60Hz current with a variety of plug shapes, sizes, and configurations. Some plugs will work with multiple receptacles, while others won't. Europe is largely standardized to the Type C "Europlug."

Plugging a 110V U.S. appliance into 220/240V 50/60Hz service will ruin the motor. We suggest that you bring *dual* voltage appliances (widely available) that work on both 110 and 220/240 voltage. Dual voltage appliances are inexpensive and need only plug adapters.

If you bring 110V appliances, such as a hair dryer (note that hotels often supply hairdryers and coffee makers) or shaver, you'll need a transformer (to halve the 220/240V current) in addition to plug adapters. Regional transformer/adaptor kits can often be found at hardware or online stores but transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave those larger items at home.

Spain uses the Type C "Europlug" and the Type F plugs and receptacles that accommodate them and 230 V/50 Hz current.



Even though you'll only need Type C and Type F plug adapters on this trip, it may be a good idea to invest in an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, this item will ensure that you are prepared for your current trip as well as future vacations. If you use multiple digital devices—cell phone, digital camera, and MP3 player for instance – it's also handy to have a travel power strip, perhaps with a surge suppressor and USB-style port for charging cell phones, MP3 players or e-readers without the use of device-specific plugs.

## **Smartphones**

It will require some effort to get the most out of your smartphone when you travel. Even with an international roaming plan, costs can add up quickly – those handy apps often pile up download fees. The simplest solution is to shut down all cell phone functions, automatic data feeds and roaming options, and take advantage of the apps via available Wi-Fi. With an Internet VOIP app (like Skype) you can make inexpensive calls. If necessary, turn international roaming back on and your phone will work as usual – albeit at some cost. If your phone doesn't support international roaming (most smartphones do), some carriers offer loaners.

## **Cell Phones**

If you want to use a standard cell phone while traveling overseas, be sure to check with your service provider ([www.verizon.com](http://www.verizon.com), [www.t-mobile.com](http://www.t-mobile.com) etc.) to see if your phone will work outside the U.S. or whether you're better off renting an international phone. The websites [www.travelcell.com](http://www.travelcell.com) and [www.globalcellularrental.com](http://www.globalcellularrental.com) have good information on rentals. Or, consider buying an inexpensive local phone for your stay.

## **Phone Calling Cards**

If you don't carry a phone, you can use a prepaid calling card to call the U.S. with minimal additional charges. Besides the prepaid long distance charges, you might have a local fee of a few cents and possibly a connection fee if you are using your card at a hotel. Check with the reception desk prior to using it to avoid unexpected charges.

Calling cards purchased locally are usually less expensive than those purchased in the U.S. and are more likely to work with the local system. Note that dialing a U.S. 1-800 number outside the continental United States will incur costly long distance fees, since 1-800 does not work outside the U.S.

## **Photo Gear**

For many people, capturing the highlights of their travel experiences in photographs or movies and sharing them is one of the most enjoyable aspects of the journey. Remember, however: some individuals and cultures are less tolerant of photography than others. It's always best to respect local customs. And in some places you may be charged for photography at specific sites, or restricted from any photography at all.

Digital cameras and camcorders are excellent travel companions—and many do dual duty by recording movies *and* still images. Fist sized camcorders can capture HD movies and high quality still photos; cameras the size of a deck of cards are great for snapshots and casual movie clips. With an ample supply of high-capacity memory cards you can record your whole trip with a small, lightweight package.

But you must remember the batteries. Recharging batteries is sometimes impossible, cameras can drain batteries *very* quickly, and replacements may be unavailable. Whether you need standard or proprietary batteries, it's good to have spares. Be sure your charger will work with the local electrical system, and bring more than enough memory cards—they may be hard or impossible to find. Memory cards are small, thin and light: you can never have too much storage.

Compact cameras are impractical for distant subjects. Some models have a zoom lens of up to 120mm, which is good for middle distances. For distant subjects a *megazoom* (with a zoom lens of at least 300mm) or a single lens reflex (DSLR) camera with up to a 300mm telephoto lens are good choices. With a DSLR you can use multiple lenses, though your gear can quickly get complex, weighty and cumbersome. Cameras or lenses that need a tripod are impractical for travel photography. A single mid-range telephoto lens coupled with a small, fast prime lens (for low light/no flash situations) is an effective, flexible and compact kit. Consider mirrorless interchangeable lens cameras (MILC), which combine small bodies and multiple, small lenses with high quality for both still and HD movie images.

If you use a DSLR or MILC camera, protect the lenses with a UV filter and bring lens caps, covers, cleaning paper and a waterproof bag (a heavy duty Ziploc-style bag is good) to protect your gear. Be sure your camera has a flash that you can turn off, and if it's detachable, remember to pack it. (At many sites and museums, flashes are *not* permitted.)

Consider disposable cameras, as well. They are inexpensive and capable of acceptable photos as long as the light is not too dim or bright. X-rays do not damage the data of digital cameras (in any media format), and so pose no problems for travelers using digital cameras.

## 9. ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS

We're including some handy practical details and a brief introduction to the places you'll visit on your Land Tour. If you expect to explore in depth on your own, we recommend that you consult one of the many available book-length guides to your destinations. If you have one or two specific sites, museums or features that you're interested in, an internet search is the ideal way to get-up-to-date information and details. And of course your Grand Circle Travel Program Director or Hospitality Desk Representative will be able to assist you with suggestions and arrangements of activities you wish to participate in during your stay.

### **Drinking Water**

Tap water is generally safe to drink, but bottled water may taste better and is readily available in hotels, restaurants, and shops.

### **Laundry Service**

Laundry and dry-cleaning services are often available at your hotels for a fee (in most hotels these services are usually high priced.)

## **Spain in Brief**

### **Cuisine**

Spanish cuisine consists of a great variety of dishes which stem from differences in geography, culture and climate. It is heavily influenced by seafood available from the waters that surround the country, and reflects the country's Mediterranean roots. Spain's extensive history with many cultural influences has led to a unique cuisine with literally thousands of recipes and flavors.

A significant portion of Spanish cuisine derives from the Jewish and Moorish traditions. The Moors were a strong influence in Spain for many centuries and some of their food is still eaten in Spain today. However, pork is popular and for centuries eating pork was a statement of Christian ethnicity, because it was not eaten by Jews or Muslims.

The essential ingredient for real Spanish cooking is olive oil; Spain accounts for 44% of the global production of olives.

Even today, daily meals are still very often made traditionally by hand, from fresh ingredients bought daily from the local market. This practice is more common in the rural areas and less common in the large urban areas like Madrid, where supermarkets are beginning to displace the open air markets. However, even in Madrid food can be bought from the local shops, bread from the *panadería*, meat from the *carnicería*, etc.

One popular custom when going out is to be served *tapas* which are essentially snacks or appetizers that can be combined to form a meal. Another traditional favorite is the *churro* with a mug of thick hot chocolate for dipping. *Churros* are fried dough pastries and *Churrerías*, or stores that serve *churros*, are quite common.

## Entertainment & Recreational Activities

Most of Spain's larger cities offer a wide range of entertainment and recreational opportunities: nightclubs, shows, fiestas, classic and popular artists in performance as well as local entertainment. Golf, swimming, hiking and most other common forms of recreation are generally available, as well.

**Bullfighting season:** The season starts the end of March and lasts through October. Ticket prices vary according to the seat's location: near or farther back from the ring, and in the shade or sun. Good seats in the shade run about \$75. You need to purchase tickets in advance. Malaga, Valencia, Madrid, Bilbao and Barcelona all have bullrings.

## Local Transportation

**Taxi:** taxis are generally available in all major cities. It is best to ask your Program Director in each destination whether or not tipping will be expected.

**Bus:** Generally less expensive than both taxi and train travel, bus travel in Spain has increased in recent years. Your Program Director can advise you in each of your destinations where the nearest stops are and the approximate fares.

**Trains:** Spain has an extensive railway network linking all major towns and cities, and rail travel in Spain is generally comfortable, reliable and often cheaper than many other European countries. Trains are modern and many are high-speed

## Madrid in Brief

### City Layout and Details

Madrid's compactness makes it relatively easy for visitors to explore the city on foot. Most of the major attractions are concentrated in the downtown area between the Royal Palace and Retiro Park, barely a mile apart. Clustered within this district are grand museums, winding medieval alleys, broad avenues, stately gardens, and quaint *tavernas*. The city's principal squares are *Cibeles Square*, a few blocks north of the Prado Museum and site of one of Spain's most famous fountains; *Plaza de Espana*, just north of the Royal Palace; *Plaza de Oriente*, east of the palace; and *Plaza Mayor*, located between the Royal Palace and the Puerta del Sol.

Madrid's "museum mile"—which extends along the Paseo del Prado—enables art fans to visit many of the city's best museums without having to travel across the city. Shoppers will want to browse the stores around the Puerta del Sol in the center of town, as well as the upscale shops in the Salamanca district, bounded, roughly, by Serrano, Goya, and Conde de Penalver. South of the city center is the Mercado Puerta de Toledo shopping mall, featuring dozens of designer boutiques. There is another attractive mall underneath the Palace Hotel on the Paseo del Prado.

"Old Madrid"—a labyrinth of narrow lanes that constitutes the oldest part of the city—lies between Puerta del Sol and the Royal Palace. Each street, lane, and alleyway is marked by a sign with its name and a descriptive picture, visual aids originally created in the 17th century for those who could not read.

## Entertainment & Recreational Activities

Madrid offers plenty of things to do at night. Theater productions include ballets, operas, operettas, and *zarzuelas*. World-class jazz, salsa, African, and classical music concerts are also common events. Castilian dances (*bolero* and *fandango*) and Andalusian dances (*flamenco*) are performed in cabarets throughout the city, and nightclubs with floor shows stay open until the wee hours of the morning. Almost a dozen movie theaters regularly show undubbed foreign films, the majority of them English-language.

*Note: See the “Newspapers & Magazines” section for publications that provide a current calendar of events and ticket information.*

## Local Transportation

**Bus:** Excellent, inexpensive bus service is available in Madrid between 6 am and midnight. Signs clearly marking the routes are at each bus stop. Some buses are entered from the rear. Microbuses cost a bit more and are equipped with plush seats and air conditioning.

**Subway:** Madrid’s Metro is rapid and efficient. Stops along all ten subway lines are clearly marked, and color-coded Metro maps are easy to read. Metro tickets purchased from booths or machines are put into electronic turnstiles as you enter the system. Do not discard your ticket until the end of the ride. Exits are marked *salida*. The Metro operates from 6 am to 1:30 am, although a few entrances close earlier.

**Taxis:** Taxis are numerous and can easily be hailed in the street. Available cabs will display a *libre* sign during the day, a green light at night. Generally, a tip of 5-10% is given to the driver.

## Valencia in Brief

### City Layout and Details

Valencia is both extremely easy and extremely pleasurable to get lost in. The center is a tangle of atmospheric old streets, framed by large roads (Guillem de Castro to the west and south, met by Cristobal Colon to the south and east) and capped by the Turia River garden in the north. If you suddenly discover yourself crossing one of those landmarks, you’re moving away from the center. Modern Valencia, in contrast, is easy to navigate – but the most interesting sites are in the city center. Within that framework you’ll find that primary corners of the center are pinned down by the Puente de Real bridge, Glorieta square and its marble arch, the train station and city bullring, the Libraby (old Hospital) – (a Renaissance building shaped like a cross), and the IVAM Modern Art Museum.

Within the city center you’ll find four main squares that offer almost half of the city’s most important sites: the Plaza de Ayuntamiento, Plaza de la Reina, the Plaza de la Virgen (Valencia’s primary historic square), and Glorieta square. The squares, connected by colorful alleys, are a walking tour in and of themselves.

The center is thus split roughly into 4 quarters, with the central core in the middle. Most important sites will be found in the core, the top left quarter (both of which constitute the old town of Carmen) and the bottom right quarter – which is more a business and administrative district with stunning architecture. The other two quarters are of limited interest. Carmen is an ancient medieval development at the center of the today’s cultural and leisure activity.

To the southeast of the center lies a 19th century Spanish expansion of L'Exemple. The large chunk of this area closest to the river is known as Canovas, for it's proximity to the Plaza de Canovas. This area booms with nightlife on weekends, and offers a large selection of cosmopolitan restaurants.

Following catastrophic floods in 1957, the Turia River was rerouted outside the city and it's old bed re-imagined as a sunken park. Former bridges were left in place, and it is now a multipurpose park/green space with various uses – from simple lounging to sports areas. It roughly bisects the city in a leisurely meander, and can be used to walk to various city areas.

If the chance arises, a visit to the City of Arts and Sciences, a modern entertainment-based cultural and architectural complex, is well worthwhile. It's at the southeastern end of the Turia River garden, and is very popular both with locals and visitors.

## **Attractions & Entertainment**

Founded by the Romans, inhabited by the Moors for five centuries, and capital of the Republic (the losing side) during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s Valencia has a rich and mixed history. At the Plaza de la Virgen is on the site of ancient Roman Forum, center of the city at its founding. At the other extreme a visit to the City of Arts and Sciences takes you up to the most modern architecture you're liable to find. In the city center you'll find classic architecture, churches and cathedrals, plazas, charming corners and a river that has been replaced with park spaces. However, Valencia has also been the site of two America's Cup sailing competitions and hosted the European Grand Prix auto races since 2008.

Around the Plaza de la Virgen you'll find the Catedral and El Miguelete – a bell tower that offers some wonderful views. At the Plaza del Mercado you'll find the central market, the old silk market (La Lonja), and the baroque Santos Juanes church. The Museo de Bellas Artes San Pio V collects the works of primitive Valencian painters as well as offering some works by El Greco, Velazquez, and Goya, among others.

The City of Arts and Sciences complex is a stunning attempt to create both an educational and entertainment arena housed in buildings that were high art before anything is went inside them. Set in the lush landscape built from the Turia River's old riverbed, it's not to be missed. Along the waterfront you'll find two main beaches: El Cabanyal (Las Arenas Beach), and La Malvarossa Beach.

## **Local Transportation**

**On Foot:** Exploring central Valencia is perhaps best done walking. You can set your own pace, stop for a coffee or snack, and choose your own destinations. Sensible shoes are the order of the day – and a few extra Euros for shopping or sipping. Streets and alleys are, depending on your mindset, confusing or charmingly unstructured. In either case, getting lost is never fatal, and a casual stroll offers the chance of engaging discoveries around every corner.

**Bus and Metro:** Destinations further out (such as the beach or the City of Arts and Sciences) may require the used of Valencia's bus or metro system. Tickets for both are available in kiosks and tobacco shops. Both offer tickets that are good for ten rides, and cost around \$8 to \$9; as well as one-way fares for around \$2. The metro has five lines (including a tramway to the beach). It is not a comprehensive system, but will get you to major points in the city. It runs from 5:30am to midnight. Buses run to nearly every part of city, from 4:30 am to 10:30pm, although timetables vary.

**On Two Wheels:** If you're confident about your balance, bike rentals are popular and widely available. The city is nearly flat, and bikes are available (from more than 100 locations in the city), convenient, and inexpensive – at about \$13 for unlimited access over 7 days. (Note, however, that you can't ride on sidewalks, and there are few bike trails – so you'll be riding in traffic.)

**Taxis:** White with the city crest and taxi license number on the side taxis run all day and night. Fares are visible inside the cars, with the total price displayed on a meter, and include charges for flag-down, distance traveled and other extras.

## **Barcelona in Brief**

### **City Layout and Details**

Barcelona has a style all its own, unmatched anywhere in the world. It seems to re-invent itself daily even as it preserves and maintains the best of its history. If you have time limitations, you'll still be able to take in the prime historic sights by focusing on the *ciutat vella*, the old town. You can reach the many major sights – the Gothic cathedral, the Picasso Museum, markets, Gaudi buildings and art galleries – from the central Plaça de Catalunya in under a half hour at a leisurely walk. For anything further out, the Metro is convenient, fast, and inexpensive.

The old town is split roughly in two by the tree-lined and very pedestrian friendly Ramblas. To the east you'll find the labyrinthine Barri Gòtic (Gothic Quarter), with the Sant Pere and La Ribera neighborhoods even further out. Going west takes you into El Raval, a district that offers a trendy and bohemian atmosphere. At the foot of the Ramblas you'll find the waterfront, with a newly polished harbor area. East from there you'll find the fishing and restaurant quarter of Barceloneta, city beaches, and the cafés and restaurants of the Port Olímpic. Moving past the old town you'll find L'Eixample (Catalan for "extension"), built when the population grew past the city walls. It is, in contrast with the cramped and historic lanes of the *ciutat vella*, a wide-open area of fine avenues and 19th-century *modernista* (Art Nouveau) buildings. It is also the location of the city's most iconic building, the Gaudi's Sagrada Família.

You'll find a cultural vibrancy here that's rare anywhere: from the glorious *modernista* architecture, and the work of Antoni Gaudí in particular, to the artistic legacy of Catalan artist Joan Miró and the showcase Pablo Picasso museum (one of the city's most popular.) When you're done taking in the sights, join the locals for a market visit, a stroll down the Ramblas, a lazy harborside lunch, lively festival nights, or a visit to the beach.

### **Entertainment & Recreational Activities**

From art openings and concerts to tapas bars, music bars, and clubbing, Barcelona is a great night-time city, and the array of after-dark diversions is huge. You don't have to leave the city center to find more than enough entertainment, but if you do, you'll find the outer districts just as lively. Trendy bars and clubs operate in every major district, and if one closes down, another seems to open the next night. Nightlife here is, however, a late adventure: evenings don't get seriously underway until after 10, bars stay open until 3am, and many clubs don't close until 6am.

From relaxing an evening away in local *tascas* (taverns), grazing on an array of appetizers at a tapas bar, or a slowly emptying a bottle of wine at a cafe, you can enjoy an easy and inexpensive way to spend an evening people-watching. If the weather is good (which is frequently is) the city's outdoor squares fill with tables and chairs. Drinking outside is so popular, and sometimes so noisy, that you might find restricted hours in some places.

There's more to the city than history and nightlife. Barcelona has numerous green belts and a busy waterfront, rebuilt with walkways, marinas, beaches, and top seafood eating spots. Outside the city, golf, horse riding, tennis, and swimming are available and within easy reach.

## **Local Transportation**

In central Barcelona comfortable shoes are your best travel buy: it's an eminently walkable city, particularly the old town. For areas further afield:

**Metro:** Barcelona's underground public transport system is very efficient, and it goes pretty much any place in the city you might want to visit. You'll find five color-coded/numbered lines radiating from the center of the city. Stations are identified by a red diamond-shaped sign with the letter M in the center, maps are widely available, and tickets can be bought ahead of time, or in the station as you travel. Tickets come in a range of flavors – from a simple single ticket to multi-trip and multi-day passes and can be bought from station offices or from touch-screen vending machines (with instructions in English.) The metro runs from 5am to midnight Sunday through Thursday and until 2am on Friday and Saturday. Visit TMB's website ([www.tmb.net](http://www.tmb.net)) for more information on the city's transport system (in English.)

**Trams & Buses:** Subject to Barcelona's famed traffic snarls, *tramvías* (trams) work the main streets through the city alongside city buses. Routes are clearly marked at each stop, as are timetables.

**Taxis:** Yellow-and-black taxis are plentiful and reasonably priced. You can hail one in the street if its green light is on. Taxis have meters, and two stage pricing – cheaper during the day, more expensive after 8pm at night. You'll find a list of prices and surcharges is (by law) displayed (by law) on the back passenger window.

## **Bilbao in Brief—Optional Extension**

### **City Layout**

The city of Bilbao is surrounded by mountains and crossed by the river Nervion. It dates from 1300 when it was founded by Diego Lopez de Haro, Lord of Vizcaya. At that time it was a small village of fishermen and peasants. Due to its privileged position, in the course of time it grew rapidly and was forced to carry out a series of enlargements. The nearby mountains caused its urban layout to be irregular.

Bilbao's Old City, has been under protection since 1972 and is also known as the Seven Streets. It includes the most important shops of the city, and has an endless series of bars and restaurants which give it a unique atmosphere. The oldest site is the gothic Santiago Cathedral in the very heart of the Seven Streets. Inside there is a beautiful neo-Classical altar-ledge. It is catalogued as a site of interest to Spain's history of art and architecture on a national scale.

Among its newer buildings, the Frank Gehry designed Guggenheim Museum has been hailed by architect Philip Johnson as "the greatest building of our time."

Bilbao is the industrial hub of the north and the Basques people's political capital. Shipping, shipbuilding, and steel-making have made it prosperous, and an abundance of bankers or industrialists can be found here. Its commercial heart, bursting with skyscrapers and cranes, hums with activity. Among the cities of the Basque region, it is the most populous.

## Entertainment & Recreational Activities

Bilbao sustains a lively nightlife all week long. You can wander through the Old Town's narrow alleyways, two of which, Calle Pozas and Calle Barrencalle, are dotted with all manner of bars, *tascas*, and *bodegas*.

The major cultural venue in Bilbao is the Teatro Arriaga, on the banks of the Nervión River. This is the setting for world-class opera, classical music concerts, ballet, and also *zarzuelas* (comic operas).

## Local Transportation

Bilbao's public transportation system has improved significantly due to the addition of the underground and the tram. There are three public transport companies: Bilbaobus (local buses), Metro Bilbao (underground) and EuskoTran (tram).

**Bus:** The buses can be distinguished by their red colour and large white lettering, and there are 25 major lines serving the city, with five smaller lines connecting the town centre with the immediate outskirts.

Bilbobus has recently won a European Union prize for service excellence. Passengers are typically recommended to use a Creditrans travelcard. Available in denominations of 5, 10 or 15 euros, they permit ease of travel. To save money, purchase the Creditrans at underground stations, tram stops, kiosks or tobacconists because the cost is discounted. The ticket is validated each time you board the bus at a flat rate cost of 48 cents. If you buy tickets on board, the cost is 1 euro.

**Subway:** The underground is one of the symbols of Bilbao's transformation. Opened in 1995 and still unfinished, it gradually adds services and destinations. The system consists of one line in the city centre (Etxebarri - San Inazio) which splits into two branches northwest of downtown. Creditrans farepass can be used. Using Creditrans, each trip has a different cost, depending on the zones crossed (1, 2 or 3). You can also get specific Metro Bilbao tickets from vending machines in the stations.

**Taxis:** Taxis are prevalent, both on the street and at cab ranks. If the green light on top is on, they're free. Drivers will only enter the narrow streets of the old towns if summoned. Generally, a tip of 5-10% is given to the driver.

## **Malaga in Brief—Optional Extension**

### **City Layout**

Located on the southern coastline of Spain, the popular city resort of Malaga is the second biggest city of Andalucia. With the Mediterranean in front, Malaga anchors the Costa del Sol and is Europe's most southerly city. With around half a million residents, it is a fairly large city, but the historic city center is easily managed on foot. The easiest way to get around is to reference the major streets. Particularly prominent is the Paseo del Parque, which is lined with tropical palm trees, and runs parallel to the city's central waterfront. The Alameda Principal is another major thoroughfare that continues to define the Old Town's boundary, extending it further to the west from the Paseo del Parque. Other notable streets include the Calle Molina Lario and the Calle Marques de Larios, which connect the Old Town from its southern side. Some of the most interesting sights are clustered together just north of the Paseo Del Parque, where you'll find the Gibralfaro Hill on the east, presiding over the Paseo del Parque. On the hill you'll find the Moorish citadels Alcazaba and Gibralfaro, and below them the Roman Theater. Nearby you can stroll the small tangle of streets and find, in quick succession, the Cathedral, the Picasso Museum, and the Plaza de la Merced. A block or two east of the end of Paseo del Parque you'll find Malaga's bullring. Malaga was the birthplace of Pablo Picasso, and the museum here features nearly 300 of his works (donated by family members) in the renovated Beunavista Palace, which dates from the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Night or day, the city center offers shops and restaurants, as does the harbor area which is just in front of the center. A little further out, the Thyssen Museum and the Contemporary Art Museum are also worth a visit. Informative maps are available at the tourist office on the Avenida de Cervantes.

### **Entertainment**

Malaga's nightlife district can be found on the streets and squares of the Plaza de la Merced, the Plaza de la Constitucion, Calle Granada, Calle Alcazabilla, Calle La Malagueta and Calle Larios – but the night starts late, around 11 pm, and goes long – until next morning, if you'd like. If you don't do discos, you can also find clubs or restaurants to enjoy a quiet meal, drink, or listen to some live music.

Not surprisingly, Málaga is known for its fish and seafood, sampled at tapas bars and restaurants throughout the city. Or visit the old fishing villages of El Palo and Pedregalejo, now part of the city suburbs, for the seafront paseo and some of the best *marisquerías* and *chiringuitos* (seafood cafés) in the area.

### **Local Transportation**

As with many European cities, best way to get around the most interesting areas of the city is on foot. It's convenient and lets you to uncover more hidden gems than you would any other way.

**On Foot:** It's the historic city center that offers the most interesting sights and opportunities to get to know this historic city. From anywhere in the center you're within walking distance of the Picasso Museum, restaurants, nightlife, and gentle recreation such as Paseo del Parque, and more.

**By Bus:** Malaga's bus system is inexpensive and convenient. A single ride costs 1€ (about \$1.50). You can purchase a bus card, good for 10 trips, for 6€ ( about \$9.30). Month long passes are also available. Buses run regularly during the day and hourly late at night.

**By Taxi:** Taxis are plentiful and prices are reasonable. Short trips throughout Malaga average around 5€ (about \$8). Malaga taxis are generally white, and easy to spot – but they may be difficult to hail one during the rush hours.

## 10. DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

### Spain

**Area:** The mainland occupies approximately 195,364.5 square miles. Off Spain's east coast in the Mediterranean are the Balearic Islands (1,936 square miles), the largest of which is Majorca. Sixty miles west of Africa are the Canary Islands (2,808 square miles).

**Capital:** Madrid

**Location:** Spain takes up 85% of the Iberian Peninsula on the southwestern tip of Europe, which it shares with Portugal. The country is bounded to the west by Portugal, the northeast by France, and everywhere else by Mediterranean or Atlantic waters. The Costa del Sol is Spain's southern Mediterranean "Sun Coast," and Malaga is its center—geographically and otherwise.

**Geography:** Spain's topography consists of a broad central plateau that slopes to the south and east, crossed by a series of mountain ranges and river valleys. It is a land of both towering peaks and endless beaches, as well as fertile landscapes and high, dry plains. Principal rivers are the Ebro in the northeast, the Tajo in the central region, and the Guadalquivir in the south.

**Languages:** Spanish, Basque, Catalan, and Galician. In resort areas, many people also speak English, French, and German.

**Population (2014 estimate):** 47,737,941

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 94%, other 6%

**Time Zone:** Spain is six hours ahead of U.S. Eastern Time.

#### National Holidays:

01/01	New Year's Day
04/18	Good Friday
05/01	Labor Day
10/12	Hispanic Day
11/01	All Saints
12/06	Constitution Day
12/08	Immaculate Conception (observed)
12/25	Christmas Day

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE SUGGESTS that Paleolithic humans lived in Spain perhaps half a million years ago. By 12,000 B.C., prehistoric man had decorated the Altamira stone caves in the north of Spain and the Pileta Cave in Ronda (about 40 miles from Malaga) with colorful paintings. These prehistoric illustrations are marveled at today for their surprising technical skill.

During the Neolithic period, rudimentary stone megaliths were built by the Iberians, who probably migrated from North Africa across the Strait of Gibraltar about 3000 B.C. The most sophisticated stone pillars, including the Stonehenge-like talayotic monuments on the Balearics, date from 1100 B.C.

It was at around this time, too, that the Phoenicians passed through and established colonies in Andalusia, notably at Cadiz, Malaga, and Tartessus. Greeks, Celts, Carthaginians, Romans, and Visigoths also invaded the country before the Moors conquered all of Spain, except its northernmost region, in A.D. 711. At this pivotal point in history, Spain, which had been a Christian land since the 1st century A.D., was suddenly forced to adopt a Muslim culture. Though the Moors created in Spain an enlightened civilization—which made enormous contributions to architecture, the arts, medicine, science, and higher learning—they were at constant, violent odds with the Christians for the next 700 years. The country's internal dissension around Spanish Islam invited a steady Christian conquest from the north. Eventually, as the Christian Reconquest pushed southward, only Andalusia remained under Muslim rule. That, too, fell in the late 15th century, when King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella drove out the last enclave of Moors from Granada. Once again, Spain was united.

Roman Catholicism was established as the official state religion. A dark period in Spain's history ensued. The cruel court of the Inquisition, which had been instituted in 1478 by Isabella and Ferdinand, continued on its zealous crusade to discover and punish converted Jews and later Muslims, who were insincere. Christians also were investigated for heresy. The court lasted until 1834. In 1492, the same year as the reconquest of Granada, the Catholic monarchs expelled all Jews who would not convert. Meanwhile, across the Atlantic Ocean, Christopher Columbus, sponsored by the same monarchs, was opening a new era for Spain by discovering America. In the age of discovery and colonization, Spain amassed tremendous wealth and a vast colonial empire through the conquest of Peru by Pizarro (1532-33) and of Mexico by Cortes (1519-21). The Spanish Hapsburg monarchy became for a time the most powerful in the world. In 1588, Philip II sent his invincible Armada to invade England, but its destruction cost Spain its supremacy on the seas and paved the way for England's colonization of America.

Spain's subsequent military losses in the Thirty Years' War, which ended in 1643, further contributed to its decline as a powerful nation. The War of the Spanish Succession (1701-14) resulted in Spain's loss of Belgium, Luxembourg, Milan, Sardinia, and Naples. Its colonial empire in the Americas and the Philippines vanished in wars and revolutions during the 18th and 19th centuries. Cuban independence at the end of the Spanish-America War in 1898 spelled the end of the Spanish overseas empire.

In World War I, Spain maintained a position of neutrality. In 1923, King Alfonso XIII appointed a military dictator, General Miguel Primo de Rivera, who modeled his government on Italian Fascism. His regime was so reviled by the masses that he was forced into exile. In 1931, the king was deposed and a second republic established with Manuel Azana as president. The new constitution called for liberal reforms that would redistribute land and diminish the power of the Church. It engendered such right-wing opposition that civil war erupted. Francisco Franco, who had led the victorious Nationalist forces, became dictator of Spain. Under his Fascist regime, Spain remained neutral in World War II. Its cordial relations with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy caused its exclusion from the UN until 1955.

Political dissent in Spain was suppressed and civil liberties were stifled until Franco's death of a heart attack in 1975, at which time Juan Carlos I, grandson of Alfonso XIII, ascended the throne and undertook a policy of liberalization. Spain managed a rapid and relatively peaceful transition to democracy under his supervision. In 1982, Spain became a full member of NATO. The same year, Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez Marquez and his Spanish Socialist Workers Party won a landslide victory in the general election. In 1985, the frontier with Gibraltar, closed since 1968, was reopened, and in 1986, Spain entered the European Union.

Writer Camilo Jose Cela brought Spain great honor in 1989 when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. The country shone in the international spotlight again when it played host in 1992 to two major events of world stature: the Olympic Games in Barcelona and the International Exposition in Seville. Other significant events of the last decade include the Popular Party's defeat of Gonzalez Marquez in 1996, after 13 years of rule. The same year, Spain issued a warrant for the extradition of former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, charging him with the genocide, torture, and kidnapping of thousands of people, including Spanish nationals, during his 17-year rule. In 1999, Spain adopted the euro as its currency.

# 11. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## Books, Maps, and Movies

***Cultural Atlas of Spain and Portugal*** by Mary Vincent and R. A. Stradling (Culture) This reference book focuses on the rich cultural diversity and artistic heritage of Spain and Portugal, and examines how the historic events of each country have been partly impacted by their geography and climate.

***Iberia*** by James A. Michener (Historical Fiction) Michener's talented prose imbues his vivid recollections of Spain and poetic interpretations of the country's art, history, customs, politics, bullfighting, peasant life, and city splendor.

***The New Spaniards*** by John Hooper (Culture) Noted historian John Hooper presents a captivating portrait of modern Spain and its people in this updated 1995 edition of his earlier book.

***Don Quixote de la Mancha*** by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (Literature) First published 400 years ago and recognized as the world's first modern novel, *Don Quixote* tells the story of a middle-aged Spanish gentleman who, obsessed with the chivalrous ideals found in romantic books, rides the roads of Spain seeking glory and grand adventure.

***Tales of the Alhambra*** by Washington Irving (Memoir) In this 1829 travel classic, Washington Irving, who was the ambassador to Spain, recounts his experiences as he rode from Seville to Granada on horseback, and also describes his time at the Alhambra, where he lived for several months.

***Traveler's Tales: Spain*** edited by Lucy McCauley (Travel Account) This anthology features intelligent, lyrical musings on all aspects of Spain, written by such luminaries as Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Calvin Trillin, Colm Toibin, and Barbara Kingsolver.

***A Traveler's History of Spain*** by Juan Lalaguna (History) One of a series of introductory histories for travelers, this book has a dateline format that begins with the earliest settlements on the Iberian Peninsula; continues with the influences of the Romans, Goths, and Muslims; covers the birth and demise of the Empire; and ends with the events of modern day.

### **Guidebooks:**

Your Program Director will be happy to provide recommendations and suggestions during the trip, so a guidebook is not a necessity. But a good one can be invaluable as a one-stop reference, so for those travelers who have asked for suggestions, we offer these guidelines. Since different guidebook series each have their own target audience and structure, it is well worth your time to browse your local library or bookstore to find the one(s) you like best. To get you started, here is some general information on the most popular series:

***Culture Smart!*** – Focuses on local customs and etiquette instead of sights, dining, etc.

***DK Eyewitness*** – Innovative visuals make these books easy to use and a nice souvenir once the trip is over. The focus is primarily on the sights and activities.

***Fodor's*** – A classic guidebook with strong information on activities, shopping, and dining. Good mix of upscale recommendations and budget suggestions.

***Frommer's*** – A comprehensive guide series that is known for its restaurant recommendations.

***Insight*** – Offers more information on history and culture than usual, nice visuals, good maps.

***Lonely Planet*** – Practical guides geared towards a more adventurous traveler on a budget.

***National Geographic*** – From the same company that publishes the magazine. Excellent photographs, good information on history, nature, and culture.

***Rough Guides*** – For the independent traveler on a budget. Particularly known for their maps.

### **Maps:**

Most hotels will provide maps free of charge at the reception desk or in your room. These maps are usually sufficient for our travelers, but if you plan on any independent exploration, you may wish to consider purchasing a map before your departure. This can be especially useful in a country that doesn't use the Roman alphabet as the hotel maps may only be printed in the local language.

Some recommended map series include: Rand McNally international maps (especially the StreetWise series), Insight's FlexiMaps, and Rough Guide's destination maps. We suggest that you visit your local bookstore or library to get a better sense of which type of map is best for your needs before making a purchase.

### **Suggested Movies**

Here are few of our favorite movies that are about, or set in, or from the region you'll be traveling. Most are available at movie rental stores and websites—or even your public library. Sometimes films produced outside of the US may be hard to find, but they are usually available online. Lists are highly subjective – if your favorites are missing, start a chat with fellow travelers and you'll likely find even more treasured movies to share.

### **SPAIN**

***All About My Mother*** (Pedro Almodovar, 1999, color) starring Cecilia Roth, Marisa Paredas, and Penelope Cruz When her 17-year-old son is tragically killed in a car accident, Manuela (Roth) sets out to reconnect with her son's father and ends up forging new connections with an outrageous transvestite, a pregnant nun, and her son's favorite actress. This 1999 Oscar winner for the Best Foreign Language Film is in Spanish with subtitles. (Other well received Almodovar films include *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* and *Volver*.)

#### ***The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (Luis Buñuel, 1972)**

A surreal/absurdist classic, this Academy Award winning film begins with four friends who arrive at their hosts' home only to discover they have arrived on the wrong night—a plausible situation. But the tale unravels into a series of overlapping nightmares. It's a disquieting yet often very funny discourse on frustrated appetites, real and imagined. Two things not on the menu: a neat plot line and clear meanings.

#### ***The Spirit of the Beehive* (Víctor Erice, 1973)** Starring Fernando Fernán Gómez, Teresa Gimpera

In a small Castilian village in 1940, just after Spain's devastating civil war, six-year-old Ana sees a traveling movie show of *Frankenstein* and becomes haunted by her memory of it. Produced as Franco's long regime was nearing its end, the film is both a bewitching portrait of a child's inner life and a veiled meditation on a nation trapped under tyranny.

#### ***Pan's Labyrinth* (Guillermo del Toro, 2006)**

Following Spain's bloody civil war, young Ofelia enters a world of unimaginable cruelty when she moves in with her new stepfather, a brutal military officer. Armed only with her imagination, Ofelia discovers a labyrinth and a faun who offers her a path to saving herself and her mother. The lines between fantasy and reality begin to blur, and before Ofelia can turn back, she's at the center of a ferocious battle between good and evil.

***Welcome Mr. Marshall! - Bienvenido Mister Marshall*** 1953 Luis García Berlanga

News reaches a small Spanish village that "the Americans are coming" to implement the Marshall plan, or, gifts to all villagers. They transform the town into a folksy Andalusian village with guitar strummers and false building facades to please the visitors -- who arrive in a cavalcade of cars that simply sweep through without stopping.

***Cria Cuervos*** (Carlos Saura, 1976) Starring Geraldine Chaplin, Mónica Randall

This film is a portrait of the legacy of fascism and its effects on a middle-class family. The disturbed eight-year-old Ana lives in Madrid with her two sisters and mourns the death of her mother, whom she conjures as a ghost. Shifting between fantasy and reality, it evokes the complex feelings of childhood as well as the struggles of a nation emerging from the shadows.

## **Grand Circle Community & Useful Websites**

If you have access to the Internet, the following sites offer a wealth of information:

**Visit the Grand Circle Community** website for a world of travel news and information:

[www.gct.com/community](http://www.gct.com/community)

### **Government websites:**

**International health information: CDC (Centers for Disease Control)**

[www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

**U.S. Customs & Border Protection: traveler information**

[www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel)

**Transportation Security Administration (TSA): agency responsible for screening luggage in U.S.**

[www.tsa.gov/public](http://www.tsa.gov/public)

**National Passport Information Center (NPIC): for passport information**

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

### **General travel information websites:**

#### **Travel books**

[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

[www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com)

#### **World weather**

[www.intellicast.com](http://www.intellicast.com)

[www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)

**Foreign languages for travelers: basic terms in more than 80 languages**

[www.travlang.com/languages](http://www.travlang.com/languages)

**Travel tips: packing light, choosing luggage, etc.**

[www.travelite.org](http://www.travelite.org)

**Net café guide: 100s of locations around the globe**

[www.cybercafes.com](http://www.cybercafes.com)

**Electric current and plug types**

[www.kropla.com/electric2.htm](http://www.kropla.com/electric2.htm)

**Foreign exchange rates**

[www.oanda.com/converter/classic](http://www.oanda.com/converter/classic)

**ATM locators**

[www.mastercard.com/atm](http://www.mastercard.com/atm) for **Cirrus** ATMs

[www.visa.com/pd/atm](http://www.visa.com/pd/atm) for **PLUS** ATMs

### **Country information:**

[www.tourspain.es/en](http://www.tourspain.es/en) **Spain**

[www.okspain.org/](http://www.okspain.org/) **Spain**

[www.madridcitytourist.com/](http://www.madridcitytourist.com/) **Madrid**

[www.visiteurope.com/](http://www.visiteurope.com/) **Links to countries**

[www.inyourpocket.com/free-instant-city-guides.html](http://www.inyourpocket.com/free-instant-city-guides.html)