

# A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY

Volume IV



EXPLORE MEDIEVAL KINGDOMS

WRITTEN BY  
TERRI JOHNSON

A CHILD'S GEOGRAPHY



## Praise for *A Child's Geography: Explore Medieval Kingdoms...*

*My eleven year old daughter and I were delighted to read through A Child's Geography: Medieval Kingdoms. We both learned so very much! Reading this book really ignites the imagination and helps you feel like you are THERE, walking through the streets of the country being studied, tasting the local foods, and meeting new friends. My daughter was so interested in what we were reading that she begged to finish the book in one day! I am a trained classroom teacher that has been homeschooling for the past 18 years, and I would definitely place the Child's Geography books up there with the very best resources—ones you and your child will return to over and over again. ~ Susan Menzmer*

*This was my first time reading any books in the A Child's Geography series and it will now be our new curriculum for geography as well as history. Beautifully written. The story pulls you in and allows you to fully immerse yourself in the places, sights, sounds, and scents of our world. The photographs are wonderful; beautiful, bright, and full of color. The book title says geography, but it is so much more. There is history and not boring text book history either. It's edge of your seat history that you, as well as your children, will enjoy. I have learned so much and I am excited to get the whole collection to begin our journey around the world! ~ Stephanie Sanchez*

*I really enjoyed getting some more indepth research about several areas that I have visited in person, either as a child or an adult. As always, Terri's knowledge is accessible to children and their parents alike so we can all learn together! ~ Meredith Boone*

*This book allows kids to not only learn geography and history, but to see where it is happening. History and geography should not be separate, they make sense to be placed together. ~ Laura Strombaugh*

*A Child's Geography: Explore Medieval Kingdoms is so vivid, it is the next best thing to being there! What a wonderful way to experience geography! Cuddle on the sofa with children at your feet traveling to foreign lands and times gone by. ~ Cindy Morgan*

*Awesome! I am hooked on the book and on Medieval Times! (and I am not a history buff!) ~ Ginette Martin*

*First I want to say I greatly enjoyed your writing style. I loved feeling like I was traveling through Western Europe: food, sights, and sounds! It reminded me of *Longing for Paris* by Sarah Mae. I can't wait to read some of your other books and share them with my children when they get a little older. ~ Beth Robinson*

*I love the content and the conversational tone. Great information. You have a nice balance of history, geography, food, and just what it is like to travel. I can't wait to see the book with the pictures and maps! ~ Cheri Stamile*

*I absolutely LOVE it! The style of writing is so exciting, and really gives life to history...not just a stack of facts and dates. ~ Marilyn Brasuell*

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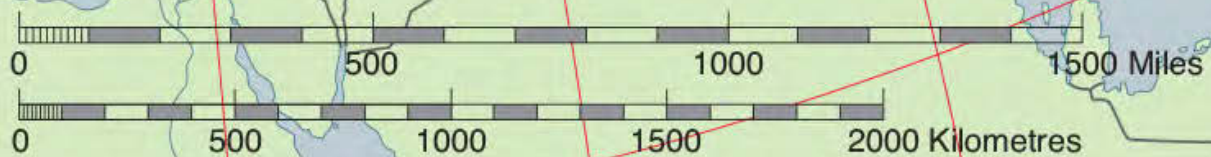
Timelines, Map Work, Activities, Recipes, Prayer Guide and more can be found on the download page listed in the Introduction.







## A Child's Geography: Explore Medieval Kingdoms



# Introduction

After the fall of the Roman Empire in 476 AD, the Classical World plunged into darkness. Although the sun did not literally disappear from the sky, nor the stars fade from view, the world did change in ways that historians would describe as “dark.”

The time of leisure and the pursuit of recreational activities had come to a screeching halt. No longer did people have time to pursue education and scholarship, architectural advancements, or political debate. More pressing matters needed their attention. The people of the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe were now focused on sheer survival, as they were living day to day amid warring tribes, led by powerful **barbarian** warlords.

During these “dark ages,” city dwellers stopped building large and beautiful buildings; they stopped developing democratic systems of government; and they stopped writing books and music. This lack of growth and production is what made the dark ages so dark. Can you imagine a world without books or music? Neither can I!

The Dark Ages lasted for nearly 400 years. That is a long time! If you think about it, the United States has only been a nation for a little more than 225 years. In fact, the pilgrims set foot on this soil and established Plymouth Plantation about 400 years ago. So 400 years is a long time!

But the Dark Ages didn’t last forever and western societies eased into a time known as the Middle Ages (or Medieval time period). The “middle” of what, you ask? Well, the Middle Ages were the middle years between the Classical World of the Greeks and Romans and the Renaissance, which means “re-birth.” The age of the Renaissance received its name because society was finally “reborn” around the 15<sup>th</sup> century, nearly one thousand years after the Fall of Rome. The Renaissance ushered in a time of great rediscovery of the fine arts, of towering architecture, of political unrest, and of classical literature.

As we continue our explorations around God’s glorious globe, we will pick up where we left off. Leaving the Classical World behind, we’ll discover the medieval realm of the barbarians—the **Franks**, the **Visigoths**, the **Burgundians**, and others—by visiting the swiftly changing countries of Western Europe. We’ll charge into the heart of this old world, some areas still more medieval than modern in many ways.

This journey is going to be quite an adventure!

We left our flying carpet behind after the second volume of *A Child's Geography* and our scrolls after volume three. Let's don our tunics and strap on our swords as we venture into new territory, which includes Spain, Portugal, France, Andorra, Monaco, Switzerland, Austria, Liechtenstein, Germany, Luxembourg, Belgium, and the Netherlands. I cannot wait to see what we will find there, and who we will meet!

Are you ready to go? I am! Come! Let's explore medieval kingdoms and the modern-day countries of Western Europe.

### A Few Thoughts Before Embarking...

This book is a stand-alone book and can be read straight through without any additional resources. We have provided pronunciation and glossary assistance, along with photos and maps to help you get everything you need out of this volume. However, there are a few things that you should know...

1. This is Volume IV of *A Child's Geography*. Three volumes precede it—*A Child's Geography: Explore His Earth*, *A Child's Geography: Explore the Holy Land*, and *A Child's Geography: Explore the Classical World*. These books do not need to be read in order, but they do complement each other nicely. Ann Voskamp, Best-selling author of *One Thousand Gifts*, wrote the first two volumes. She set the stage for a great series of books that teach history and geography using a “living book” approach that engages the reader while bringing greater understanding and appreciation for distant corners of our globe. *Explore His Earth* lays a foundation for geography by covering earth science topics such as components of our planet, layers of the atmosphere, continents and seas, tectonic plates, earthquakes, volcanoes, latitude, longitude and so much more. *Explore the Holy Land* dives straight down into the Middle East, exploring the beautiful countryside and bringing greater understanding for the cultures and people who live there.

2. Volumes II and III are the perfect companions to an ancient history study. This volume, volume IV, is an ideal complement to medieval history. *A Child's Geography* series is a wonderful way to study history and geography together in a seamless way.

3. A single volume of *A Child's Geography* can be studied over the course of a semester or an entire year. If you plan to use only one book this year, then aim to cover one chapter every two weeks. The first week, you can read the chapter and discuss the narration questions. The second week, you and your students can work on additional projects, such as writing in your journals, keeping a timeline, labeling maps, doing extra reading and tackling some fun projects, especially (I hope!) cooking up some of the recipes provided. If you would prefer to finish the book in half the time—one semester—then



plan on spending one week on each chapter, reading the content and choosing one or two additional activities per country.

4. Words in **bold** type indicate vocabulary words, which are defined in the glossary in the back of the book. If your student is unfamiliar with the word, use your reading time in this book to expand his/her vocabulary.

4. The extra activities are located on a special download page on our website. There, you will find timelines for each chapter, map labeling suggestions, hands-on activities (including authentic recipes), extra reading suggestions, and more.

<http://knowledgequestmaps.com/dev/acg4-extras-dnld/>

5. A *Child's Geography* series is intended for students in 1<sup>st</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grades, but it can work equally well with middle school students. Feel free to adjust the activities and assignments according to your student's grade level and/or maturity level.

6. This book is your book and you are the teacher. Please use this book, along with its many optional activities, as you see fit. We hoped to provide you with MORE than you need or want to do. That way, you can pick and choose what works best for your family or group of students. Our goal is to equip you with resources, not shackle you to a pile of extra work.

If you have any questions or comments, please send them to me at [terri@knowledgequestmaps.com](mailto:terri@knowledgequestmaps.com). I would love to discuss them with you. Oh, that reminds me... yes, I, Terri Johnson, am the author of this book. While Ann Voskamp began the series several years ago, she is unable to continue it at this point in her life. I hope that I have been able to do this volume justice, following on her heels, and trying to fit into her awfully large shoes (no, her feet aren't big, but her reputation as an extremely gifted author is great indeed). Any mistakes that you find are mine alone. Anything that you love about the series concept can be credited to Ann.

I hope that you enjoy this fascinating journey around the countries of Western Europe. I cannot wait to explore these places with you. It will be like we're traveling there without leaving the comfort of our own homes. Together, we will embrace new cultures and appreciate people different from ourselves. It will be an adventure we will not soon forget. Do you have your map ready, you bag packed, and your shoes laced? Great. Let's go!



**P.S.** Be sure to head to the web link above for all of the fun bonuses that come with this book. So fun!

# Spain, Pt I

## Moor Land in Spain

Across the scorching North African sands, the **Moors**, with their black capes billowing behind them, raced on horseback to Hispania, a new land full of hope and promise for the future. Ah, Hispania... the land of abundance, overflowing with green olives and purple grapes, ripe for the picking.

After the death of Mohammed in AD 632, the Muslims of Arabia began to expand their territory rapidly. They spread across northern Africa and settled in the land of Morocco, in the very north-west corner of the African continent. Do you have your travel map handy? Pull it out and see if you can find Morocco. It was here that this group of people became known as the Moors. While Morocco was a pleasant rest stop for the Moors, it was not their final destination. They had set their sights on conquering the barbarian tribe known as the Visigoths and settling the Iberian **Peninsula**, which is the region we know as modern Spain and Portugal.



Iberian Peninsula map by Robert Wilkerson, public domain image.

The Moors crossed the narrow **Strait** of Gibraltar on ships, bringing their horses with them. The Strait of Gibraltar is a waterway fifteen miles wide that separates the continents of Africa and Europe. (A **strait** of water isn't necessarily straight, without bends or curves. The word strait has nothing to do with "straight" lines. A strait is a narrow channel of water that connects two larger bodies of water.) On the Spanish side of the strait is the mighty



The Rock of Gibraltar, ThinkStock photos, used with permission.

monolithic limestone outcropping known as the Rock of Gibraltar. The ancient peoples of Greece and Rome referred to this rock as one of the Pillars of **Hercules** (the other and smaller one being Jebel Musa—or Mount Moses—on the African side of the strait). These Pillars marked the boundaries of the known world. What lay beyond was anyone's guess.

After the Moors crossed the strait, it took about eight years for them to conquer the Visigothic kingdom of Spain. The Moors loved their new land, but they were not content. Moorish raiders on horseback, with **scimitars** glinting in the hot Spanish sunlight, continued to move north over the next several decades, winning more and more land until they could go no further. They crossed the Pyrenees Mountains and made significant inroads into modern-day France before a legion of Frankish and Burgundian warriors, led by Charles Martel, stopped their advance at the Battle of Tours in AD 732.

Let's drop into Spain at the same location that the Moors did... at the Rock of Gibraltar. The Rock, and the surrounding area known as Gibraltar, are the property of the United Kingdom and not owned by Spain at all. But it is the southern entrance to Spain and a great place to start our adventure.

We need to have our maps out because as we pass through the UK territory of Gibraltar, we find ourselves in the southern region of Spain known as Andalucía. Andalucía is perhaps the most iconic part



of Spain because it typifies the very things we think of when we think of Spain—bullfights, horses, and flamenco dancing! In fact, the town of Ronda in the very south of Spain has the oldest bullfighting arena in the country, the Plaza de Toros de Ronda.

Terrifying hairpin turns and a steep mountain incline transport us into Ronda, a town built along the extreme edge of a sheer cliff face overlooking a deep gorge below. The village, with its dizzyingly tall, narrow bridge, is so lofty in altitude that it is often enveloped in rain-heavy clouds.

There is no bullfight scheduled for today, but it is fun to imagine one in this historic arena. The sport of bullfighting dates back to Ancient Greek and Roman times when many Man vs. beast competitions were held in the Colosseum and other arenas of the Classical World. Spain is not the only country that hosts bullfights in modern times, but when we think of bullfighting, we certainly think of Spain. Other countries that host bullfights are France and Portugal (both of which border Spain as you can see by looking at your map); Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela across the world in South America; and the Philippine Islands in the Pacific Ocean, southwest of Japan. Bullfighting was brought to these regions by the Spanish, who colonized these regions around the world.

The people who fight bulls are called “toreros.” You have probably heard of the more familiar term “matador” but this word only refers to the most senior torero. Finely dressed toreros must execute a series of choreographed moves, almost like a dance, waving a fiery red cape to entice the bull to charge it. Toreros must be very careful because there is great danger when they face the bulls in the bullring. The bulls can get very angry during the bullfight and their horns are very sharp, so the toreros must pay close attention and always be alert. And quick on their feet!



Bullfighting in Spain, ThinkStock photos, licensed for publication.

We'll continue our explorations of Spain in the city of Seville, the capital and largest city in Andalucía. Although not directly on the coast, Seville has a long history with deep seafaring roots. The Phoenicians originally colonized Seville over 2,200 years ago before it became a Roman **outpost**. In 1519, Ferdinand Magellan departed from Seville to complete the first **circumnavigation** of the globe. Spain also commissioned the Italian sea captain, Christopher Columbus, to sail to the New World. He departed from Palos, Seville's closest seaport. This is the reason his remains were given to this Spanish city and his tomb can be viewed inside the great doors of the **Cathedral** of Seville.

Mysteriously, the city of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic also claims to possess the bones of Christopher Columbus. Although Columbus died in Spain, his skeletal remains were carried to Hispaniola—modern-day Dominican Republic—in 1537. In 1795, they were moved to Cuba, and later returned to Seville, Spain in 1898.



However, the journey may not have ended there, and this is where the mystery lies. Back in the Dominican Republic at the Cathedral of Santa María la Menor, a worker discovered a heavy leaden box marked “The illustrious and excellent man, Don Colón, Admiral of the Ocean Sea.” (Colón is the Spanish name for Columbus.) The implication of this find is that the Spanish may have taken the wrong man's bones back to Seville. Christopher Columbus' son was also named Don Colón, so it is possible that one of the sets of bones belongs to him. Or they may belong to someone else entirely. DNA testing has not proven the identity of either set of bones. And so, for this reason, each of these countries straddling the Atlantic Ocean proudly display *the* tomb of Columbus and dispute the other's claim to possess his illustrious remains. The 500-year-old mystery remains unsolved.

In modern times, Seville has become the center of flamenco music and dancing. Flamenco is a type of Spanish folk music

and dance. The unique dance style was born right here in the province of Andalucía. Today, we have the opportunity to see a flamenco performance at the theater. Flamenco is a combination of singing, guitar playing, hand clapping, and dancing. Let's hurry so that we don't miss any of it!

The audience loves the lively music, the colorful costumes, and the beautiful dancing. They show their appreciation by clapping and shouting their approval. I'll be quiet now so that you can enjoy the performance yourself:

<http://knowledgequestmaps.com/media-files-acg4-spain-ch1-2/>



Flamenco dancer, ThinkStock photos, licensed for publication.

What did you think of the flamenco performance? Isn't the footwork for flamenco dancing fast and intricate? It takes a great deal of practice to move your feet that quickly.

It's time to jostle our way through the crowds to the train station. The train will be here any minute and it is sure to be on time, because if it's late, passengers ride free. Spain has the best train system in Europe. The trains are extremely reliable and incredibly fast, reaching speeds of 220 miles per hour. They are also very comfortable and luxurious, especially the hotel-trains, which are Spain's "hotels on wheels." This clean and plush rail car makes us feel like royalty. Isn't it great that the windows are





Alhambra Citadel photo by Jiuguang Wang, public domain CC BY-SA 3.0.

so large? We can watch the scenery as we speed through the Spanish countryside with a short stop in Granada before we take a longer ride up north to Barcelona.

The view outside our window is spectacular as we zip east through green valleys and up into the **foothills** of Granada. The town lies at the base of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Granada is best known for The Alhambra, a Moorish citadel and palace built in AD 889. I'm looking forward to exploring it with you.

Moorish poets described The Alhambra as a “pearl set in emeralds.” This description compares the color of the buildings to the color of pearls and the lush green woods surrounding the fortress to emeralds. The palace complex was designed with the foothill setting in mind. There is a park surrounding the citadel, which was planted by the Moors. Within the park are groves of orange and myrtle trees with rose bushes of many colors and varieties. Its most characteristic feature, however, was not planted by the Moors, but by the English. There is a dense wood of English elms that were brought here by the Duke of Wellington in 1812.

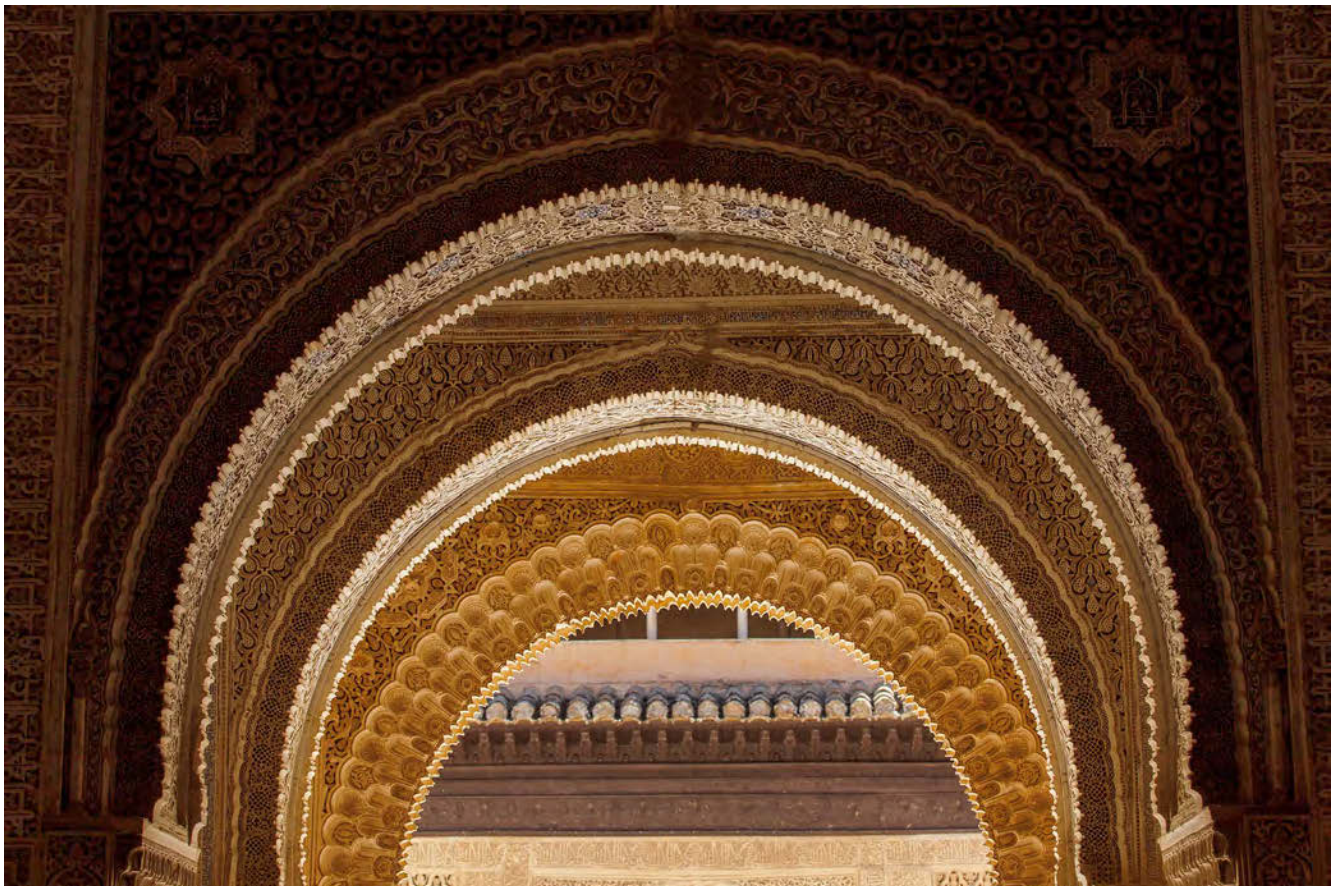
Do you hear that? That is the beautiful song of the nightingale. Bird songs and trills, along with the swishing sound of water cascading over falls and fountains, make the park a tranquil place to enjoy the beauty of this area.

## Explore Medieval Kingdoms

Let's go inside and look around. This impressive fortress and the town of Granada were the last hold-outs of the Moors in Spain. The year 1492 holds great significance for the people of Spain and every year they celebrate an event that happened that year. And no, it has nothing to do with Columbus sailing the ocean blue. Spaniards celebrate 1492 because that is the year that the Moors were finally driven out of Spain after 800 years of domination. They celebrate the "Reconquista," or re-conquest, of this land by the Spanish Christians. On January 2, 1492, Emir Muhammad XII surrendered Granada after 600 years of occupation to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella after his defeat in the Granada War.

That is why you can see both Muslim and medieval Christian influence throughout the halls and rooms of the magnificent Alhambra. It is a beautiful, jaw-dropping palace that tells a long and complicated story. Be sure to take many photos to send back home. In fact, let's write a postcard home and tell them about our favorite thing we have learned so far here in Spain.

But not yet! It's time to hurry back to the train. Our "hotel on wheels" departs in an hour and we do not want to miss it. We'll write our postcards while we ride the rails north. Next stop, Barcelona!



Alhambra Citadel photo by SuperCar-RoadTrip.fr, public domain CC BY-SA 3.0.



## But first, tell me what you remember about...

### **The Moors:**

*What do you remember about Morocco? Did the Moors end up staying there? They had to pass through the Strait of Gibraltar on their quest to conquer Spain. Do you remember the names of the pillars that stood on either side of the Strait of Gibraltar, marking it as the boundary of the known world for ancient peoples?*

### **Spain:**

*Why do the people of Spain celebrate the year 1492? Here is a hint—it does not have anything to do with Christopher Columbus!*

*Tell me what you think about our trip through Spain. What sights and sounds do you remember? Can you name some of the places we visited? Would you rather see a bullfight or a flamenco dance and why?*

*Why is the Alhambra called “a pearl set in emeralds”? What two cultures are reflected in this beautiful palace and why?*



## **Balmy Barcelona to Majestic Montserrat**

It is quite an experience to travel by hotel-train up to Barcelona and one I think you will enjoy. We can settle in and get comfortable because we will not arrive in Barcelona until early tomorrow morning. We have a sleeper car to ourselves, but the beds fold into couches when we don't want to sleep. The big windows provide a magnificent view of the scenery outside.

While we zip north through the heart of Spain, let me give you some more information about the lay of the land. Spain takes up most of the Iberian Peninsula, along with Portugal and Andorra, which are smaller countries we'll learn about later. Spain is bigger than the state of California in the United States. It is the second largest country in Europe, right after France.

Spain is a mountainous country. The Pyrenees Mountains form its northern border with France. Other mountain chains and many high **plateaus** spread throughout the rest of the peninsula. However, the highest mountain in Spain is not found on the Iberian Peninsula at all. Mt. Teide is located on the island of Tenerife, one of the seven Canary Islands that belong to Spain, which are located in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Africa. Mt. Teide is an active volcano and the third largest volcano in the world.

The nation of Spain includes another set of islands too—the Balearic Islands—which are located on the other side of Spain near the Mediterranean Sea. And if that weren't enough, Spain's holdings in-





Spanish high speed trains, ThinkStock photos, licensed for publication.

clude two more areas—the cities of Ceuta and Melilla, enclaves located on the Mediterranean coast of Africa bordering Morocco. Do you remember what an **enclave** is? An enclave is a country, or portion of a country, that is entirely surrounded by another country. You can see these two cities on your map.

Running right through the heart of Spain is the Tajo River. In fact, there are several large rivers, including the Ebro, the Duero, the Guadalquivir, and the Guadiana, that crisscross Spain bringing water and nourishment to the semi-arid land in the south. Because of this, Spanish farmers can grow an abundance of citrus fruit, such as oranges, grapefruit, lemons, and limes. Like most countries that surround the Mediterranean Sea, Spain also grows olives and grapes in abundance.

Because Spain is so close to Africa, the wildlife is very diverse. We will see plenty of chameleons, lizards, and snakes during our stay here in Spain, but we might also spot a brown bear or a red deer. We may even see some creatures that are less familiar to us, such as ibex and mongoose. Let's keep a lookout for them before the sun goes down and our view of the world from our train window disappears.

It's time to prepare our train car and ourselves for sleep. When we wake up, we'll be in the beautiful seaside city of Barcelona. Night-night!



Guell Park, Barcelona, Adobe Stock Photos, licensed for publication.

Good morning! We have arrived in Barcelona and it is a beautiful, sunny day here on the Mediterranean coast. We couldn't have asked for a nicer day to wander through this lively and colorful city, the capital of Catalonia. Just like Andalucía, Catalonia is a geographical region of Spain. But the Catalans do not consider Catalonia a region; to them it is a nation that isn't officially recognized as one.

The people of Catalonia speak their own language—Catalan—in addition to Spanish. There are two additional languages spoken in regional parts of Spain—Galician and Basque—for a total of four languages spoken in this country.

Barcelona is the second largest city in Spain, after Madrid, with 4.7 million people calling it home. Barcelona has a rich and diverse history. It was founded over 2,000 years ago as a Roman colony. Later, it became the Visigoth capital during the Dark Ages and then a 14<sup>th</sup> century **maritime** super-power.

Let's stroll along the Ramblas first, since this avenue is the center of old Barcelona. Cafés and eateries line the street, so we are sure to find something delicious for breakfast. How about a bagel with eggs and ham, and maybe some coffee or hot chocolate to drink? Hot chocolate is a specialty beverage of Spain and is quite different from the hot chocolate served in other countries. The warm drink is thick,



dark, and sweet, traditionally served with fried-dough sticks, called churros. Perfect. If we sit by a window or out on the sidewalk, we can watch the many street performers that parade up and down the boulevard.

At the far end of the Ramblas is the Columbus **monument**, for it was here that King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain welcomed Christopher Columbus home after his first voyage to the New World. It is ironic that Barcelona should honor the man whose discoveries opened up new trade routes in the Atlantic Ocean, because this shifted the focus of European trade away from the powerful and wealthy trading ports on the Mediterranean, including Barcelona. Barcelona plunged into an economic decline during that transition, but today it is a bustling and exciting city.

Beyond the monument is the waterfront, which was completely renovated for the 1992 Summer Olympic Games that were hosted by Spain in Barcelona. Sand was trucked in to provide beaches for the great numbers of people that swarmed Barcelona to watch the Olympics. Promenades were constructed along those man-made beaches and cafés built along the promenades. Barcelona has become a lovely beach town.

We must visit the Gothic Quarter next. There, in the heart of old Barcelona is the Picasso Museum. Have you ever seen the artwork of Pablo Picasso? If you have, then you will be surprised by what you will discover here. Barcelona is the town of Picasso's youth and it has the largest collection of his early artwork anywhere.



Barcelona beach taken by Mislav Marohnić, public domain image, CC BY-SA 3.0.



When you see the realistic art of Picasso's youth, you will have a greater appreciation for his later, more abstract art. The museum collection takes you back to his earliest works, which are very detailed and thoughtful. Even as a child and early teen, his portraits show impressive technique and insight into the emotions of his subjects. Often, his family members made appearances in his artwork, usually his father, appearing as a teacher, doctor, or priest.

As a child, Pablo Picasso painted like an adult. When he became an adult, he said that he learned to paint like a child—not painting what he saw, but what he felt.



Science and Charity by Pablo Picasso (1897) and A Rooster by Pablo Picasso (1938).

Beyond the Gothic Quarter and outside the dense Old City of Barcelona, we can visit the Eixample (pronounced [é-sham-pla] meaning “expansion”) district. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a boom time for Barcelona. By 1850, the city was bursting out of its medieval walls, and so an expansion was planned to grow the city. Wide sidewalks, tree-lined boulevards and spacious squares were all thoughtfully planned and carried out for the Eixample district.

The vision for the Eixample was to allow everyone to be equal and have equal access to all amenities. Each district of twenty square blocks would have its own markets, hospitals, parks, schools, and day-care centers. However, the wealthy residents of the city turned this area into an architectural showcase to flaunt their wealth to their neighbors.

The wealthy citizens of Barcelona embraced Modernisme, the Catalan version of the Art Nouveau style, which was becoming popular throughout Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Barcelona became the



Passieg de Gràcia taken by Mstyslav Chernov, public domain image, CC BY-SA 3.0.

capital of Modernisme, and you can see it everywhere in this Doctor Seuss-like section of town. The buildings are not square and angular, but rounded with flowery and flowing asymmetrical shapes.

Take a look at the mansions along the boulevard Passeig de Gràcia [pass-àge-de-gra-sia]. Because of all of the creative twists and swirling structures, the locals have nicknamed this neighborhood the “Block of Discord.”

Perhaps the most famous Modernisme architect of that time was Antoni Gaudí. Our word “gaudy” (which means overly extravagant and showy) derives from Gaudí and his exaggerated, whimsical designs. And yet, if you look closely at his work, you will begin to appreciate his style and ability to design buildings that do not look like they should be structurally sound, and yet are.



Sagrada Família, photo by Wjh31, CC BY-SA 3.0.



## A Child's Geography

Gaudí's most famous work is the unfinished Church of the Holy Family, or La Sagrada Familia. He worked on it for over 40 years until his death in 1926. The work continues on the church. Its projected date of completion is the year 2026, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Antoni Gaudí's death. Like the construction of many grand cathedrals throughout the ages, this project will take many lifetimes to complete.

There is another Gaudí masterpiece that I would like for you to see, the colorful and whimsical Park Güell [gu-éya] (image on page 18). Park Güell began as a housing project, intending to provide homes for sixty families, but the high-end housing development flopped. However, a century later, it is a great success as a city park. Today, families flock to the park to enjoy the fanciful decor and the playful shapes of this unusual playground overlooking the grand city of Barcelona and the sparkling Mediterranean Sea beyond.

Before we call it a day, we need to take a side trip out of town to the Montserrat Monastery. A visit to the northwest corner of Spain would not be complete without seeing the monastery.

Montserrat means “serrated mountain” and you can understand how the monastery got its name as we wind our way into the mountains northwest of Barcelona. They look like the jagged edge of a serrated knife. You might want to keep your eyes on the road, as it is easy to get carsick on twisty mountain highways such as this one.

Now for the best part... we get to ride a **téléphérique** (which in English we would call a **gondola**, lift, or cable car) further up into the jagged mountains and be delivered right to the doorstep of the Benedictine abbey. Although once destroyed by Napoleon, the Montserrat Monastery was beautifully restored in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and has become the heart and soul of the Catalan people.



Montserrat Monastery taken by Rodrigo Paredes, public domain image, CC BY-SA 3.0.

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A handful of Benedictine monks carry on the monastery's spiritual tradition. The Catalan people have a slogan “ora et labora” which means “pray and work” and these words sum up the life of a monk living in Montserrat.



Pilgrims of the Catholic faith journey here to see the La Moreneta, a small wooden statue of the Virgin Mary, which was discovered here in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The legend surrounding the statue is that St. Luke, the author of the Gospel of Luke, physician, and evangelist of Jesus Christ, carved the masterpiece, but **carbon dating** indicates that she is only 800 years old. Still, pilgrims reach out and touch the orb in Mary's hand to seek and receive her blessing.

It's time to drive back down the mountain and get some rest before we continue our tour of Spain. We have been blessed to wander through Moorish citadels, see an old bullfighting arena, watch flamenco dancers, tour the Eixample district of Barcelona, gaze upon the early work of Picasso, and ride a gondola car to a monastery hidden between serrated mountain peaks.

What will tomorrow's adventures bring? Only tomorrow will tell. Get some rest; there is still so much more of Spain to discover!



**But first, tell me what you remember about...**

### **Geography of Spain:**

*What chain of mountains forms Spain's northern border with France? Do you remember what the highest mountain is in Spain? It's located on the island of Tenerife. There's also something special about this mountain – can you tell me what it is?*

*Do you remember why Spanish farmers are able to grow such bountiful crops? Tell me! Of the crops that were mentioned, which are your favorites?*

*Can you name some of the animals you might find in Spain?*

### **Barcelona:**

*What can you tell me about Barcelona, the diverse capital city of Catalonia? Do you remember which culture founded it almost 2000 years ago?*

*Which famous artist was from Barcelona? Have you ever seen any of his paintings? If so, what do you think of them?*

*Wow, the Eixample district is amazing...what are your thoughts about the architecture? Would you like to visit the Park Güell or the Sagrada Familia?*

*What does "ora et labora" mean?*

## Timeline of Spain

500 BC	↑	Toledo becomes important steel-working center
AD 632		Mohammed dies
AD 732		Battle of Tours (Poitiers)
AD 1492		Moors driven out of Spain / Columbus sails for the New World
AD 1500		King Phillip the 3rd constructs the Plaza Mayor in Madrid
AD 1519		Ferdinand Magellan sails from Seville to circumnavigate the globe
AD 1588		The Spanish Armada defeated by the British Navy
AD 1850		Planning begins for the expansion of Barcelona
AD 1900		The Spanish Civil War
AD 1926		Antoni Gaudi dies during the building of the Sagrada Familia
AD 1992	↓	Summer Olympics held in Barcelona

