



Focus on SPAIN

School Program

Bullfighting and flamenco do not begin to summarize Spain's rich complexity. The country has four languages, seven dialects and 17 *autonomías*—political regions, each with its own government, budget, and cultural ministry. Spaniards, in fact, often feel deeper allegiance to their region's cultural traditions, political issues, lifestyle and cuisine than they do to those of Spain as a whole. Spanish terrain is as varied as the country's regional cultures—from cloud-raking Pyrenees to Andalusian deserts to sybaritic beaches. Among the few generalities that hold true for most Spaniards: they're proud, dignified, generous, and happy in crowds, whether at festivals, strolling in plazas or cheering at soccer matches—as well as at bullfights.

AFS & Your Experience

AFS Spain has been in existence since 1954. More than 200 volunteers from across the country work hard to provide you with the most satisfying intercultural experience possible. During the year, AFS Spain hosts approximately 100 students from 17 countries such as Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Japan and Thailand.

AFS will be at your side throughout your intercultural exchange. Even before leaving your home country, you will participate in organized AFS orientations and have the assistance of experienced AFS volunteers. Once in your host country, you can rely on your local volunteer contact and other chapter volunteers to support you in your experience. Together we will ensure that you have an incredible experience abroad.

Landing in Spain

Once you land in Madrid, Spain's capital, and collect your baggage, you and your fellow AFSers will pass through customs and be met by AFS staff and volunteers.

Arrival Orientation

To start your stay in Spain, you will participate in a one-day orientation, organized by staff and run by volunteers in the outskirts of Madrid. There, you will have a chance to relax after your long flight, meet other AFSers from around the world, ask questions, and learn about AFS in Spain as well as about Spanish culture.

Living in Spain

Lifestyle and Family Living

Spanish families are typically open and welcoming, eager to see that visitors return to their home country with a good impression of Spain. They are also more inclined to identify with their particular region than with the country as a whole, and AFS participants often come to share this regional enthusiasm.

As is the case throughout much of the world, Spain's families have undergone radical changes in recent years. Nevertheless, family is still the foundation of Spanish society. Traditionally, the mother manages the household while the father works outside the home, but more and more women now have jobs in addition to their domestic responsibilities.

Spanish families—including the extended family—tend to be close-knit, visiting each other frequently and sharing in large weekend gatherings.

Because homes and apartments in Spain tend to be small, you can expect to share a room with a host sibling. Parents will want to know when you go out and may give you a curfew that you will be expected to honor.

Spanish host families, like all AFS host families worldwide, are not paid. They open their homes to students in order to share their community and culture as well as to enrich their own family lives.

AFSers are placed anywhere within Spain, including Cueta, Melilla, the Canary Islands or the Balearic Islands. While you will always speak formal Spanish in school, you may also have the advantage of learning the regional dialect or language of your host family.

Dress and Appearance

Spaniards tend to have fewer clothes than people from other countries, but they greatly value appearance; their clothes are always neat, clean and crisply pressed. AFSers should bring casual, warm clothing for winter and lightweight clothing for spring and summer. Students are also encouraged to bring one or two nice outfits (dress shirts and ties for men, dresses or skirts and blouses for women) for special occasions.

Diet and Meals

In keeping with European tradition, lunch is the main meal of the day and is served around 2 or 3 p.m. Dinner is at 9 p.m. or later, and most families eat together. While each region of Spain has its own food specialties, Spanish cuisine reflects the country's many historical influences. Generally speaking, Spanish cooking is Mediterranean in style with liberal use of olive oil, garlic, onions, tomatoes and peppers. Fish and seafood are abundant, but Spanish cooking emphasizes red meat and pork which are eaten nearly every day. For this reason, AFS Spain cannot accept vegetarians or students who do not eat meat or pork for personal reasons.

School Life

Most AFS students in Spain attend public schools as seniors with classmates 17 to 18 years old. Students may choose from three areas of study: science, humanities and technology. Science includes math, physics, biology and chemistry. Subjects in the humanities include Spanish, literature, history, foreign language, philosophy and Latin.

Technology includes industrial and engineering classes. You can obtain a transcript and/or certificate of attendance if you attend classes regularly, complete the coursework and pass the examinations.

Teen Life

Spanish schools focus primarily on academics, leaving sports and cultural activities to after-school hours. Outside of school, Spanish teens often attend lectures, concerts and sporting events. Soccer (or football) is easily the most popular sport. Volunteering for a local community organization is another great way to learn more about your new surroundings and make new friends.

Perhaps because of the climate and long hours of sunshine, Spaniards begin socializing later in the day and end later at night than their European neighbors do. On weekends, teens often stay out late, going to movies, parties or hanging out together at the local café or town square.

AFS Activities

In addition to an orientation at your arrival, AFS Spain will provide you with several others. AFS orientations are a chance for participants to meet (often for a weekend or for a few days) and talk about expectations for the future program and past experiences. Orientations involve participating in group activities and self-examination. Sessions usually provide new information and ways of looking at things while also allowing participants to share points of view. AFS orientations are social, interactive and educational, bringing together young people from many countries and helping them to better understand their own intercultural learning experience.

AFS Spain also organizes a domestic exchange in the spring, so that students have an opportunity to visit and experience life in a different region of the country. This exchange lasts between seven and ten days. There may be other activities depending on your chapter.

Finally, there is the "End-of-Stay" orientation. Right before returning to your home county, you will get together with other AFSers in Spain. The "End-of-Stay" is about looking back at your experience, sharing memories and looking to the future.

Travel

Although it is natural for you to want to travel while in Spain, AFS is not designed as a tourist program. AFS offers the rare opportunity to be immersed in a culture and a country. It is likely, however, that you will have many opportunities to travel with your host family, school, community organization, local chapter or AFS Spain. We strongly discourage traveling on your own or with friends.

Spending Money

Host families are asked to pay only for ordinary family events in which you are expected to participate. When you do such things as shopping for yourself or going out with friends, the expenses are your responsibility.

AFS recommends that about US\$1,200 in traveler's checks should cover out-of-pocket spending for an entire year. Spending more than your peers and family may create a distance between you and them. It is wise to learn to spend as they do.

Safety and Support

Spain is a safe country, and you should do well if you follow the normal precautions you would use in your home country.

During your stay, local AFS volunteers will be available to assist you as you learn to live as Spaniard. In the event of an emergency, AFS staff can be reached 24 hours a day by you in your host country and by your natural family at home.

For the welfare of participants, AFS worldwide has two rules: no driving and no use of drugs for non-medicinal purposes. Any student who violates either of these rules will be automatically sent home. AFS Spain may have additional rules.

Health Precautions

In addition to the precautions mentioned above, AFS suggests that you discuss the health recommendations for Spain (which you can get from your government or easily find on the Internet) with your personal doctor, to determine what is best for you and your personal needs.

If you require any medical assistance during your stay, your host family or local volunteers will be ready to help find it. As an AFS participant your medical expenses are covered for illness or injuries incurred while on the program, exclusive of pre-existing, dental or visual aid expenses.

Documents

You must have a passport that will be valid for six months longer than your intended stay. In addition to your passport, you also need a visa to enter and reside in your host country. Visas are obtained through the consular offices of your host country, and requirements often vary from consulate to consulate.

Consulates charge fees for their services, and obtaining your visa can be a complicated and lengthy process requiring a great deal of paperwork, patience and persistence. AFS will help you obtain the visa and provide you with instructions regarding the required documents.

Program Prices

Please [contact the AFS office in your home country](#) for information about program price and scholarship possibilities and what the program price covers for the various program offerings. In most cases the program price covers the following: round-trip international travel with your AFS group; travel in the host country to your host family; travel from your host family to your international departure point; AFS's medical plan; placement with your host; orientation in your home country and your host country; 24 hour emergency assistance in your home and host countries; a global medical assistance organization to support extreme emergencies; a network of trained volunteers who support you throughout your experience.

In order to keep costs low and provide good service, AFS utilizes a network of volunteers and staff in 50+ countries around the world. Volunteers need training, support and assistance from professional staff in each country. Other expenses you will normally need to pay in addition to the program price: passport and visa fees, required inoculations, expenses for eyeglasses, contacts and dental care, school uniforms (where

applicable) and personal spending money. Your housing and food are provided by your host family as part of their commitment to our program.

Country Information

Geography and Climate

Spain is located on the Iberian peninsula southwest of France. It is bordered by Portugal to the west. It is nearly as large as the American states of Nevada and Utah combined. Much of its terrain is hilly or mountainous. It has an extensive coastline along the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Spanish territory includes Ceuta and Melilla, enclaves on the north coast of Africa across from Gibraltar, the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean Sea and the Canary Islands in the Atlantic off the coast of North Africa.

Spain is located in the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere. With its extensive coastlines and higher elevations, its climate is diverse. The north coast enjoys a moderate climate year around. The south and eastern coasts enjoy a Mediterranean climate with long, hot, dry summers. The central regions have greater temperature extremes with cold icy winters and hot summers. The Canary Islands have year-round mild weather.

Population

Spain's population is 45 million. Madrid, the capital city, has a population of 3 million.

Language

While the language of instruction in most schools is Spanish, Spain has three other official languages: Catalan, Galician and Basque.

Government

Spain is a parliamentary monarchy. The Cortes, or Parliament, consists of a Chamber of Deputies with 350 members and a Senate with 208, all elected by popular vote.

Religion

At least 75% of Spanish people are Roman Catholic. However, most of them do not attend religious services on a regular basis.

Launching Your AFS Experience

Evaluations by previous participants support our belief that those students who prepare prior to leaving have the best experience. In order to get ready, first make every effort to learn some key Spanish words and phrases so that you arrive with at least some basic knowledge of the language.

To familiarize yourself further with life in Spain, make use of your local library and/or the Internet. A lot of general information is available about Spain and its culture.

Although each participant's experience is unique, we strongly suggest that you speak with a recent AFS participant to Spain. This person will be an excellent resource regarding living life as a Spaniard. If you do not know any alumni, please contact your

local volunteer or national AFS office. In addition, AFS Spain will provide you with a special packet of country-specific information.

Spanish people will be curious about your home community. You may be surprised to find out how much they already know about your country. Therefore, it is also helpful to be as informed as possible about current events in your community and country.

If you have not already received a full AFS application packet, please contact your local AFS volunteer or national office to request one. We wish you a wonderful experience.

Curiously Spanish

- ✦ Every year, Spain hosts the world's biggest food fight, the *Tomatina*. On the last Wednesday of August, some 30,000 people descend on the Spanish town of Bunol to throw more than 240,000 pounds of tomatoes at each other.
- ✦ Spain holds more than 3,000 *fiestas* (festivals) a year, the most famous being the running of the bulls in Pamplona, which lasts for seven days in July.
- ✦ The word "Spain" means "land of rabbits."
- ✦ Spain is one of the world's top cork-producing countries.
- ✦ A 5,917 foot sausage, the longest of its kind, was cooked in Spain on September 22, 1986 in Barcelona.
- ✦ Spaniards eat one grape for each of the last 12 seconds of every year for good luck.

How to Apply

To become a participant in this country's School Program, contact your nearest AFS office. To locate an AFS office, go to <http://www.afs.org/contact>

Student age (upon arrival)	15Y to 18Y	
Country data	Size	504,788 sq km
	Population	45 million
	Official languages	Spanish, Catalan, Galician and Basque
	Government	Parliamentary monarchy
Currency	Peseta	
Useful websites	http://unlimitedspain.com/funfacts.html http://www.sispain.org/ http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/europe/spain/ http://www.tuspain.com/ http://www.mapzones.com/world/europe/spain/currencyindex.php	
AFS Spain website	http://www.afs.es/	

AFS program destinations are not always available to residents of all countries. If a program interests you, please contact your nearest AFS office to find out if it is an option for you. You can locate your nearest AFS office at <http://www.afs.org/contact>