



USEFUL TIPS ABOUT SPAIN

VISA

No visa is required for U.S. passport holders for a stay of up to 3 months.

CURRENCY

As of January 1st, 2002, the new currency of Spain, like that of most European Union countries, is the EURO. One Euro is divided into 100 centimes. There are eight different coins worth 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50 centimes, and 1 and 2 Euros. Banknotes come in 7 denominations: 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, and 500 Euros.

Tourists may bring up to 6,010.12 Euros (approximately \$5,724.00) without declaring the amount at customs.

TIPS

For taxi rides, a 10 percent tip is sufficient. For restaurants, a 10 percent tip is customary.

CUSTOMS

You may bring the following into Spain: personal effects, a portable type writer, one video camera or two still cameras with ten rolls of film each. A portable radio, a tape recorder, and a laptop PC per person are admitted free of duty provided they show signs of use. Two hundred cigarettes, or 50 cigars, or 250 grams of tobacco are also permitted as well as two bottles of wine (2 litres) or one bottle of liquor (1 litre) per person over 17 years old. The following sports equipment is also allowed: fishing gear, one bicycle, skis, tennis or squash racquets, and golf clubs.

PETS

There is no quarantine in Spain. The animals will be accompanied by their owners or their owner's duly authorized representatives. It must be justified by written certification that the animal has been kept under their owner's supervision, for at least three months prior to their introduction in Spain; and a certificate by a veterinarian stating that an animal is in good health and has been inoculated against rabies (for dogs and cats).

OPENING TIMES

Usual shop opening times are 9:30 am - 1:30 pm, Monday-Saturday, and 4:30-8:00 pm, Monday-Friday. Major shopping malls, department stores and supermarkets stay open without a break from 10:00 am - 9:00 pm or in some cases until 10:00 pm. On a fixed number of Sundays in the year (approximately 12 in all), the large department stores and supermarkets also open to the public. Along the coast, during the high season, shops are generally open until well after 10 at night.

Banks are mainly open Monday through Friday from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm (ATMs are available throughout the country. Make sure that the signs at the back of your ATM card match the signs on the ATM machine. ATMs in Spain only accept four digit Pins so it is very important to make sure you have a four digit PIN before travelling).

Breakfast time is usually from 8-10 am and lunchtime in restaurants from 1-3:30 pm. Dinner is served from 8:30-11:00 pm. Many catering establishments operate a continuous service throughout the day, a common practice in coffee shops and bars, in many of which it is possible to order snack-like servings (tapas), a limited variety of set dishes, rolls and small portions of selected foods (raciones).

Pharmacies usually open from 9:30 am - 1:30 pm and 4:30-8:00 pm, though in the bigger cities a certain number remain open 24 hours. There is a listing displayed outside pharmacies and published in the daily press, indicating which of them are on night-service and/or open during the weekend.

Standard museum hours are Tuesday to Saturday from 9:00 am to 7:00 pm, and Sundays and holidays from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm, but check with the Tourist Office of Spain nearest you for hours of specific museums. Museums close on the following holidays: January 1, Good Friday, May 1, and December 25.

Cinemas also usually operate a flexible timetable, with the matinees beginning at 4:30-5:00 pm and films being shown continuously until the last screening at around 10:15 pm. Midnight shows are also a feature at some of the cinemas in the bigger cities.

Theatres tend to have a single function, with performances beginning at 8/8:30 pm.

Nightlife in Spain is a class of its own, particularly from Thursday to Sunday. Pubs, late night haunts (bares de copas) and discotheques normally keep open until 3 or 4 in the morning, and in the major cities, such as Madrid and Barcelona, there are innumerable night-spots that stay open till dawn.

ELECTRICITY

220 volts (50 cycles) is commonly used in Spain. Two round prong plugs are used in all outlets. Standard American plugs will not fit into Spanish outlets. Adapters may be purchased at any hardware store.

TAXES AND TAX FREE SHOPPING

A 7 percent V.A.T. (Value Added Tax) tax is added to rates for all restaurants and hotel rooms. Service is included. This 7% V.A.T. tax on services is not refundable.

Travellers to Spain are entitled to a reimbursement of the 16 % V.A.T. (Value Added Tax, IVA in Spain) they pay on all purchases as long as the purchases add up to no less than 90.15 Euros (approximately \$86.00) in the same store. The vendor must provide the purchaser with a duly filled out invoice which includes the price of each good, the V.A.T. paid for each item, as well as the identification (name and address) for both vendor and purchaser. The goods must be brought out of the European Union within three months from the date of purchase.

At the time of departure from Spain and final departure from the European Union territory, and before checking in your baggage, you must bring your invoice(s) and the merchandise purchased to the Spanish Customs in order for them to process your V.A.T. refund claim (there is a specific booth for this purpose just prior to the entrance to the international area at the international port, gate or airport). The Customs Officer will process the original invoice, and the passenger should return this invoice(s) to the corresponding vendor(s). The vendor(s) is responsible for issuing the V.A.T. refund (although, usually, the processed or stamped invoice can be turned in at a bank in the airport for reimbursement). This V.A.T. claim will only be processed when Spain is the final point of departure from the European Union, otherwise, this claim must be processed in the country of your final departure from the European Union (and always before leaving Spain or the EU).

You might also find it convenient to reclaim your tax through Global Refund Tax Free Shopping, a service offered by major retailers worldwide. For further information on its procedures you may visit www.globalrefund.com

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

There are 14 Public Holidays in Spain, 10 of which are common to the entire country, and 4 celebrated only within the boundaries of each autonomous region.

- January 1 - New Year's Day
- January 6 - the Epiphany
- Good Friday
- May 1 - Labour Day
- August 15 - Feast of the Assumption
- October 12 - Spain's National Day
- November 1 - All Saints' Day
- December 6 - Constitution Day
- December 8 - Feast of the Immaculate Conception
- December 25 - Christmas Day