



Destination Spotlight: Spain

By Ashley Kosciolek

A visit to Spain brings access to world-class cities, iconic art and architecture, delicious cuisine, stunning beaches, and deep history and culture – all of which appeal greatly to cruise passengers. It's no surprise the country is prominent on the cruise tourism map.

Europe cruises have seen a steady increase in passenger interest in recent years, according to most popular cruise region in the world, with one out of every six cruise passengers globally sailing to the Mediterranean in 2025.

Spain, and in particular the city of Barcelona, is a popular embarkation and disembarkation point for cruises in the Mediterranean. The country plays a central role in the cruise industry's success in Europe, and nearly every major cruise line has a presence in the country.

CLIA has a dedicated presence in Spain, and closely collaborates with local and national authorities to advance sustainable tourism. This includes agreements to manage ship traffic in major ports, such as Barcelona and Palma de Mallorca in the Balearic Islands. These agreements balance the significant local economic benefits of cruise tourism with the number of passengers destinations say they can handle. In 2024, more than 63,500 jobs in Spain were the result of a thriving cruise industry.

Coastal and easy access inland attractions

Barcelona is the leading port city in Spain, and home to such attractions as Antoni Gaudi's eccentric architecture, the famous La Rambla boulevard, and the Mercat (market) de la Boqueria, a foodie favorite.

Cruise lines homeport ships in the city because it affords access "to some of the Mediterranean's most sought-after destinations from a convenient turnaround port that is a bucket-list destination in and of itself," says Todd Hamilton, chief of staff for Norwegian Cruise Line.

Norwegian Cruise Line calls at 19 ports in Spain. Popular destinations include Palma de Mallorca, with its medieval Old Town and access to the island of Mallorca's beaches and coves. Malaga, on Spain's east coast, where Pablo Picasso was born, and the historic city of Cadiz, both serve as gateways to Andalusia, with its rich history, Moorish architecture and cultural attractions such as flamenco dancing.

Valencia, Las Palmas (in the Canary Islands), Cartagena, and Bilbao, among other destinations, show off Spain's variety as a Mediterranean destination.

"Spain's incredible diversity makes it an ideal destination to explore by cruise, from the rich history of Majorca to the beach clubs of Ibiza and the vibrant culture of Motril, there is something for everyone," Norwegian's Hamilton says.

"Spain guests can explore a wide range of destinations – from historic cities and cultural capitals to scenic coastal ports – each offering a distinct sense of place," agrees Robert de Bruin, director of itinerary planning for Holland America Line, which visits 14 Spanish ports. "Together, Spain's breadth of ports and Barcelona's strategic significance enhance itinerary variety, enrich the guest experience, and reinforce Holland America Line's destination-focused approach to cruising.

Genuine partnerships benefit local economies

"Spain is honestly one of those destinations that just keeps delivering, and that's exactly why it plays such a central role in what we offer," says Natasha Salzedo, senior director of destinations for Virgin Voyages, which seasonally homeports three ships in Barcelona, and sails to more than 10 Spanish ports.

Salzedo says guests don't stay on the ship in Spanish ports; they go out and explore. "That's real economic value flowing back into the community," she notes.

Geneva-based MSC Cruises has the largest presence in Spain, and Carnival Cruise Line, Celebrity Cruises, Costa Cruises, Disney Cruise Line, P&O Cruises, Princess Cruises, Royal Caribbean International and luxury lines such as Explora Journeys, Oceania Cruises, Regent Seven Seas Cruises, Seabourn Cruise Line, and Silversea Cruises, are among other cruise companies with a significant presence in the country.

Spain as a growing source market

In addition to attracting international visitors, Spain is also a significant source market for cruises. According to CLIA, more than 635,000 Spanish passengers set sail in in 2025. The average Spanish cruiser sails for more than a week, and the top destination is the close-to-home Mediterranean.

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