

The Art of Spain

Kate Sommers-Dawes gives us a glimpse of the artistic wealth that Spain offers immersion students

Were we to measure nations by their artistic contribution,

Spain would hover at the top of every list. Its gifts span the classic to the modern to the avant-garde: from Cervantes' Quixotic literary masterpiece to modern film provocateur Pedro Almodóvar to an art world revolutionized by Picasso's Cubism or altogether melted away by Dalí's Surrealism, where would the world be without Spain?

Given that Spain's contributions to culture and art are too many to cover here, journey to the Iberian peninsula on a language immersion adventure — experiences will range as widely as the Spanish cultural achievements. And it won't take long to realize that a world without the brilliance of Spain's dancers, artists, musicians, architects, authors, and filmmakers would be one severely diminished in every way.

To whet your appetite, here's a regional glimpse at the artistic delights on offer in Spain:

Cataluña

Any celebration of Spanish culture would be incomplete without

paying homage to Surrealist luminary Salvador Dalí. The Dalí Theatre-Museum in the artist's hometown of Figueres, near Barcelona, bills itself as "the largest surrealist object in the world." After the theatre was decimated in the Spanish Civil War, Dalí built his museum on its vestiges. As he said of the outrageous brick red structure and its gold accents, "It's obvious that other worlds exist, that's certain; but, as I've already said on many other occasions, these other worlds are inside ours, they reside in the earth and precisely at the centre of the dome of the Dalí Museum, which contains the new, unsuspected and hallucinatory world of Surrealism." The former theatre itself was an ideal site for his museum because he was, as he described himself, a thoroughly

"theatrical painter."

Though his work can be seen throughout Spain, combining the passion and ingenuity of the Spanish people into constructions that have come to symbolize Barcelona itself, is famed Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí. "Originality is the return to the origins," he once said, and he remained fiercely faithful to his Catalan beginnings and for the duration of his innovative life. His somewhat twisted gothic style, surrealist in its own right, appears in Barcelona's uniquely legendary Park Güell. Built over a period of fourteen years in the early 20th century, the park's colorful mosaics adorn terraces to dragon sculptures to sea serpent benches in a creation uniquely Catalan.

Given that arts and culture nurture all languages, they play a key role in foreign language study. At ESADE in Barcelona, Spanish courses have for years included a cultural program. Every Friday at 12:30 pm, ESADE offers a lecture on art, history, literature, cinema, society, gastronomy or a wide range of other subjects. The cultural program also includes an array of extra-curricular activities, which are recommended to students. They help to gather information on Barcelona's cultural scene and encourage students to visit and enjoy the city's cultural attractions on their own.

Barcelona offers a thriving theater and flamenco scene — concerts at the Palau de la Música are a must, as well as guided tours to museums, wine-tastings, and sailing trips.

There are traditional celebrations from castellers (human castle-building) to calçotades (the feast of the traditional Catalan calçot onion), and even bullfights.

