

#### ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

US and Canadian tourists must carry proof of citizenship; you do not need a visa for Spain if you have a US or Canadian passport. **A valid signed passport with an expiration date at least six months beyond the tour return date is required.**

**Travelers must be able to present proof of having sufficient financial means for their duration of stay in Spain.** The minimum accepted amount travelers must possess is EUR 113.4 per person per day and a total minimum of EUR 1,020.6 or its legal equivalent in foreign currency. Travelers may prove financial means by presenting cash, certified checks, traveler's checks, payment letters, or credit cards accompanied by a bank account statement or an up-to-date bank book. Letters from banks or internet bank statements will not be accepted. You can read more about guidelines for providing proof of sufficient financial means [here](#).

**ETIAS travel authorization** will come into effect starting in the first half of 2025. ETIAS is a completely electronic system that will monitor visitors who do not already require a visa to enter the Schengen Zone. ETIAS's main function is to protect against potential security threats. The application process will include filling out a short online form and paying a fee of €7. Once obtained, an ETIAS is linked to a traveler's passport and is valid for up to three years or until the passport expires, whichever comes first. If you are travelling to more than one Schengen Zone country, you will identify the country you will travel to first. You will then

be free to travel anywhere else within the Schengen Zone for a maximum of 90 days. You may read more about ETIAS on the EU official website [here](#).

#### CURRENCY, ATM MACHINES & CREDIT CARDS

**CASH:** The Euro (€) is the legal currency of the countries we will be visiting except for Switzerland. The currency of Switzerland, which is not a member of the European Union, is the Swiss Franc (CHF). If you want to check current rates at the time of travel a good website is <http://www.xe.com/ucc/>. You will be given the opportunity upon arrival in each country to exchange cash for local currency or withdraw funds from an ATM.

**ATMS:** ATMs are prevalent in your destinations. Check with your bank for more specific details about using ATMs or ABMs such as the network your bank supports, PIN numbers, etc.

**CREDIT CARDS:** Visa, MasterCard and American Express are the most widely used credit cards. Use may be restricted in small businesses, such as open marketplaces and street vendors. Credit cards should be protected by **RFID-blocking sleeves** so they cannot be scanned, and your payment information stolen. You can find RFID-blocking sleeves at most luggage stores. Do not use your credit card in questionable shops and never let your card out of your sight. Non-essential cards can be left at home. It is recommended to bring your driver's license in case you are asked for additional photo ID, and your health card in case of an emergency.

Before leaving home, we encourage you to consult with the bank that has issued the credit cards and debit cards you will be using as you travel. Today banks have a variety of fraud detection systems so we advise you to be sure you will be able to use your cards. You should also have an out-of-country contact phone number available in case any cards are lost or stolen.

## LANGUAGE

The European Union has 21 official languages; however, there are many other lesser-known languages spoken as well. The official language of Spain is Spanish. English is widely spoken.

## COMMUNICATION

**Internet:** There will be an opportunity to access the internet while on tour, as most hotels have Wi-Fi available. If you wish to access the internet while away from your hotel, you may consider purchasing an eSIM to connect to local networks in your destination. [Airalo](#) is a recommended eSIM provider.

**Phone calls:** North American cell phones are not automatically equipped to make international calls. If you plan to make phone calls or send text messages while on tour, please check with your phone provider for directions and pricing.

## TIME ZONES

Europe is 6 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST). Therefore, when it is 3:00 p.m. in Europe, it is 9:00 a.m. (EST) in Ontario and Pennsylvania.

## CLIMATE & CLOTHING

The climate in Western Europe is generally pleasant without extremes in temperature. The temperatures are similar to those in Southern Ontario or Pennsylvania. At this time of year,

you can expect mostly pleasantly warm temperatures, with average afternoon highs of 19°C / 66°F, but light rain is common, interspersed among sunshine.

In the evening, the temperatures usually drop about 5 to 10 degrees so a sweater or light jacket would be appropriate. The elevation also can have an impact. In general, expect warm



and sunny days, and be prepared for cloudy, wet days as well. Bring a folding umbrella in case of rain.

Plan to take a variety of casual clothing that is easy-care, comfortable and doesn't show the dirt. Be able to dress in layers so that you can peel off or add as the temperature changes. A good pair of walking shoes is necessary.

## ELECTRICAL CURRENT

The electrical current in Europe is 220 volt - 50 cycles alternating current (AC), whereas in Canada and United States it is 110 volts, AC 60 cycles. Wall outlets in Europe take Continental-type plugs, with **two round prongs**.

Multi-voltage appliances (shavers, hairdryers, curling irons, etc.) are generally available at larger department stores. However, if your electrical appliance is *not* designed to operate on either 110 or 220 volts by the flick of a switch, you will also need a converter. Converters and adapters should be available at major department stores, electronic shops or stores that specialize in selling luggage.

But before you purchase a converter, be sure to check the label on your appliance. Some appliances never need a converter. **If the label states 'INPUT: 100-240V, 50/60 Hz' the appliance can be used in all countries in the world.** This is common for chargers of tablets/laptops, cameras, cell phones, and toothbrushes.

## CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS & EXPECTATIONS

Public toilets usually charge a small fee, so it is important to have coins available. Also, be prepared to pay for water at restaurants.

Contrary to North American culture, tipping at meals is typically not expected. Tips for group meals are included in your tour fare, but when dining on your own, small tips are appreciated but not necessarily expected.

Notes about hotels:

- Hotels in Europe are not always equipped with air conditioning, as Europe generally does not experience the same extreme summer heat as North America.
- If staying in a double room, you can expect two twin beds pushed together, as opposed to one queen.
- Not all hotel rooms will be as spacious as in North America. European interiors are generally very efficient and make the most out of the space. This is often out of necessity, as many hotels were once buildings used for other purposes (i.e... not originally designed as a hotel).

## WATER PURITY

It is safe to drink tap water in Europe and eat fresh produce after it has been washed.

## MEDICAL & VACCINATIONS

Inoculations are not required if you are traveling directly from the US or Canada. Routine booster immunizations (e.g. Tetanus-Diphtheria, Polio, etc.) should be up to date.

It is advisable to take along enough prescription medicine for the whole tour and a written prescription from your doctor for each medicine. If any of your medicines contain habit-forming drugs or narcotics, take precaution to avoid misunderstanding by properly identifying all drugs. Do not remove the drugs from their original containers and carry only the necessary quantity. These safeguards could save you considerable trouble.

## PROTECTING YOURSELF

Before you leave on your tour remove any unnecessary cards from your wallet and leave them at home. Photocopy your passport ID page and any credit or debit cards (both sides) that you plan to take with you. Keep a copy separate from your wallet for quick reference should your cards be lost or stolen. Leave a photocopy with friends or family at home.

Pickpockets are more common in Europe than in North America, especially in public spaces like airports and train stations. Carry billfolds in the front inside pocket of a jacket or front pants pocket as opposed to your back pocket. Consider a money belt (obtainable at AAA stores, for example) for excess cash. Beware of a common pickpocket ploy which is to announce that pickpockets have been observed in the area. People instinctively touch their pockets to check, and the pickpockets then know where you keep your valuables.

## SUGGESTED RESOURCE LIST

*The following resources will provide a good orientation for the tour.*

### **HISTORICAL NONFICTION AND FICTION**

- Kinds of Water by Anne Carson, Grand Street, 1987.
- Two Steps Forward by Graeme Simsion & Anne Buist, William Morrow Paperbacks, 2017.
- The Pilgrimage by Paulo Coelho, HarperOne, 1987.
- The Sun Also Rises by Ernest Hemingway, Pan Books, 1926.
- Off the Road: A Modern-Day Walk Down the Pilgrim's Route into Spain by Jack Hitt, Simon & Schuster, 1994.
- I'm Off Then: Losing and Finding Myself on the Camino de Santiago by Hape Kerkeling, 2009.
- The Camino: A Journey of the Spirit by Shirley MacLaine, Atria Books, 2001.
- Walking with Sam: A Father, a Son, and Five Hundred Miles Across Spain by Andrew McCarthy, Grand Central Publishing, 2023.
- Roads to Santiago by Cees Nooteboom, Harper Paperbacks, 1992.
- Pilgrimage to the End of the World: The Road to Santiago de Compostela by Conrad Rudolph, University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- The Road to Santiago by Walter Starkie, John Murray, 2003.

### **FILMS AND MEDIA**

- The Way (2010) – Story of a father who heads overseas to recover the body of his estranged son who died while traveling the "El Camino de Santiago," and decides to take the pilgrimage himself.
- Walking the Camino: Six Ways to Santiago (2013) - A profile of six pilgrims taking the Camino De Santiago pilgrimage.
- Saint-Jacques...La Mecque (2005) - Three siblings who detest each other and hiking must complete together a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela to be eligible to inherit their mother's wealth.
- Footprints, the Path of Your Life (2016) - A Roman Catholic priest leads a band of ten young men from various backgrounds on a pilgrimage
- I'll Push You (2017) - An up-close and personal look into the dynamics of a life-long friendship between two best friends as they travel across El Camino de Santiago.
- Buen Camino! (2015) - Follow two ordinary individuals on an epic 800km hike across Northern Spain in search of adventure and an unforgettable life experience.

### **TRAVEL GUIDES**

- Lonely Planet – Camino de Santiago
- The Best European Travel Tips by John Whitman.
- Lonely Planet - Western Europe.
- Frommer's Europe.
- Europe 101 - History and Art for the Traveler by Rick Steves and Gene Openshaw. John Muir Publications, 1994 – this book carefully ties each style of art to its historical era.

*Your local library will have an excellent variety of resources for your specific interest.*