

Spain – a thousand different destinations

For years, Spain has been one of the leading MICE destinations. The country's mild climate, tourist attractions and easy accessibility from many other European cities have contributed to its popularity amongst meeting and event planners. According to the ICCA statistics published in April 2007, Spain was ranked 5th, measured by the number of international meetings organized in 2006, with Barcelona 4th in the city rankings. The country's well-developed infrastructure has facilitated traffic to and from the country. This does not just apply to the major cities of Madrid and

Barcelona but also to many other Spanish towns and cities. Spain now has a total of 47 airports which registered 55 million international arrivals in 2006. The Spanish Government continues to invest in improving the country's infrastructure. Extension programmes are currently underway at Barcelona, Málaga, Palma de Mallorca and the Canary Islands' airports. The AVE high-speed train network is being expanded in all directions from Madrid and over the next few years the important cities in Spain will all be reachable from Madrid within 4 hours.



CCIB, Barcelona ©CCIB

Convention Centres

Spain offers a wide range of conference venues and convention centres, all equipped with the latest technology. Madrid boasts many modern meeting facilities including the state-of-the-art IFEMA convention centre, opened in 2002, which provides 10,000m² of multipurpose space and has capacities ranging from 60 to 2,150. The IFEMA hosts almost 80 trade fairs a year, half of which are international. Trade fairs and exhibitions can also be held in the Palacio Municipal de Congresos Centre, also situated in the Campo de las Naciones business park. Another trade fair centre is located in the Casa de Campo business park. Meetings can also be held in a number of unusual buildings such as the magnificent medieval castle, Manzanera el Real, or the railway museum.

Barcelona's trade fair organization (Fira de Barcelona) has a number of sites throughout the city, including the Fira Gran Via, Montjuïc 2, where the EIBTM trade fair has been held in recent years. The recently completed CCIB (centre de convencions internacional de Barcelona) was voted the third best convention centre in the 2007 meeting and incentive travel industry awards. This centre is situated near the marina of Sant Adrià

de Besòs and can accommodate a total of 15,000 delegates including over 3,000 in its imposing auditorium designed by the Basel architects Herzog and de Meuron. Unusual meeting venues include structures designed by Gaudí between 1906 and 1912.

Many new convention centres have been constructed in recent years, some of them designed by famous architects such as Santiago Calatrava, Norman Foster, Arata Isozaki and Jean Nouvel. New convention centres are currently under construction in Albacete, Badajoz, Girona, Madrid, Mérida, Palma de Mallorca, Oviedo and Toledo.

Cuisine

Spanish cuisine enjoys world renown and varies from region to region: ranging from tapas to trendy haute cuisine. The best advertisement for Spanish culinary expertise must be Ferrán Adrià, the famous Catalan chef, considered the best chef in the world, and currently head chef at El Bulli in Roses on the Costa Brava. Wine and sherry production has also developed in leaps

and bounds in recent years and an original incentive programme is a visit to a bodega with sherry tasting, a visit to the vineyards and even grape harvesting as additional activities.

Culture and leisure opportunities

The cultural attractions of the country are of great significance for supporting programmes. Spain has the most UNESCO World Heritage Sites in any single country in the world and these include the St. James Way to Santiago de Compostela, Toledo, Tarragona and Cordoba. Other cultural highlights are the Prado in Madrid, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, the City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia (see page 209) and the Picasso Museum in Málaga.

Spain is endowed with large areas of unspoilt countryside, nature parks and reserves – plenty of space for outdoor sports of all kinds. The country offers over 300 golf courses, 28 ski resorts and all sorts of water sports. Many international events are held in the country, amongst them the America's Cup in Valencia and in 2008, the Expo, an international exposition, to be held in Zaragoza from June to September with the title "Water and sustainable development".



Mediterranean cuisine ©Oficina Española de Turismo



City of Arts and Sciences, Valencia ©City of Arts and Sciences

MEETINGS



Manzanares el Real, Madrid ©Madrid Covention Bureau



Golf on the Costa de la Luz ©Turespaña



Mallorcan coastline ©Eduard Miralles, FTM



Teide, Tenerife ©Turespaña

Incentive Ideas in Spain

Madrid – culture, history & golf

A visit to The Prado Museum, one of the finest art galleries in the world, is especially recommended since the gallery was reopened following the restoration of the Jerónimos Church and extension work in 2007, creating new exhibition galleries and an auditorium for 438 people. The city's historical backdrop lends itself to supporting programmes such as “Madrid of the Hapsburgs” or “Madrid of the Bourbons”. Madrid is also a popular golfing destination and the city offers special packages for business tourists, for example a full or half-day golf class or mini-championship.



Casa Batlló, Barcelona ©Oficina Española de Turismo

Barcelona – The world of Gaudí

Barcelona is famous for the architecture of Antoni Gaudí (1856-1926). A coach trip around the city is the best way to appreciate the work of this outstanding modernist artist. The visit begins on the Passeig de Gràcia at La Pedrera, whose wave-like stone façade and remarkable rooftop make it one of Gaudí's finest achievements. The top storey of La Pedrera houses a museum Espai Gaudí, which gives an insight into Gaudí's work. The Casa Batlló can also be found on

the Passeig de Gràcia and is another one of Gaudí's masterpieces. The roof is covered in ceramic tiles giving the impression of the scales of a dragon's skin. The next stops on the route are the Palau Güell, former residence of the Viscount Güell, the architect's main patron, and Casa Viçens, built in Arabian style and the first work built by Gaudí in the city. A visit is then made to the Park Güell, a combination of garden and city architecture, representing Gaudí's biggest and, perhaps, most imaginative work. All these splendid buildings can be hired as backdrops for prestigious venues. The church of the Sagrada Família, is still under construction although building work was originally commenced over 100 years ago. It is arguably Gaudí's most impressive building and an unmistakable landmark.

Andalusia - sherry bodegas

There are many bodegas in and around Jerez de la Frontera - these are not only sherry wine producers but veritable museums providing a fascinating insight into the history of sherry wine production. Most hotels



Bodega Domeq Veneciados, Jerez ©Turespaña

organize guided tours of the bodegas. In the Gonzalez Byass Tio Pepe bodega, for example, there are over 100,000 wine barrels. The oldest are over 350 years old. The tour explains the history and manufacture



Windsurfing ©Eduard Miralles, FTM

of sherry wine and provides a sherry tasting session and opportunity to buy one of the many different sorts available. This bodega has been visited by many famous people: Harold Lloyd, Jean Cocteau, Winston Churchill or Ayrton Senna, Roger Moore or Steven Spielberg, to mention just a few, who have all left their signatures and a message on a barrel. In one of the bodegas Alexander Fleming, the inventor of penicillin, wrote: “My medicine cures the sick, but this wine brings back the dead”.

Mallorca – culinary exploration

Mallorca offers special group programmes for wine tasting and sampling tapas in Mallorcan wineries, learning to cook a typical paella, taking a culinary itinerary through Palma de Mallorca and visiting olive oil factories to sample local products. Visitors can also enjoy Mallorcan cuisine in farmhouses that are fully equipped to host events, yet that maintain Mallorca's typical style. These culinary events can be combined with cultural visits to museums.

Balearic Islands – Enjoying the sea

Mallorca is home to companies that specialize in incentive trips, groups and events that offer views of the Bay of Palma at nightfall and dinner

on antique sailboats, boat excursions and trips to Cabrera in yachts or catamarans while enjoying a meal on the high seas. Mini-regattas on yachts or catamarans can also be organized for incentive groups.

Canary Islands – Whale watching

Pilot whales have found the ideal habitat for living and breeding in the south of Tenerife and a population of over 300 live here all year round, just



Whalewatching, Tenerife ©Turespaña

a few miles off shore. Whale watching excursions leave from the ports of Los Cristianos and Puerto Colon sailing along the south coast of Tenerife, offering panoramic views of La Caleta, Las Americas and the island of La Gomera to the area where the dolphins and whales live, not far from the amazing Los Gigantes cliffs. A spectacular experience you will never forget!

For further information, see www.spain.info



Park Güell ©Espai d'Imatge (Turisme de Barcelona)



Spanish Folklore Dancing ©Turespaña



Valldemossa ©Eduard Miralles, FTM



Sunset Coast, Tenerife ©Turespaña