

## Spain Culture

Spanish people are traditionally friendly happy people famous for their partying spirit, afternoon siestas and late night socialising.

Religion, tremendously important in the history of the country, plays a big part in the life of the individual. The influence of Roman Catholicism can be observed in the fervent mystical element present in the art and literature of Spain, the impressive list of its saints, and the large number of religious congregations and orders. The Catholic marriage is the basis of the family, which in turn is the foundation of Spanish society.

Fiestas (festivals) are an outstanding feature of Spanish life. They usually begin with a high mass followed by a solemn procession in which venerated images are carried on the shoulders of the participants. Music, dancing, poetry, and singing often accompany these colourful occasions. The fiesta at Valencia, the April fair in Seville, and the San Fermín fiesta at Pamplona are several of the more important ones. In contrast, the feast of Corpus Christi in Toledo and Granada and the Holy Week observances in Valladolid, Zamora, and Cuenca are solemn affairs. The bullfight, so important a part of Spanish tradition, has been called a fiesta brava. It is far more than a mere spectator sport; fans applaud not only the bravery of the toreros but their dexterity and artistry as well.

Spain is not just about religion and fiestas, it also has a long tradition in the arts. A number of great painters have lived and worked in Spain. Among the most famous are El Greco, noted for his late 16th-century painting View of Toledo, which is kept at the Metropolitan Museum in New York; Diego Velázquez, known for his depictions of the 17th-century Spanish court; Francisco Goya, whose work in the late 18th and early 19th centuries greatly influenced the development of modern art; Salvador Dalí, surrealist painter; and Pablo Picasso, one of the most prolific artists in history and a major figure of 20th-century art.

Spanish music has a vitality and a rhythm that reflect the many influences on the culture by the Christians and the Moors. Popular Spanish instruments include the guitar, tambourine, castanets, and the gaita, a kind of bagpipe. Spanish dance styles include the bolero, the flamenco, the jota, and the fandango. The zarzuela, a form of opera, was introduced in the 17th century. A leading composer during the 18th century was Antonio Soler, and, during the 20th century, Joaquín Turina and Manuel de Falla were noted for their advanced styles. Famous Spanish performers of the 20th century include the guitarist Andrés Segovia and cellist Pablo Casals.