

Excerpt from:
*The Walls of Spain: Diary of a
Short-Term Mission*
©2009 by J.D. Alcalá-Bennett

<http://shop.jhousepublishing.com>
<http://jdalcalabennett.wordpress.com>

Visitor's Guide

For anyone considering a short-term mission or visit to Spain, the following information may help in planning a trip and getting one's bearings.

Quick Stats

The Kingdom of Spain has approximately 44 million inhabitants but the lowest reproduction rate in Europe: an average of 1.1 children. Spain is the second largest country in Europe, about the size of Texas, and boasts coasts on all sides. The North Coast is known as the *Cantabrian* Sea and is rocky but has some good surf spots like *Mundaka*, *Viscaya*. The East, or Mediterranean, Coast south of *Cataluña* is known as *Levante*. The South Coast is all *Andalucían* and is known as the Sunshine Coast. The west coast of the Iberian Peninsula is dominated by Portugal, but Spain's West Coast is found in *Galicia* and is known for fishing and good waves. Spain receives 52 million tourists a year, making

it one of the top three visited countries in the world. Spain leads Europe in castles, and is among world leaders in wine and olive oil exportation.

Travel in Spain

Spain can be crossed fairly quickly, in a day, by taking a couple speed trains, for example, from *Sevilla* to Madrid and Madrid to Barcelona on the fast *AVE* or *Talgo* lines. There are also inexpensive rail passes with Spain's *RENFE* rail network, these passes allow one to get to any corner of Spain affordably.

Another way to see Spain close up is to backpack across Northern Spain on the "Way of St. James." When the author has volunteered at Oasis Trails Pilgrim Hostel in *Monjardín, Navarra*, he's learned much about taking in Spain on foot from the good-humored back-packers. The author heard great stories of hospitality shown to backpackers being invited in out of the rain and about curious encounters with shepherds among other stories from the many backpackers who have taken repeated journeys on the trail of St. James.

Finally one can rent a car. This allows you to take your time in crossing the Spanish countryside. Renting a car allows you to stop to pet the sheep, or to climb up to an unmarked castle, or to follow a historic route. Two routes worth noting are the *Ruta de Quixote* [Route of Don Quixote], which stretches from the border of *Andalucía* in southern *La Mancha* to way past *Guadalajara*, up to the Castles of *Sigüenza* in the North. In *Navarra* and *La Rioja*, cheese and wine connoisseurs will have a hey-day on the *Ruta de Vino*, [the Wine Route], which snakes through all the noteworthy wineries on the *Ebro* River valley. There are also good castle routes, considering that Spain at one time boasted 10,000 castles. There are castle sight-seeing routes in *Valladolid*, *La Mancha*, and *Andalucía*. The most amazing castles in Spain include: *Alcázar de Segovia*, *Palacio Real de Olite*, *Castillo de Butrón*, *Palacio Real de Madrid*, *Castillo de Guzmán el Bueno* in *Tarifa*, The *Alhambra* Castle complex in *Granada*, the *Reales Alcázares* in *Sevilla*, *La Granja* Palace, *Castillo de Loarre*, the Moat Castle at *Medina del Campo*, the *Palacio Real* in *Aranjuez*, and *Manzanares el Real* Castle.

Spain's Spiritual Outlook

Spain's religious condition and her spiritual walls have to be seen in the light of the tremendous religious coercion that forcefully converted Spanish Empire inhabitants from the Mediterranean island of *Palma de Mallorca* all the way to *Santiago, Chile*. The Inquisition helps to explain why Roman Catholicism is nominally practiced by 95 percent of Spain and in all of the former colonies. Native Americans, Jews, Muslims, and Protestants were forced to convert to Catholicism or to forfeit their lands, homes, or worse—their lives. Those who converted but were accused of practicing their native customs were put on trial and inevitably were tortured or wound up dying in jail. Spaniards today do not like to acknowledge the Inquisition, but the Inquisition must not be forgotten for its theft of children, of culture, of life, and of Spain's Golden Age, presumably in the name of the Cross.

Once the torches of the Spanish Inquisition began to ember in the 1800s, with the loss of Spain's colonial empire and internal chaos on the peninsula, religious intolerance found a new hey-day during the Spanish Civil War. Of the 162 known Protestant churches in Spain that operated during the Second Spanish Republic, which lasted from 1931-1936, one hundred fifty (all but twelve) were destroyed by 1940. All public missionary activity ended with the Civil War, and missionaries and evangelists had to flee the country. Spanish Evangelical pastors were put into internment camps, under the approval of the Cardinal, and in some cases had their eyes put out while being interrogated to give names of more Protestants, before being executed.

Instead of having an Abraham Lincoln type to reconcile Spain of her heavy wounds, Spain got the Fascist Catholic Dictatorship of the Falange, with close endorsement and oversight of Cardinal Segura of the Roman Catholic Church. The Falange, or Nationalists, won the Spanish Civil War with a spirit of attrition. Instead of offering amnesty, the Falange Fascists looked to get even with the Spanish Republicans, also called the "Reds." Thousands of Republican Troops were placed in Internment Camps, along with Protestants and other "dangerous thinkers." The luckier ones fled for their lives across the Pyrenees into

France or took the first boat to South America. There are Spanish documentaries of Republican soldiers, referred to as “moles,” hiding out underground for decades, fearing that they were still being hunted, and some were. The Fascist Government of the Falange held on until the death of the Dictator, Francisco Franco, who, if nothing else, at least willed the government to peacefully pass over to the Prince upon his death.

Prince Juan Carlos, grandson of Spain’s last King, Alfonso XIII, was proclaimed king on November 22nd 1975 and on November 29th was officially crowned King of Spain. Shortly after, Don Juan *de Bourbon*, his father, came out of exile and renounced all rights to the throne to bolster his son the new king. Juan Carlos I oversaw the adoption of the Spanish Constitution in 1978 and of the Religious Liberty Law in 1980. For this law, the Evangelicals of Spain are grateful and relieved.

This series of nationwide events did two terrible things to the spiritual condition of Spaniards. To those who resented the Fascist Dictatorship, they also resented the Catholic Church for siding with the Falange in the Civil War, and it seems to have seared any true affection that this populace had for Jesus Christ as well. Those who had backed the Republic now felt at odds with the Church. Second, these two tidal waves of spiritual intolerance, the Inquisition and the Spanish Civil War, banged in the idea to many Spaniards that it is okay to be against religious freedom. The Spanish Inquisition was called off by King Juan Carlos I in 1992, five hundred years after it was issued (1492).

<http://shop.jhousepublishing.com>
<http://jdalcalabennett.wordpress.com>