

Spain



Spain's powerful world empire of the 16th and 17th centuries ultimately yielded command of the seas to England. Subsequent failure to embrace the mercantile and industrial revolutions caused the country to fall behind Britain, France, and Germany in economic and political power. Spain remained neutral in World Wars I and II, but suffered through a devastating civil war (1936-39). In the second half of the 20th century, Spain has played a catch-up role in the western international community; it joined the EU in 1986.

SPAIN FACTS

Population: 41 million (UN, 2003)

Capital: Madrid

Major languages: Spanish (Castilian), Catalan, Gallego (Galician), Euskera (Basque)

Major religion: Christianity

Life expectancy: 76 years (men), 83 years (women) (UN)

Monetary unit: 1 Euro = 100 cents

Main exports: Transport equipment, agricultural products

Average annual income: US \$14,300 (World Bank, 2001)

Internet domain: .es

International dialling code: +34

Spain's mixed capitalist economy supports a GDP that on a per capita basis is 80% that of the four leading West European economies. Its center-right government successfully worked to gain admission to the first group of countries launching the European single currency on 1 January 1999. The AZNAR administration has continued to advocate liberalization, privatization, and deregulation of the economy and has introduced some tax reforms to that end.



Flag Description: three horizontal bands of red (top), yellow (double width), and red with the national coat of arms on the hoist side of the yellow band; the coat of arms includes the royal seal framed by the Pillars of Hercules, which are the two promontories (Gibraltar and Ceuta) on either side of the eastern end of the Strait of Gibraltar. For a timeline of key events go to http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/992004.stm