

Christine Tsai samples the linguistic delights of Spain's northern and eastern coastal regions

## Costas del Castellano

### Cantabria

**Located on the northern coast of Spain, Cantabria is bordered** by El País Vasco on the east and Castilla y León on the south. Cantabria belongs to Green Spain, which is the strip of land between the Cantabrian Sea and the Cantabrian Mountains with a moist, oceanic climate and lush vegetation. As well as the lively capital city of Santander, Cantabria offers quiet scenic country. Students can explore caves, marvel at the religious architecture, or attend one of the many fairs and festivals of Cantabria, filled with traditional Cantabrian music, delicious local delicacies, and exquisite handmade crafts.

**Fundación Comillas**, located close to Santander in Comillas, surrounded by mountains and beaches, is housed in an impressive historical 19th century building, entirely renovated and equipped with the latest in language teaching technologies. The school is dedicated to combining pedagogy with flexibility and total personalization. Its range of courses is intended to satisfy the specific needs of specific groups, such as professionals and executives, groups from companies and institutions, as well as teachers of Spanish as a Foreign Language. Students can choose from general Spanish courses, DELE examination preparations courses, and tailor-made courses.

Located in Puente Viesgo, a village renowned for its famous spa and prehistoric caves just 25 kilometers from Santander, is **The Spanish Course**, where students can learn Spanish in a relaxed environment, sharing accommodations with their Spanish tutor in a typical Spanish rural cottage with modern facilities. The school offers immersion courses for primary and secondary teachers to refresh their Spanish language skills, Spanish courses for older adults, historical and cultural Spanish courses, and weekend "Spanish taster" courses. Students can also have courses customized to their needs.

### Galicia

**Galicia, in the top left corner of** Spain, looks out over the Atlantic Ocean and has more than 2,000 years of history. Each year, walkers and cyclists travel to Galicia to make the capital, Santiago de Compostela, their destination as they embark on the famous "Camino de Santiago," just as pilgrims have done for the last 1,000 years. The pilgrimage consists of various routes, all of which lead to St. James the Apostle at the magnificent cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. The city, which was named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1993, offers countless historical sites that have contributed to the city's rich culture.

**Universidad de Santiago de Compostela**, one of Spain's most prestigious universities, has an International Course Office, which has been organizing Spanish language courses for more than 60 years. For undergraduates, the school arranges a semester where they attend classes alongside Spanish students. The courses are designed to provide students with the practical knowledge to become more fluent in daily life and real communicative situations. The programs consist of four hours of classes each day combined with cultural activities, such as visits to the city and attending debates in cafes in the old city. Students are guaranteed quality instruction since all teachers have doctorate degrees or are specially trained for the teaching of Spanish as a Foreign Language.

### El País Vasco

**El País Vasco (the Basque Country)** is situated in northern Spain, bordered by Cantabria and Burgos to the west, France and Navarra to





The Rio Tina Mayor Estuary on Cantabria's Costa Verde

the east, and La Rioja to the south. It is made up of three provinces, Guipuzcoa, Biscay, and Alava, and students will definitely be stunned by the breathtaking landscapes of the area. País Vasco has two official languages, Spanish and Basque, or Euskera, a distinctive regional language that is unrelated to the Spanish language.

Students will be overwhelmed by what the region has to offer. The capitals of the three provinces, San Sebastián, Bilbao, and Alava, provide endless cultural and historic sites to tour, such as Renaissance palaces, gothic cathedrals, and a myriad of museums. Travelers cannot miss Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, which opened in 1997, making the city an international destination for all visitors.

**Escuela Internacional para la Educación y el Desarrollo** (EIDE) is both a language school and a tourism and hotel management school founded in 1978. Located in the city center of Santurtzi, a fishing town on the northern edge of Bilbao, the quality and professionalism of EIDE's teaching has been accredited by entities such as the Department of Education of the Basque Government, the Instituto Cervantes, and the University of Cambridge. The school offers intensive Spanish language courses, executive Spanish courses for companies, courses for children, and courses that combine Spanish language learning with special topics, such as cooking, hotel management, and tourism. Courses last from a week to a year long.

San Sebastián, a chic and lively university city, boasts an extraordinary landscape and a high quality of living. The bay of Concha, in the heart of the city center, is a magnet for sun seekers while surfers show off their skills on Zurriola Beach. **Tandem San Sebastián** uses a range of dynamic teaching methods, including practical exercises, group work, and role-plays to improve communication skills. Highly trained and motivated teachers provide varied and interesting lessons, while

ensuring the needs of individual students are met. In addition to the general Spanish language courses, the school also offers internship programs, a Spanish and Surf class, DELE examination preparation courses, and a class for students over the age of 50.

## Valencia

**Valencia is Spain's third largest city and has experienced a cultural renaissance** in recent years. Located on the Mediterranean coast, the Valencian Community encompasses Alicante, Castellón, and Valencia. It has everything from pristine beaches to fascinating architecture, a world-class soccer team, and a nightlife that lasts until dawn.

Valencia is also home of paella and boasts a mouth-watering cuisine of seafood and other delicacies. Even more important is Las Fallas, one of Valencia's famous fiestas that travellers the world over come to experience. During Fallas, every neighbourhood constructs a satirical papier-mâché caricature, each of which is judged and awarded prizes. All caricatures are later burned, creating a fiery spectacle. Valencia is a wonderful place to learn Spanish because although it is a big city, it still has a small town feel that makes foreigners feel at home.

Located in the heart of Castellón, a lively town in the north of the Valencian Community, **Audio Gil Spanish Institute** is a teaching institution accredited by the Instituto Cervantes and the University of Alcalá de Henares. Students can choose from general Spanish language and culture courses, DELE examination preparation courses, Spanish language courses with a focus on business or tourism, and customized courses that can be adjusted to the student's needs. The Institute will also arrange accommodation for students as well as internships for those who would like to practice their Spanish language skills.

With locations in Barcelona, Madrid, Sevilla, and Valencia,