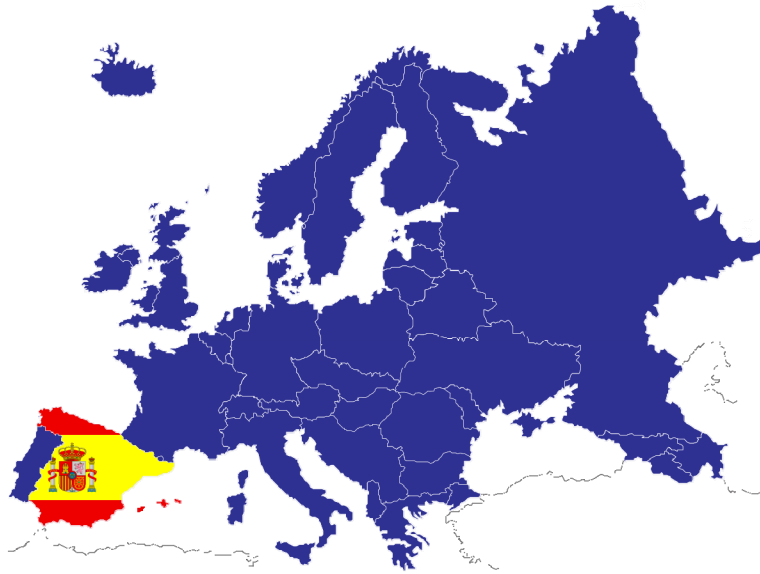


European Christmas Tree Decoration Exchange 2024



OUR COUNTRY - SPAIN



The first historical inhabitants of Spain were the Iberians, of Indo-Scythian origin, possibly Pelasgics, who gave the name of Iberia to the Peninsula; then came the Celts, through Gaul and also Aryans. The two peoples merged, giving rise to a new one; that of the Celtiberians. The Romans called the entire peninsula Hispania, from which the name "Spain" comes.

Spain, formally the Kingdom of Spain, is a transcontinental sovereign country, constituted as a social and democratic state of law and whose form of government is the parliamentary monarchy. It is one of the twenty-seven sovereign states that make up the European Union. The king of Spain is Felipe VI. The queen consort is Letizia Ortiz Rocasolano.

Spain is located in southwestern Europe and borders France (to the north) and Portugal (to the west). Most of its territory is a peninsula, but it has two large archipelagos. Off the coasts of Catalonia and the Valencian Community, in the Mediterranean Sea, are the Balearic Islands. Also the Canary Islands, located in the southwest of the country.

The moment in which Spain was born, according to the theory, was officially born with the abdication in Brussels of Charles I of Spain in favor of Philip II on February 24, 1556, in which it broke away from the Holy Roman Empire.

Well known for flamenco music and dance, bullfighting, fantastic beaches and plenty of sunshine, Spain has so much more to offer. It is and has been for thousands of years one of the cultural centers of Europe. Spain has an extraordinary artistic heritage.

Spain is a country that is characterized by a great cultural richness, with exponents in the field of art, music, architecture and letters. Some of the most renowned Spanish artists are: In art: El Greco (1541-1614).

Spain is the fourth country with the highest number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. After Italy, China and Germany, Spain is the country with the most UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Among the 49 UNESCO World Heritage Sites are the works of Anton Gaudi, the famous fortified old town of Ibiza, the unfinished Gothic church of the Sagrada Familia, etc. Must-sees include the Alhambra in Granada, the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, the Cathedral in Mallorca, the City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia and the museums in Madrid... but you are free to change the list to your liking!

The symbols of the Spanish State are: the Flag, the Coat of Arms, the National Anthem. The traditional symbolic animals of Spain are the fighting bull and the imperial eagle.

Spain is a democratic state, based on the rule of law and welfare, with a market economy. Spain is a state whose political form is a parliamentary monarchy. The system of government is based on national sovereignty, the division of powers and a parliamentary system. The Monarch is the head of state, a symbol of its unity and permanence.

The motto that identifies Spain was "Non Terrae Plus Ultra" (There is no land beyond) in reference also to Finisterre, a mythological belief that was dynamited by Christopher Columbus when he crossed the Atlantic Ocean in 1492. Since then, "Plus Ultra" has been Spain's motto.

Spain is a historic country with stone castles, snow-capped mountains, grand monuments, and sophisticated cities, all of which have made it a favorite tourist destination. The country is geographically and culturally diverse. Its heart is the Meseta, a broad central plateau half a mile above sea level.

Spanish culture has its roots in the influences that different peoples have left behind after passing through the peninsula over the centuries. In addition, the history, the mountainous relief and the seas that surround it have contributed significantly to the formation of today's culture.

OUR REGION - EXTREMADURA



After the formation of the Crown of Castile by the union of both kingdoms in 1230, the province of Extremadura was created in 1371.

The region of Extremadura is divided into two provinces, Cáceres in the north and Badajoz in the south. The capital of the Region is Mérida.

During the Christian reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula, the name Extremadura was used during static periods to refer to areas outside Muslim territory; it denoted a fixed region, but its borders fluctuated with the fortunes of the conquest.

Extremadura is an inland region that is home to some of the most beautiful rural landscapes in Spain and the Monfragüe National Park is declared a World Biosphere Reserve. With an average population of just 26 inhabitants per km², Extremadura is a place where you can really feel a close relationship with nature.

Extremadura, Spain is known for its different ways of preparing Iberian pork and lamb. The main characteristics of traditional Extremaduran cuisine are its simplicity, its lack of refills and its low cost. It is also a cuisine that reflects a generous spirit, as many of its preparations used to be cooked in large pots to share with visitors, friends and neighbors. The resulting dishes are eaten with local bread.

Iberian pigs live mostly in semi-wild conditions. The meat of these pigs is essential in most Extremaduran dishes.

The favourite spices in Extremadura cuisine are paprika, garlic, bay leaf, pennyroyal and anise. The northeastern region of La Vera produces paprika from La Vera, a smoked paprika highly valued throughout Spain and widely used in Extremadura cuisine. Olive oil is used for frying and as an ingredient in many dishes. Extremadura is a vast region with many typical dishes, where meats, cheeses, oil, honey are very important. The Iberian pig fed and raised in the Extremadura pastures and from which the Iberian ham D.O. Dehesa de Extremadura is obtained stands out. The world-famous paprika from La Vera.

Extremadura's gastronomy is one of the richest in Spain. A wide variety of typical dishes are proof of this. In addition, the raw material from Extremadura shows the cultural and gastronomic richness of the region.

TYPICAL FOODS SUCH AS: Extremaduran migas, lamb frite, chanfaina, cochifrito, repápalos, zorongollo, hurdana salad, pestorejo, cojondongo, perrunillas and other typical sweets (pestiños, flowers...)

OUR TOWN - RIBERA DEL FRESNO



Ribera del Fresno is a municipality located in the province of Badajoz, Extremadura, Spain.

It is located between Puebla del Prior and Villafranca de los Barros, at an altitude of 399 metres. It belongs to the region of Tierra de Barros and the judicial district of Villafranca de los Barros.

Its surface area is 185 km², which represents 0.86% of the provincial territory in hectares and 0.0368% of the national space. As for its relief, it is very unrugged, with slopes of less than 3% and no more than 5% on the hilliest slopes.

The hydrography of Ribera del Fresno runs in a south-north direction, with the Valdemedel river and some unimportant tributaries such as the Bergil. El Salado, El Moral, El Peo and the regajo del Pozo de San Juan Macías. The Matachel River crosses the municipality slightly and serves as a northeastern boundary with the municipality of Palomas.

The climate of the area is subtropical Mediterranean with continental characteristics, with an average annual temperature of 16 °C.

According to tradition, the name of the town is due to the fact that there was an ash tree of monumental dimensions on the banks of the Valdemedel stream, which gave the nickname to this town and in the end, Queen Isabel II would request to move to her palace, compensating the place with the donation of an artistic pulpit of Estremoz marble for the parish church.

Although there are different legends regarding the existence of the Fresno. One of them says that "They were so large and exuberant that Queen Isabella, the Catholic, in one of her breaks in these lands because of the war against the Moors in Granada, stopped to rest next to the ash tree and was so amazed by such a superb specimen, that she advised the authorities of Ribera to include the name of the tree in that of the town, being called from that day Ribera del Fresno".

The economy of the town revolves around the primary sector, mainly vine and olive cultivation.

The festivals that the town has throughout the year are the following:

- Thursday of Compadres: It has a close relationship with the celebration of Carnival. It is held two Thursdays before Ash Wednesday, so, like Ash Wednesday, it does not have a fixed date on the calendar, varying each year depending on Easter. It consists of the escape to the countryside of the inhabitants of the town, grouped in a gang, to taste the typical products of the slaughter. Throughout the day they make straw dolls with very marked sexual attributes. These dolls will participate in the "compadres contest" and then be burned in a bonfire near the Valdemedel stream.
- San Isidro: It is celebrated on May 15 where all the residents of the town go to the countryside to taste the typical products. At night, and for 3 days there is dancing until the early hours of the morning.
- Fiestas del Emigrante (15 August): Traditional festival in honour of all the emigrants who come to Ribera del Fresno on holiday.
- Festivities and Fairs in honour of the Holy Christ of Mercy (14 September). It is the main festival of the village and lasts 4 days.
- Pilgrimage to the Pozo de San Juan Macías (Third Sunday of September): All the riverside residents gather in the Pozo de San Juan Macías to celebrate the traditional pilgrimage and spend a day in the countryside in honor of the saint and patron saint of Ribera del Fresno.

GASTRONOMY:

Ribera del Fresno offers a gastronomy derived mainly from the typical products of the region: wines of excellent quality or extra virgin olive oil. In fact, the wines of Ribera del Fresno are included in the Designation of Origin.

But it is in the food where a great variety is denoted, highlighting gazpacho, cod in cantina, escabeche, lamb stew, whiting, guarrino tapas, migas, chickpeas stewed with romances, milk repápalos, etc.

As for the typical sweets of the town, the following stand out: the candil rings, the flowers, the prestines, the ringlets, perrunillas, biscuits, Easter buns typical of Easter, nuts, fried bagels...



CHRISTMAS IN OUR TOWN: RIBERA DEL FRESNO



In our town, Christmas is celebrated in a very special way: before the holidays we start decorating our houses with lights, the Christmas tree, the Nativity scene without the Baby Jesus, the street lights, and the facades of our houses. The Town Hall organizes a contest for decorated facades.

We decorate the classroom and hallways with garlands and we have a festival with performances and the parents come to see us at school. We also eat churros with chocolate. It's great fun!

Our school is multicultural. There are children from different countries too such as, among others, Romania, Ukraine, Senegal... They all share with us their Christmas traditions.

On Christmas Eve (24th December) we have dinner with our family: seafood, Iberian sausages, ham, cheese and a lot of special and delicious foods. And for dessert we eat turrón, mazapán and polvorones (typical Christmas sweets famous throughout Spain). On that night we place the Baby Jesus in the Nativity scene, because the birth of the Child is the reason for Christmas.

At Christmas day (25th December) we get together again as a family and we finish eating all the leftover food from the night before. There are children who open the Christmas presents that Santa Claus had left them under the Christmas tree and in their stockings.

On New Year's Eve (31st December) we meet up with the family again for dinner, in a more festive atmosphere. When the twelve bells ring, for each bell ring we eat a grape. It is a Spanish tradition that we love and we believe that it brings us good luck. Afterwards we toast with champagne for the new year.

And the day of the Three Wise Kings is the most special for the children. On the night of the 5th we go to the Three Wise Kings' parade. The Three Wise kings throw candy to us, on the Paseo del Cristo Avenue, a meeting place in our town. On the 6th we get up very early to see the gifts they have brought us. They bring coal to the naughty children. We eat the Roscón de Reyes.

This is what Christmas is like in our country.

(Writing done by 5th and 6th grade students of primary education).

What decorations our school made and why?

Our school has made an acorn (holm oak tree), a typical fruit of our region and closely connected to our Extremadura pasture where our wonderful pigs are raised to later obtain our delicious hams (Serrano and Iberian) among other products.

Our acorn has holly leaves (typical of Christmas), a ribbon to hang the acorn with the colors of the flag of our Autonomous Community of Extremadura; green, white and black. And finally, we have added a bell to give it a Christmas touch.

How to say “Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year” in Spanish.

We say “*Feliz Navidad y próspero Año Nuevo*”

Our wishes for 2025

We would like to ask for many things that we consider important and necessary for a better world full of opportunities, prosperity and equality for everyone. Below we mention some of our wishes:

- No more wars. Please, peace in the world.
- Equality and inclusion in class.
- No more pollution.
- Stop racism.
- No bullying.
- End of poverty.
- No more gender violence.
- No child alone.



PHOTO GALLERY

CHRISTMAS IN OUR TOWN



CHRISTMAS AT OUR SCHOOL



OUR SCHOOL AND OUR CHRISTMAS CRAFT DECORATION

