QUICK INFO

- Landscape dominated by highland plateaus and the Pyrenees and Sierra Nevada mountain ranges, with alluvial plains along the coasts shaped by many rivers, including the Guadalquivir, the Tagus, and the Duero.

- Climate varies by region from Mediterranean in the south to Andalin in the northeast; hot summers and cold winters on the high central plateau; each season pronounced in Andalucia, ocean dictates temperature along coastline.

- Current population is approximately 46.5 million.

- Country consists of autonomous administrative regions called Comunidades Autónomas with significant cultural identity.

- Cultural identity is diverse and complex; traditional regional cultures include Basque, Catalan, Galician, and Castilian, also many distinct local cultures.

- Other ethnic groups include Gitano (Romani) and immigrants from Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and various parts of Asia and the Middle East as well as Eastern Europe.

- Cuisine reflects intersection of imperial cultures, peoples, and religions throughout the ages.

- With Greeks came olive trees and grape vines; Muslims developed irrigation and introduced citrus, sugar cane, rice, and grains; from the New World, Spanish explorers brought tomatoes, potatoes, chilies, beans, squash, chocolate, and vanilla.

- Distinct regional cuisines reflect diverse cultural identities and local traditions; "national" foods include jamón and other pork products, paella, a wide range of seafood dishes, and various tapas.