

Spanish and culture

Spanish language programmes that offer a dedicated cultural element are reported to be performing well, especially those combining Spanish language with dance tuition. We profile a range of such programmes in Spain.

Many students are attracted to a Spanish course that offers something extra – either a diverse cultural programme as well as language tuition or targeted instruction in both Spanish and one or more specific areas of cultural interest. As Eva Diez Domenech of Eugenia International School in Lloret de Mar says, “Getting to know cultural aspects [of a country] is an ideal way of enlarging your understanding of the people who speak that particular language.”

One of the courses that is in high demand, according to schools active in this sector, is Spanish and flamenco or salsa dancing. At Escuela Montalban in Granada, Margaret Fortmann reports, “The demand for flamenco dance courses has increased by 80 per cent, especially among German female students.” In Cadiz, Israel Barro at Centro Internacional de Español Melkart also testifies to rising interest.

“Last year, due to demand for [cultural options], we decided to create a package,” says Barro. “These combined courses are intended for those interested in doing a Spanish course plus a leisure activity that they are already enthusiastic about or which they intend to learn from scratch.” Options include various forms of dance, Spanish guitar and surfing. Barro relates that, in general, female students in their early 20s are most likely to enrol on these courses, “although I remember an old couple who learned to dance sevillanas!”

At Liceo Internacional Agarimo in Betanzos, La Coruña, Carmen Villasol says that “students who have an intermediate level of Spanish and are looking for a different concept of cultural courses” are most likely to enrol on their programmes, which suggests a slightly older average age of student. Their cultural courses, which can be tailored to suit specific student requests, are broader and encompass a travel element too, with students staying in rural Galician houses while undertaking anything from a music workshop to authentic Galician cooking lessons.

Another institution that offers a range of options is Escuela CF Idiomas in Aranda de Duero Burgos. “We offer many types of cultural instruction such as typical pottery, wine tasting and [trips to] the special wine route through Ribera del Duero,” says Crystal Marie Farnsworth at the school. “Escuela CF Idiomas has been offering cultural programmes since 1979 and has always changed with the needs of the market.”

Other institutions have added cultural options to their repertoire more recently. At Babel Idiomas in Malaga, Boelo van der Pool explains, “We started [these courses] last summer because we realised that more and more students were asking for special programmes. We now offer Spanish literature classes and a Spanish and Pablo Picasso programme. The students get something more out of it than just the language knowledge.”

At Hispano Continental in Salamanca, the cultural course includes a diverse range of activities aimed to give students an overall taste of Spanish culture, as Auxiliadora Vicente at the school explains. “Students are very interested in our language and culture and lifestyle,” she says. Their programme encompasses a tapas night, cooking class, art, theatre and cinema lectures and excursions to relevant cultural sites of interest.

In contrast, the options at the Don Quijote schools are more targeted. Erin Corcoran at Don Quijote says, “Most of our Spanish and culture courses have been offered since 2002, and with each new year, there’s been a significant increase in popularity. This is most notable in our flamenco dancing course in Seville where demand for lessons has tripled since its introduction in 2002.” The school chain also offers options in wine tasting, cooking and Arabic culture.



Selection of programmes available

PHOTOGRAPH: ENFOREX

Location	School	Min hrs cult. instr. per week	Min hrs lang tuition p/wk	Cultural instr:	Start dates	Location	School	Min hrs cult. instr. per week	Min hrs lang tuition p/wk	Cultural instr:	Start dates
A Coruna	Tu Hablas	7.5	7.5	th	v	Pamplona	Uni. de Navarra ILCE	14	11	a,ci,h	r
Alicante	University of Alicante	5	15	ci,l,a,c,f,s	yr	Salamanca	Hispano Continental	5	10	d	yr
Aranda de Duero Burgos	Escuela CF Idiomas	v	10	w,p,v	r	Salamanca	ITS	5	10	a,h,l,ci	yr
Cadiz	Academia Valcia	10	10	ci,m,c	yr	Salamanca	Universidad Pontificia	8	20	a,ci	yr
Cadiz	Centro Int. de Esp. Melkart	8	20	f,s	yr	Santiago de Compostela	Tu Hablas	7.5	7.5	th	v
Cantabria	Casa Pygmalion	v	v	c	yr	Sevilla	Taller Flamenco	10	7.5	v	yr
Granada	Centro de Esp. Garcia Lorca	7	10	d	yr	Valladolid	Paramo	-	-	d	r
Granada	Escuela Montalban	20	20	ar,f	yr	Valencia	AIP Language Institute	5	20	d	yr
Lloret de Mar, Girona	Eugenia Int. School	10	10	l,a,h	r	various	Don Quijote	5	20	w,f,c,ar	yr
Madrid	Inhispania	5	20	ci,m,c,a,l	yr	various	Enforex	v	20	f,d,h,a,l	yr
Malaga	Babel Idiomas	5	20	l	yr	various	Liceo Internacional Agarimo	3	2	c,l,d	-
Malaga	Malaga Si!	5	20	a,ci,m	yr	various	Proyecto Espanol	5	15	d	yr

a art ar arabic culture c cooking/gastronomy ci cinema d diverse f flamenco h history l literature m music r pottery r restricted s salsa th theatre v varies w wine yr year round