

Spain known as the Iberian Peninsula is the southern most European country. It is attached to France by the Pyrene mountains (los Pirineos) and to the South it is only 7 miles from Africa crossing the Strait of Gibraltar (Estrecho de Gibraltar). Portugal shares this peninsula and its capital is Lisbon (Lisboa).

A peninsula is a body of land surrounded on three sides by water. To the West Spain has the Atlantic Ocean and is approximately 3,000 miles from the shores of New York. To the East it is surrounded by the Mediterranean and to the North by the Biscayne bay. In the Mediterranean lie 5 Spanish islands called the Balearic islands and they consist of: Mallorca, Menorca, Ibiza, Formentera and Cabrera. These islands are famous for their natural beauty, beaches and for the nightlife they offer.

Spain was invaded and occupied by the Moors (Arabs of Northern Africa) in 711 a.c. to 1492 when they were expelled from their strong fort and palace in Granada. This fort is known as the ALHAMBRA and it is visited by thousands of tourists every year because of its beautiful buildings and gardens. Even though the Moors occupied Spain for over 700 years, Spain never acquired their food, or music. However, because of their occupation, Spain acquired over 4,000 Arabic words and Arabic-derived that have been absorbed into the Spanish language,

Madrid is the capital of Spain, Barcelona its 2<sup>nd</sup> largest and Valencia is the 3<sup>rd</sup>. The most enduring contribution of Spain to the world is its language, which was imported to the Americas with the expansion of the Spanish Empire in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Now more than 400 million people speak Spanish in 22 countries, including 35 million who speak it in the United States. World-wide there are 20 countries where Spanish is their first language. Puerto Rico, although it is a US commonwealth, the people voted to continue to have Spanish as their official language.

The ancient aqueduct of Segovia in Spain was built by the Romans in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century a.d. and still supplies water to the city. It is admirable because the stones are not held up by any bonding material. The oldest WORKING lighthouse of the world is located in La Coruña, Spain a city to the northwest, right above Portugal. It was built by the Romans in the XI century and it is called The Hercules Tower or "La Torre de Hércules".. of the peninsula.

There are four languages actively spoken in Spain today with their corresponding Grammar and literature. They are: Castellano, Gallego, Catalan and Basque. The main dish of Spain is the Paella....which consists of a rice dish with chorizo, Seafood, chicken, etc. Spain is famous for its TAPAS, which are small servings of food as appetizers. Flan, Natillas and Rice Pudding are very Spanish desserts.

The largest contribution of the Spaniards to the New World was the Spanish language and the Catholic religion.