

# Spanish Culture Shocks:

## A Practical Guide to Understanding

*Spain's Unique  
Customs*



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# Embrace the Spanish Way of Life: Key Cultural Insights

- Discover Spain's surprising cultural quirks, from affectionate greetings to spirited conversations.
- Navigate Spanish customs with ease, from mealtime traditions to everyday social etiquette.
- Use tips to immerse yourself fully in Spain's vibrant lifestyle.
- Embrace each culture shock with confidence and humor.

## YOUR FIRST STEPS INTO SPANISH LIFE

When you arrive in Spain, you might be expecting flamenco dancers, paella, and sunshine—and yes, there's plenty of that. But beneath these iconic images, Spain's culture has a few unexpected twists that might just leave newcomers wide-eyed and curious. From the Spanish passion for a good nap (the legendary siesta) to the way bread seems almost sacred at the table, the Spanish way of life is full of charming quirks that set it apart from other cultures.

This guide will walk you through some of Spain's most delightful culture shocks, offering a light-hearted insider's look at Spanish life. Think of it as your friendly handbook to Spain's vibrant traditions, hearty meals, and social customs. Whether you're learning to greet with a warm double kiss or noticing the surprising quiet of cities in August, these 10 culture shocks will help you navigate Spain's unique customs with confidence and a smile. As the Spanish say, "En cada tierra su uso"—"Every land has its ways." Embrace the surprises, and you'll be in for an unforgettable adventure!



# 1. SO YOU THOUGHT ALL SPANIARDS WERE LOUD?

## High Energy Meets High Volume—Welcome to Spain!

If you've ever walked into a Spanish household or a local café, you'll know that silence isn't the norm here. Spaniards love to speak their minds with enthusiasm and are quite comfortable raising their voices to make a point

TVs and radios often play in the background at full volume, adding to the lively atmosphere.

It might seem like chaos to an outsider, but for Spaniards, it's all part of the daily rhythm. You'll soon find that a good conversation in Spain is one where everyone's voice is heard loud and clear!





## 2. WHY DO PEOPLE IN SPAIN STARE?

### Are They Staring at Me? Yes—But It’s Not What You Think!

In Spain, eye contact is a sign of interest and engagement. While it might feel intense at first, prolonged eye contact is considered polite, and people aren’t shy about observing what’s going on around them.

Spaniards also love to people-watch, so if you’re wearing something unusual or doing something unexpected (like eating dinner before 9 pm), don’t be surprised if people glance your way a little longer than you’re used to. In Spain, it’s simply a way of acknowledging each other.



## 3. ARE YOU USED TO THE SPANISH DOUBLE KISS?

### Prepare for the Double-Kiss Greeting (and Maybe More!)

Meeting someone for the first time in Spain? Get ready for the double-cheek kiss, an affectionate greeting that spans friends, family, and acquaintances alike.

In many regions, people kiss once on each cheek—though don't worry, they're more "air kisses" than actual cheek smooches.

You might even find yourself receiving more than two kisses in some places! The double kiss is used as a warm farewell too, so embrace this friendly gesture as part of Spanish hospitality. It's a surefire way to feel connected.





## 4. A SPANISH MEAL WITHOUT BREAD? RIDICULOUS!

### **Bread: Spain's Fourth Piece of Silverware**

Bread is treated as a sacred part of every Spanish meal. Whether it's breakfast, lunch, or dinner, a basket of bread is always there to keep you company, often served with olive oil or used to scoop up sauces.

Spaniards have a saying, "Si no hay pan, no hay comida"—meaning "If there's no bread, it's not a meal."

From hearty crusty rolls to thin slices of baguette, bread is a non-negotiable that adds a little magic to every bite.





## 5. WHY DO SPANIARDS LOVE TO HUG?

### **Spaniards Show Affection with Every Gesture**

Hugs, shoulder taps, and friendly nudges are just part of the friendly Spanish spirit.

Personal space is a little closer than in many other cultures, and it's common to find Spaniards expressing warmth and friendship through physical gestures.

A quick tap on the arm or even a spontaneous hug is a way to convey connection, so don't be alarmed by this enthusiastic display of friendship! Soon enough, you'll likely feel right at home with Spain's naturally affectionate nature.



## 6. ARE YOU FULL AFTER A SPANISH MEAL? WAIT FOR A SECOND ROUND!

### Spain: Where Food and Family Go Hand-in-Hand

Spanish meals are more than just food—they're social experiences that keep everyone around the table for hours. Starting with a primer plato (first course), moving on to a hearty segundo plato (second course), and often wrapping up with dessert and coffee, Spanish meals are designed to be savored.

Then, just as you think you're done, someone might offer you a marienda (afternoon snack) or invite you for dinner later on. Come with an appetite, and prepare to be thoroughly spoiled by Spain's love for food and family time!





# 7. EVER DARED TO BRAVE A SPANISH GHOST TOWN IN THE AUGUST HEAT?

## August: The Month When Cities Quiet Down (But Only Temporarily)

August in Spain often brings intense heat, leading many city-dwellers to escape to the coast or mountains.

But don't worry! Evenings are when cities come back to life, as people gather to enjoy the cool air and share good food, drinks, and conversation.

You'll quickly notice that Spaniards are experts at enjoying life—especially after the sun sets.



## 8. DO ALL SPANIARDS HAVE A KNACK FOR GETTING OPINIONATED?

### **Strong Opinions? You Bet!**

In Spain, lively debate and strong opinions are welcome at nearly any gathering. Whether you're buying ham or talking politics, it's not unusual for someone to jump in with advice or a personal story.

Even casual conversations can become passionate discussions, but it's all in good fun.

Spaniards are social by nature, and exchanging thoughts—whether you agree or not—is just part of connecting.





## 9. SHALL WE PEEL BACK THE TRUTH ON FRUIT? SPANISH FRUIT ETIQUETTE

### **Pesticides? Peeling is the Answer**

Spaniards are health-conscious and mindful of pesticides, so it's typical to peel fruit—even if it's as simple as an apple or pear. Organic fruits are growing in popularity, especially in urban areas, where they're labeled clearly in stores.

So if you're served peeled fruit, it's just a nod to Spain's health habits. This custom, like many others, reflects Spain's appreciation for fresh, quality ingredients and the attention to detail they bring to everyday life.



# 10. EXPLORE SPAIN WITH SPANISH EXPRESS!

## Immerse Yourself Fully with Spanish Express

Ready to dive deep into Spanish culture? Spanish Express's Spanish Homestay Immersion Programme (SHIP) offers an authentic experience where you'll live with a Spanish family, practice the language, and embrace Spanish customs firsthand.

From learning about the double-kiss greeting to enjoying long, relaxed meals with locals, SHIP helps you live and learn like a true Spaniard.

This full immersion gives you a unique insider's view of Spain, helping you not only learn the language but feel right at home in Spanish culture.



## QUIZ: SPANISH CULTURE SHOCKS

### 1. What is commonly associated with noise in Spain?

- A) Honking cars
- B) Radios and TVs on full blast
- C) Barking dogs

### 2. People in Spain often maintain eye contact to:

- A) Challenge you
- B) Show disinterest
- C) Indicate friendliness

### 3. The Spanish double-cheek kiss is a way to:

- A) Greet and say goodbye
- B) Ask for directions
- C) Give opinions

### 4. In Spain, a meal is incomplete without:

- A) Wine
- B) Bread
- C) Dessert

### 5. Hugging in Spain is often seen as:

- A) Inappropriate
- B) Reserved for family
- C) A natural display of warmth

**6. A typical Spanish meal could include:**

- A) Multiple courses
- B) One quick course
- C) Just dessert

**7. During August, many Spanish towns:**

- A) Host large festivals
- B) Become quieter as people travel
- C) Close all restaurants

**8. Spanish people may offer opinions:**

- A) Only if asked
- B) With humor and friendliness
- C) Very rarely

**9. When it comes to fruit, Spaniards tend to:**

- A) Eat it without peeling
- B) Avoid eating it
- C) Peel it, especially if it's not organic

**10. The Spanish Homestay Immersion Program (SHIP) offers:**

- A) A chance to live with a Spanish family and experience culture
- B) Brief lessons in Spanish vocabulary
- C) Tours without language immersion

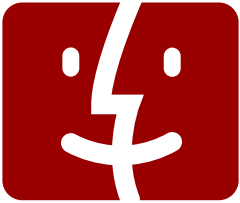


## ANSWER KEY

1. B) Radios and TVs on full blast
2. C) Indicate friendliness
3. A) Greet and say goodbye
4. B) Bread
5. C) A natural display of warmth
6. A) Multiple courses
7. B) Become quieter as people travel
8. B) With humor and friendliness
9. C) Peel it, especially if it's not organic
10. A) A chance to live with a Spanish family and experience culture

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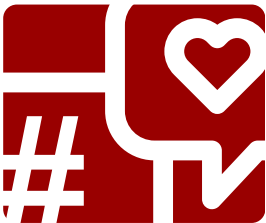
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**We have the right Spanish immersion programme to make that dream a reality!**

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*in Spain*

