

What history should we know about Spain before traveling there? How does this history affect Spain today? What cultural traditions are practiced in Spain? We'll answer these questions and many more in today's episode, A Brief History of Spain to Know Before You Go. Welcome to Wiser World, a podcast for busy people who need a refresher on all things world.

Here we explore different regions of the globe, giving you the facts and context you need to think historically about current events. I truly believe that the more we learn about the world, The more we embrace our shared humanity. I'm your host, Allie Roper. Thanks for being here.

Hello again! Today I am doing something new. Recently, I was preparing to travel to Spain and I've learned over many years of traveling abroad that understanding the history of a place, even just a little bit, can be very, very valuable in travel. And I have far deeper experiences and conversations with locals, taxi drivers, Waiters, waitresses, I've eaten better food, I've avoided awkward topics, all of these things, knowing, knowing what to look for when you go to a country, what's important to that place, that has become really important to me before I travel.

And so as I was looking into Spain, I thought, wait a minute. Maybe others would want brief histories and outlines for travel destinations as well. And so the idea of a no before you go episode type was born and this one on Spain is the first, and I have many more to come. So what am I going to include in these?

No, before you go episodes, well, I'm going to cover histories of countries that. People love to travel to. So we're going to cover things like location, food, religion, language, art, the things you need to know before you go there. And then naturally we're going to cover the history, but it will be more broad and cover, cover a large scale of time in a short amount of time.

And these episodes won't be the deep, dark dives, like my one on one episodes, but they will give you an overview that will hopefully give good context and To the area, and these episodes aren't just for travelers though. Obviously if you know somebody who's traveling, share this with them please. But if you're just curious about a place or studying it in school or just genuinely want to know more about the world and aren't traveling right now, these episodes are still for you.

So since I was just in Spain, I recently got back this first, no, before you go episode is going to be on Spain and I'm really excited to share some Spanish history with you. It's one of the best trips I've been on, and so I hope you can hear the enthusiasm in my voice. So, let's get started with Spain.

Spain is located on the Iberian Peninsula of Europe. It borders Portugal on the west, France on the northeast, and to the south there's this Strait of Gibraltar. It's a narrow strip of water, and below that is Morocco and the continent of Africa. Spain has a large coastline with the Mediterranean Sea, some coasts on the Atlantic as well, giving it some of the best beach towns in Europe and in the world, frankly.

Madrid is the capital of Spain, and it's located right in the middle of the country. Spain is known for being really sunny and generally has a Mediterranean climate, though. really depends on where you are in the country. It can be a little drier in the southern part of Spain. But in the north parts of Spain, like where I went, I went to Barcelona.

It is very green and lush, much greener and lusher than I was expecting, to be honest. The Canary Islands, which are off the west coast of Morocco, they are part of Spain, and they have a warm island climate, as you would suspect. Some parts Seville or Sevilla. They can get very, very hot in the summertime, like over 100 degrees Fahrenheit, over 40 degrees Celsius.

And so the best time to visit Spain is typically in the spring and fall. I just visited in May 2023. Totally beautiful, green, forested, um, in the area I went to, and it was in the 60s and 70s in Fahrenheit. Spain does have mountains. It's very biodiverse, and it has a lot of agriculture. It produces things like wheat, barley, tomatoes, olives, sugar beets, citrus fruits, right?

Lemons, oranges, grapes, and cork. And did you know that cork, like, Corks for wine bottles, or any bottle really, is the outer bark of a cork oak tree's trunk. I didn't know that. I thought that was very interesting. And Spain also produces the most olive oil of any country in the world. The national language of Spain is Spanish.

However, there are other languages spoken in Spain, and we're going to talk about that a little bit when we talk about Spain's distinct regions. But it may surprise you that you won't find a street sign in Spanish in some parts of Spain. But again, I'll talk about that in a second. The most popular religion in Spain is Catholicism, Christianity, the Catholic religion.

Nearly every town in Spain has a patron saint, and the second most popular religion in Spain is Islam. Let's talk about Spanish food for a second. Its food is very distinctive, and people are known for eating dinner very late at night in Spain. Most restaurants do not even open until 9 p. m. or later. Some people don't start eating dinner until 11 p.

m. And so, as a result, Spaniards are known for taking siestas, or rest periods, now. Apps during the hottest hours of the afternoon when lunch is usually eaten, uh, between one and 3:00 PM Some of the foods that Spain is most famous for are tapas, which are these small dishes of food that are typically served with alcohol, and I found that tapas were often available earlier in the evening before the big kitchens opened for dinner.

So a lot of people go on like tapas tours before dinner. It's kind of a nice snack. And they usually include olives, curd meats. Seafood, bread. Another famous dish in Spain is the tortilla española or a Spanish omelette. It's made with eggs and thinly sliced potatoes and onions. Really delicious. Spain is also famous for paella, which is a rice dish made with saffron and vegetables, meat, seafood, and It's made differently depending on where you are in the country.

So there's lots of different opinions in Spain on how a paella should be made. Um, churros with a thick hot chocolate for dipping. Delicious. And also jamón ibérico, which is, um, Iberian ham.

This is a cured ham that's made from pigs that have been fed acorns. So it's very distinctive flavor. It's everywhere in Spain.

It's very good. And also, Spain is famous for it. Culturally, Spain, you know, when you think about Spain, a lot of people think of flamenco dancing and bullfighting, and it's for a good reason. These are very distinctive Spanish traditions. Bullfighting is a very controversial one. In my research, I discovered that it's not popular in all parts of Spain.

However, it is a tradition dating back thousands of years. The modern bullfight started shaping up around the time that the Romans came to Spain, which I'll explain when we talk about the history in a second. But over time, this bullfighting has become deeply ingrained in Spanish culture. But many inside and outside of Spain see the bullfight as a very cruel sport, and some regions in Spain have actually banned it.

Another one that's interesting is in the city of Pamplona, there is the Running of the Bulls festival, which is a huge tradition that happens for a week in July each year. And in this event, a group of bulls is let loose on a course of kind of sectioned off streets in town that lead to a bull ring where the bulls will be fought later in the afternoon.

And each morning of the festival, six bulls are released to run the streets. And people. Runners. traditionally dressed in white with a red handkerchief around their necks, try to outrun the bulls or at least stay close to them. It's this wild and dangerous tradition, and it attracts thousands of participants and spectators every year.

So super interesting. Another fun festival is the La Tomatina Festival. tomato throwing festival in Buñol and overripe tomatoes are trucked into the center of town and the world's largest food fight begins. The town square is covered in tomato guts and hosed off by fire trucks afterwards. And this tradition has a unique history that I'll be sharing with my email list later this month, which you can sign up for my emails on my website, wiserworldpodcast.com.

wiserworldpodcast.com. Spain has a rich artistic heritage. Famous painters like Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí came from Spain. Antoni Gaudí, who is very famous in the city of Barcelona, also had a unique architectural style. His Catholic cathedral called La Sagrada Família is hands down the most incredible building I've ever set foot in.

Absolutely fantastic. The most popular sport in Spain is soccer, fútbol, and it has some of the world's most successful teams like FC Barcelona and Real Madrid. Oh, and one last thing, the currency of Spain is the euro. Okay, let's talk about the history now. People have lived on the Iberian Peninsula for centuries, as early as like 1000 BC, and different tribal groups created pretty solid civilizations for generations.

And in the 300s BC, there was a powerful empire out of North Africa called Carthage. And the Carthaginians arrived on the Iberian Peninsula, and they lived there for a good while. And they were then challenged by the Romans. Now, Rome was known for building impressive roads and

aqueducts for transporting water and just intense colonies, and they called the peninsula, which is today modern day Portugal, Spain, part of France, they called it Hispania.

Nowadays, Spaniards call their country España. They began to grow Hispania into an important center for trade and culture, growing olives and grapes especially, and important cities like Cordoba, Toledo, Seville, cities that are very much alive and popular today, were created during the Roman time. For hundreds of years, Hispania was part of the Roman Empire until its decline when Germanic tribes invaded called the Visigoths, and they ruled it for 300 more years.

And during this time, Christianity became the dominant religion, and the Catholic Church became a huge part of daily life in Spain. In fact, almost every city in Spain has a cathedral in the center of town, some have multiple cathedrals. And in the 8th century AD, I just covered a lot of history in a short amount of time, but in the 8th century AD, Arab and Berber invaders from North Africa came up and drove out the Christian Visigoths.

And Spain became part of the Umayyad Caliphate under the Muslims. If you want to learn more about Islam, I'd recommend my episode 23 called What is Ramadan? I talk a little bit about Islam. And at the time, Islam was a pretty new religion at that time, and Spain was under the control of the Muslims during the Islamic Golden Age when art and science and culture and architecture, all of these things were.

Flourishing in Arab controlled areas during this time. And that is why when you travel to Spain, there are many parts of Spain where you can see Islamic architecture and evidence of the time that Spain was under Islamic rule. Spain has some incredible mosques. Now, during this time, there were frequent conflicts between the Muslims and the Christian groups, and Spain was divided into kind of smaller kingdoms or territories.

And in about 1085 A. D., Christian forces began something called the Reconquista. Or reconquest of the peninsula. And it took centuries. It was the idea that they wanted to take Spain back from the Muslims, get it back into the hands of the Christians. And this was a long and brutal process. Many wars, battles, political intrigue, a huge deal.

It took seven centuries to Remove the Muslims. It lasted from the 8th century to the 15th century, the Reconquista. And the basis of modern Spain, in many ways, is built on the Reconquista, since powerful Christian kingdoms grew up during this time. Eventually, the Muslims and Jews were expelled, and these Christian rulers wanted to make a unified Christian state.

By the 15th century, so that's the 15th century, The 1400s AD, Spain began to emerge as a major European power, largely because some of those Christian kingdoms I talked about earlier merged together with the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella. Ferdinand was from Aragon, Isabella from Italy. Castile. And these groups allied together, completing the Reconquista.

Under King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella I, who were Catholics, something called the Spanish Inquisition happened. In 1478, there was a push to identify and punish those who weren't Christian. So forced conversion to Christianity was very popular during this time. And there were suspicions of people who had converted, but we're still practicing their own religions privately.

And this time is unfortunately known for torture and other brutal methods to extract confessions from suspected heretics. People were imprisoned, their homes confiscated, some burned publicly. This lasted for hundreds of years. The Inquisition officially ended in 1834 and is a divisive topic in Spain today.

When I was in Spain, I read a book on Spanish food culture, and I learned that one of the reasons that pork, like chorizo and, again, Iberian ham that I just talked about, one of the reasons why they're so popular in Spain is because of the Inquisition. In the religions of Judaism and Islam, pork is forbidden.

It's viewed as unclean to eat. And so, during the Reconquista and Inquisition eras, pork People began putting pork in the food to see if people would eat it. So if you have ham drying in your window or little pieces of ham in your beans, this was like a visual sign to people that you were a well and true good Christian and not a Jew or a Muslim hiding out undetected.

I found that very interesting how the food culture and the history all come together. Also during Ferdinand and Isabella's reign, And beyond, Spain experienced what is known as the Spanish Golden Age. Lots of art and literature and culture that defines Spanish culture today happened during this time. It was also kind of during the time of the Renaissance and other parts of Europe.

And important figures like Miguel de Cervantes, who wrote Don Quixote, the famous book, um, Diego Velázquez, who interpreters, an important painter, all were during this time. And there was also a lot of experimentation going on with government and administration, like how do we govern overseas territories, which leads us to the Age of Exploration, right?

Christopher Columbus, here we go. Right? The Age of Exploration was where? It's coming in hot during this time as well. The 1400s to the 1600s and European countries were competing for control of trade routes and territories around the world. And Spain was a major player in this time. Largely because, again, it's location on the Western edge of Europe and Spain had a strong navy and a good financial system to support a lot of overseas expeditions, which led to a massive Empire over time.

Christopher Columbus was not actually Spanish, but he got his funding from Spain and ended up stumbling upon these full civilizations in the Caribbean and in the Americas, right? Hernán Cortés, Francisco Pizarro, very, two very prominent Spanish explorers as well, and thus began Spain establishing colonies, territories in what is now Mexico, Central America, South America, the Caribbean, Peru, Chile, Argentina, Colombia, Cuba, You know, I'm more and more.

This explains why these countries currently have Spanish as their most popular language, though indigenous languages do still exist, and many of the people living in these lands were, for the most part, brutally taken out by wars and diseases brought over by the Spanish, and their labor was also exploited by the Spanish.

These countries today each gained their independence from Spain through wars of independence. So today, when Independence Day is celebrated in Mexico, they are celebrating their independence from Spain. Now, Spain also established a colony in the Philippines, which became a major center of Spanish influence in Asia.

A lot of people don't know that. The Spanish maintained control over the Philippines. Philippines for over 300 years, when they got their independence in 1898. Some Pacific islands, such as Guam, the Mariana Islands, the Caroline Islands, were also territories of Spain, mostly used as stopovers for Spanish ships.

And Spain also had a number of colonies in Africa, mostly off the west coast, like Morocco, these colonies traded gold, ivory, and slaves. This age of exploration time was also met with a lot of wars with other European nations like England, France, the Netherlands, and by 1588, the English Navy hit the Spanish hard and thus kind of began this decline of Spain's major European power status.

By the 1600s, Spain had a lot of troubles. Inflation, corruption, declines in trade, lots of tensions between the central government of Spain and the regional authorities of Spain, which we'll talk about again in a minute. Because of the discovery of gold and silver in the Americas, Spain saw large amounts of these precious metals being shipped back to Spain.

And when this new money was spent, the money supply shot up faster than the supply of goods and services, which causes massive inflation. And there was more money than goods, which devalued the currency and caused prices to go up. And there were other problems like the Spanish monarchy was spending a lot of money on wars and people were leaving to go to the Americas.

So the population of Spain was decreasing. And so agriculture was becoming less efficient. You get the picture, lots of struggles going on in Spain toward the end of this period, it begins to decline. And in 1700, King Charles the second died. And so there's this war over who should take over. And eventually, this guy named King Philip V became king and began to modernize the country, consolidate power through a centralized government, a national bank, new laws, and different regions of Spain, which, uh, Long it had autonomy, or kind of their own freedoms, they began to resist this.

They, they did not like this centralized power. By 1808, Napoleon, the French, invaded Spain. And this led to a period of instability and conflict. The French destroyed many of Spain's

architectural treasures during this time. In fact, I visited many religious sites and villages with signs that said, this was destroyed during the Napoleonic Wars.

I always find that to be sad to see how many natural treasures are destroyed by wars. Spain was ruled by Napoleon's brother, actually, Joseph Bonaparte, during this time. And the Spanish really resented French rule, were pretty unhappy about it. And over time, they waged wars against the French with the help of the British, actually.

And over many years, they finally expelled the French and put Ferdinand VII back in power there. in 1814. So struggling to recover from war, the Spanish colonies, you know, over in the Americas, over in Asia, they started to seek independence during this time, right? Spain's having a hard time over there in Europe.

This is our moment. So from the Spanish perspective, you know, Spain's got a lot of issues, right? It's a declining global empire. It's starting to lose its colonies one by one. And in 1820, a group of Spanish liberal military officers led a revolution in Spain, and they forced the King to accept a new liberal constitution.

They wanted a constitutional monarchy, which is a more democratic form of government where the King has very limited powers. I actually have an episode on this. It's episode 26, where I talk about this type of government and that's what they wanted. And the king obviously hated this. It's a limitation of his powers.

And again, that began a 40 plus year period of infighting between traditional royalists supporting the king and liberal progressives who wanted more democracy. These are called the Carlist Wars, if you're interested in that. By 1876, Spain had actually established a constitutional monarchy under King Alfonso XII.

During this time, many Spanish began embracing new political movements such as socialism. There was a lot of social unrest and upset over poor working conditions and low wages. And by 1898, Spain had lost its last remaining colonies to the Spanish American War. It lost the Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico, Cuba.

They had been. Spain's for centuries, and this was a huge blow to Spain, and a period of political instability and conflict occurred. Great for these areas, not so great for Spain. At the same time, people are amazing, and lots of beautiful things happened during this time as well, like Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dali became prominent artists in Spain, changed art forever, and Spanish writers who still inspire also emerged during this time of turmoil.

So we've got a constitutional monarchy going on in Spain, and World War I starts. Spain, during World War I, was officially neutral, but the war did impact Spain. Its economy really struggled from the loss of markets in Europe, especially Germany and Austria Hungary had been really important trading partners for Spain.

And parts of the north of Spain made profit from the war. They tried to trade with anybody, but the more agricultural areas really suffered. And this caused a, a widening wealth gap and inner tensions between different groups. Some wanting a centralized government, others wanting more regional autonomous governments.

This was also very hot and very divisive during the war. The way that I would explain this for people living in the United States is it's kind of like, do we have a federal government that has super strong centralized powers, or do we allow more powers to the states? And there are regions in Spain that wanted the power to be largely over the United States.

They have more power in the regions instead of the centralized government. These political divisions were really strong. Some people wanted a more conservative, traditional Spain. Others wanted more political reforms like socialism or even anarchism. Or republicanism, which in Spain was a more left wing ideology.

So in the United States, republicanism is seen as right wing, but in Spain at the time, republicanism was a more left wing ideology. And with rural poverty and labor unrest, it was a hotbed for violence. In July of 1936, a group of military officers led by General Francisco Franco launched a coup against the democratically elected government, and this coup was supported by right wing political groups and conservative elements in Spanish society.

They were opposed to the reforms that the Republicans, the more left wing, um, elect democratically elected group were making and so these nationalists or right wing forces, sometimes they were called fascists. They gained control quickly of much of Spain and the left wing Republicans were forced to the east and north of the country.

And it quickly became a force. full scale civil war. This is called the Spanish Civil War. It lasted from 1936 to 1939. It was extremely complex. As I mentioned before, internal tensions in the country had been very high for a while. And it, this, this conflict really was where the left wing Republicans, the right wing nationalists, The anarchists, the communists, all of these different theories on how to run an economy and run in a government all came to a head in the Spanish Civil War.

And if you don't know what those words mean, that's fine. I have two episodes to explain them. Episodes 25 and 26 explain political ideology and economic ideology to just help you have the right words for that. The nationalists, which are the right wing, and it had come to establish the coup, right? They received help from fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

And the Republicans, the left wing, were supported by the Soviet Union and other communist countries. And both sides committed atrocities during this war. In the end, the nationalists, the right winged, won the war. And Francisco Franco became president. became a dictator, and he ruled Spain until his death in 1975.

The war had a profound impact on Spanish society. Thousands of people were killed, many fled the country as refugees, but it also influenced all of Europe. It was a precursor to World War II, because this was in between World War I and World War II, right? And also, A precursor, a kind of warning signs of both fascism and totalitarianism, which we're going to talk about a little bit more in a second.

Now during World War II, it had just come out of its own civil war at this time. Franco is a new dictator at this time. And so Spain also remained neutral during World War II. And I say neutral kind of in quotes, because Franco did sympathize with Nazi Germany. And it did provide intelligence and resources to Germany and Italy during World War II, but it also allowed the allies to use Spain to transport supplies and people into North Africa.

So it kind of played the field. However, because it was clear that Franco favored Hitler after World War II, Spain was pretty isolated after the fact and did face some sanctions and political isolation at the end of the war. Let's talk about Franco's regime for a little bit, because this is especially important when you travel to Spain.

Many older people were alive during his dictatorship. A lot of people don't like to talk about it, and I want to explain a little bit as to why. During the Spanish Civil War of the late 1930s, many families were torn apart because of the differences between the different groups, the Republicans and the Nationalists.

The communists, the anarchists, and after Franco one, there was a policy of repression and retribution for anyone who had supported the Republican left wing side. There have even been allegations that babies of Republican parents were forcibly taken from their families and given to Francoists or sympathizers who, who agreed with Franco and in order to create a society that believed in his ideology, this is one, one dark chapter of Spain's history that is still very controversial and yet to be resolved.

And while there was economic stagnation in the 1940s because of the Civil War and World War II and the sanctions afterward. In the 1950s and 1960s, Spain did see a lot of economic growth under Franco, a lot of modernization. He began to develop industries like tourism, manufacturing, construction. There were some reforms for poverty and unemployment.

He really wanted a centralized power and nationalized key industries, meaning that the government took over some key industries. There also was widespread corruption and inefficiency. And politically, Franco was very restrictive. He had strict control over the media forms of expression. He was an authoritarian ruler who tightly controlled and repressed, um, any opposition.

His own party was the only party. Any political opponent was imprisoned or executed or forced into exile. Elections were manipulated. If you've listened to any of my previous videos, Um, past episodes, you know, this, this is not unusual, um, but extremely sad freedom of speech assembly, also very restricted.

And there was very high levels of censorship. So any form of dissent or criticism was censored. And Franco's regime emphasized Spanish nationalism and traditionalism. So Spanish Catholicism was highly regarded and the influence of the Catholic church was very strong during this time. time, not as much separation of church and state going on.

Gender roles, you know, with women expected to be in the home were highly reinforced as well. Divorce and contraception were actually made illegal, and access to education and employment for women was also limited quite a lot. Tourism to Spain did occur during this time. You might know some people who traveled to Spain during the 1940s, 50s, 60s.

Early 70s, but it was highly controlled by the government. Propaganda was used to give an image of modernity and prosperity to the world. And though this really wasn't the case for many parts of Spain, it was kind of like a sanitized version of Spanish culture and history, very highly censored by Franco.

Anyone visiting was also subject to strict controls and government monitoring. And in the 1960s and 1970s, more and more people began opposing Franco's regime, both in Spain and internationally. More protests, you know, increased pressure forcing Franco's government to make more political reforms and You know, little by little, democratize the country, and in 1969, Franco named Prince Juan Carlos as his successor, which made many think that, you know, when Franco died, there would be a more democratic system of government, and at first, Juan Carlos Show no signs of this, but he did actually do it.

He made, he announced a transition to democracy and began to take steps toward greater political and economic freedom. By 1978, Spain was a constitutional monarchy with a king who had limited powers, but a democratically elected parliament that makes laws. And again, as we know from other episodes, the transition to democracy is almost always bumpy.

And this was the case for Spain. Did, however, over time, become a member of the European Union and has become more stable in the years since. There has been a lot of debate on how to address the crimes of Franco's regime. You know, many of those debates are still going on. But overall, Spain was modernized in the years since then.

It has, uh, It's a unique system of regional autonomy that grants quite a lot of power to Spain's different regions. In fact, Spain has 17 autonomous regions and I'm going to talk about that in just a second. During the 1980s and 1990s, Spain had a lot of foreign investment. It became one of the largest and most prosperous economies in Europe and it started to play a stronger role in the global political arena, right?

It joined the EU, the big deal, um, more investment trade with Europe. And the sad part is, is that in 2008, the global financial crisis really hit Spain super hard, and it's still talked about in Spain as la crisis, and it led to high unemployment that Spain is still recovering from that economic stagnation.

Now, let's let's talk a little bit about the tensions between regions in Spain, because I think this is especially important if you travel there. Spain has 17 different autonomous regions, like I said, but for purposes of simplicity, I'm going to share about six regions. So there's the Basque country in North Spain.

There's Andalusia, which is in the south near Morocco, has Cordoba, Malaga, Granada, Cadiz. There's the Extremadura, which is kind of the Midwest of Spain. There's Catalonia. Which is the northeast near France. It has Barcelona. I went to Catalonia, Valencia, which is in the east, and Galicia, which is in the northwest.

And then Madrid, the capital of Spain, is kind of its own region more or less as well. And you could spend a lot of time on the different regions of Spain and the tensions between them. But personally, I'm going to talk a little bit more about the Basque country and Catalonia as probably the most critical for a traveler to understand.

And, Catalonia. Which is in the northeast of Spain, has the city of Barcelona, and Catalonia has its own distinct language called Catalan, and some people say it sounds like Portuguese more than Spanish. Personally, I think it kind of sounds like a blend of French and Spanish since it's close to France.

That makes sense to me. But Catalonia has had its own distinct culture from the rest of Spain and has wanted to be independent from Spain since it was unified with it in the 1700s. So it's a really long message. History. Additionally, during Franco's regime, he really pursued a policy of centralization and really suppressed regional identities, especially in Catalonia, Galicia, and the Basque country.

And this naturally, right, makes these cultures go underground and often become Stronger. People in Catalonia often see themselves as Catalonians first and Spaniards second. And there are many Catalonians who want full independence from Spain. Obviously, Spain, the centralized government in Madrid, does not want this.

Most recently in 2017, so very recently, Catalonia held a very controversial independence referendum, which the Spanish government in Madrid deemed illegal. And this led to widespread protests and political turmoil In Spain, in the Basque country, which in the in the north part of Spain, it also has a deep, strong sense of regional identity with a language called Euskara or Euskara spoken in Spain and France at the western edge of the Pyrenees Mountains, which is that natural border between Spain and France.

And there's a separatist group in the Basque country that was responsible for a series of bombings and assassinations throughout Spain. And so tensions between the Basque country and the rest of Spain have been high. long time, and both Catalonians and the Basques generally feel that the Spanish government in Madrid doesn't recognize or respect their unique cultural identity and isn't as responsive to their needs.

And so with issues like the financial crisis and high unemployment, there's been much debate on how Spain should tax its people. And strong arguments and disagreements still abound today in Spain over these regional areas. And I share about these regional differences with you so that as a traveler or just a world citizen speaking to people from Spain, you could just be aware and generally educated that regional differences in Spain, it's a thing.

So there you have it, a brief history of Spain for those who want to learn more about the country or are traveling there. Spain is a very vibrant and diverse and dynamic country. It has a rich cultural heritage. Not to mention it's so, so beautiful. I was in Barcelona in the northern part of Spain and went up the Costa Brava and some of the medieval towns in that area just blew my mind.

Absolutely amazing. So old, such rich cultural heritage. I honestly thought to myself, why did Spanish explorers leave? Like, this is the most amazing place. So, just really enjoyed Spain myself, uh, loved the country, loved the people. They were warm, welcoming, absolutely beautiful place, really wonderful to travel to and I'd highly recommend it.

So I hope, hope this was helpful to you. If it was, please share it with someone who's traveling to Spain or is interested in Spain, wants to know more about it. And in the meantime, until the next episode, let's just go out and make the world a little wiser.