The Kingdom of Spain is a country in Southwestern Europe, bordering France as well as the North Atlantic Ocean, and the Mediterranean Sea. After its powerful world empire of the 16th and 17th centuries, Spain fell behind Britain, France, and Germany in economic and political power in the 18th and 19th centuries. Despite remaining neutral in both world wars, Spain suffered from a civil war in the late 1930s and consequent dictatorship under Francisco Franco. After his death in 1975, a peaceful transition to democracy and rapid economic modernization led to Spain becoming a global champion of freedom and human rights. It operates under a parliamentary constitutional monarchy that has been led by Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy since 2011.

REligion
Roman Catholics constitute the big majority of Spanish people, with 94% being members of the Catholic church. Although there is no official state religion anymore (the Catholic church was abolished as the official state religion in 1978), the government and taxpayers allocate some financial resources to the Catholic church. Although a lot of people belong to the Catholic church, more and more people start to identify as Atheists or Agnostics. Other religions common in Spain include Islam, which constitutes the fastest growing religion in Spain, Judaism, Protestantism, and Hinduism. Freedom of religion is guaranteed by the Spanish constitution.

Ethnicity & Demographics
While the Spanish people make up the majority of the population in Spain, this group is actually ethnically heterogeneous. It consists of Castilian, Catalan, Galician, Basque, Canary Islanders, and others. Moreover, people of other Mediterranean as well as Nordic ethnic types are present in Spain. Spain’s birth rate slightly outnumbers its death rate by 0.3%, but the net migration rate posts a big positive number, leading to a population growth rate of 0.84% in 2016.
CONTEMPORARY SPAIN & RELATIONS TO EUROPE
After experiencing a prolonged recession in the wake of the global financial crisis that began in 2008, Spain in 2014 marked the first full year of positive economic growth in seven years. High unemployment is still an issue, although the rate has decreased from a high of 26% in 2013 to 22% as of 2015. Nevertheless, this constitutes one of the highest unemployment rates in Europe. Exports were resilient throughout the economic downturn and helped Spain in bringing its account into surplus again. Furthermore, rising labor productivity and an internal devaluation have helped to improve foreign investor interest in the economy. Domestic politics have been dominated by nationalist separationist movements carried out by both Catalan and Basque organizations for decades as well, some of them turning violent like the Basque separatist group ETA.

Spain has been a member of the European Union since 1986, as well as a member of the border-free Schengen area since March 1995. Additionally, Spain was one of the inaugural members of the eurozone in 1999, accepting the euro as its currency. There are 54 seats in the European parliament designated for Spain, and it has held the revolving presidency of the Council of the EU four times between 1989 and 2010. Spain has also been a member of NATO since May 1982, making it the third enlargement of the organization.

SPANIARDS IN THE USA
The discovery and conquest of America by the Spanish, and its presence in America for many years forged strong ties between the two shores of the Atlantic. According to the 2013 American Community Survey, 759,781 people reported as Spaniard, with 652,884 born in the US and 106,897 foreign born. The states with the largest populations of Spaniard ancestry include California, Texas, New Mexico, and Florida. Moreover, Spanish is the second-most common language spoken in the United States.

FAMOUS SPANIARDS
Famous Spanish people include artists Pablo Picasso, Johan Miró, and Salvador Dalí, tennis player Rafael Nadal, actors Antonio Banderas and Javier Bardem, actress Penelope Cruz, Formula One driver Fernando Alonso, singer Enrique Iglesias, model Clara Alonso, and conquistador Hernán Cortés.

SPANISH WORDS
Hi ................................. Hola
Bye ..............................  Adiós
Good morning .................. Buenos días
Yes .................................. Sí
No .................................... No
Please ............................ Por favor
Thank you ........................ Gracias
How are you? ...................... Cómo estás?
I do not understand ............ No entiendo
I understand ........................ Entiendo
What is your name? ............ Cómo te llamas?
My name is ........................ Me llamo...
Where are you from? .......... De dónde es usted?
Do you speak English? ... Habla usted Inglés?

USEFUL LINKS