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Asturias is the region along the northern coast of Spain. It is unique because the traditions, customs, and geographic features of this region are not found anywhere else in the world. Many of the customs and traditions are a result of the temperate climate that allows Asturians to enjoy an outdoor lifestyle.

Starting Points

1. Look at a picture of the landscape of Asturias (see Geography & Climate Visual 1). In what ways does it look similar to your own surroundings? In what ways does it look different? The terrain of Asturias sets a foundation for the customs and values of the Asturian people.

2. Discuss fun things to do in your community. What do you like to do? What would you like to try? What activities do you wish were available? Because the people of Asturias enjoy a mild climate, they love to participate in outdoor activities and carry out an agricultural way of life.

3. Look at pictures of Asturian food (see Additional Resources). What do you notice about the food that is similar to the foods you like to eat? What is different? Does the climate where you live affect the foods you eat? As you learn about Asturian climate, notice the effect it has on the foods the Asturians eat. Determine whether they could enjoy those same foods if the climate in their region were different.

Information

The Great Outdoors

Because Asturias is on the northern coast of Spain, its geographical features include beaches, forests, and mountains. The Picos de Europa [pee-cohs day eh-oo-ROKE-ah] (Peaks of Europe) is the best-known mountain range in Asturias. These mountains are very high and rugged (see Geography & Climate Visual 2). They are used for all kinds of recreation, agriculture, and industry. People visit these mountains, which are referred to simply as the Picos, to drive, hike, bicycle, rock climb, and camp.

People have lived in the Picos region for thousands of years. Some of the oldest human remains have been found in the caves of the Picos. In these caves, anthropologists have found and studied cave paintings that appear to be the oldest in Europe and perhaps even the oldest in the world.

Because of the rugged terrain and landscape of Asturias, indigenous people have sought refuge from invading civilizations in this country. The Asturians hid from the Romans and the Moors in the Picos. In fact, Asturias was the only region in Spain that was never controlled by the invading Moors that ruled the Iberian Peninsula from 711 C.E. to 1492 C.E.
The people of Asturias are very active, and they express this by biking, hiking, camping, and rock climbing. Many people love to visit this region, and it is a popular travel destination in Spain for outdoor recreation. Young people attend summer camps and participate in many other activities there every year. Even the king has a house in the Picos that he visits in the summertime.

**Asturian Climate and Agriculture**

The climate in Asturias is very mild. The temperature does not usually rise above eighty-six degrees Fahrenheit, and it rains often. The mild temperatures and plentiful rain create an ideal climate for cultivating agriculture and raising livestock. In the more rural areas of Asturias, people grow much of their own food, including the apples used to make Asturian cider.

As a result of the temperate weather in Asturias, it is very easy for nearly every family in the countryside to grow a small garden. People commonly grow herbs, beans, peppers, tomatoes, and many other types of vegetables. It is also common for Asturian families to keep livestock. In other places, livestock are kept in pens, but in Asturias cows and sheep generally roam free. Farmers put a bell on each of their animals to keep track of them and then let them roam in the mountains, where enough plant life grows naturally to keep them well fed. Cows and sheep can often be found grazing at very high altitudes, and it is common to hear the animals’ bells all over, even in very remote places.

**Asturian Food**

Asturian foods are very distinct and are the result of the mild climate of Asturias. These unique foods include cheeses, honey, bean stews, and many other hearty foods. A snack in Asturias often consists of bread, cheese, jam, and honey. The Asturians are especially proud of their cheeses. One of the most popular cheeses is the cabrales [cah-brah-lays] cheese, which tastes similar to blue cheese. Cabrales cheese is made from goat milk and is usually cured in fig leaves. Most of the Spanish cheeses found in the supermarket are from Asturias.

Cider is a favorite drink in Asturias. Asturian cider is an all-natural hard cider that has been fermented in wooden vats and then bottled. Most of it is bought by local residents. A unique aspect of Asturian cider is the way it is served. When served, the cider is poured from above the head into a glass held near the hip. Bartenders in Asturias are very good at pouring cider from high up without spilling.

**Activities**

1. You have learned about the climate and some of the activities that are unique to Asturias. What else would you like to know about? Perhaps you want to know what school is like for children your age or maybe how Asturians celebrate birthdays. Write a letter to an imaginary pen pal in Asturias asking your questions.

2. Learn more about farming and raising livestock. Write a list of ten advantages to living on a farm. List ten disadvantages. Compare your lists with a friend’s lists.

3. Look at a table with fifteen to twenty objects on it. Include objects typical of Asturias, such as a bottle of cider (or any type of glass bottle), beans, a cowbell,
cheese, honey, a picture of mountains, a picture of the ocean, a toy cow, a rock climbing rope, or other things that would be found in Asturias. Walk around the table and look at the objects for three to five minutes, then cover the objects. Write down as many of the objects as you can remember. Discuss the different objects, their uses, and why they are important to the people in Asturias.

4. Glue **Geography & Climate Visuals 1 and 2** to card stock paper. Draw lines on the back of the card stock and cut along them to make puzzles. For a more challenging activity, divide into two teams. Each team should take a plastic bag filled with puzzle pieces. Quiz each other on information you have gone over in class (e.g., What animal does Cabrales cheese come from?) and take out a puzzle piece each time your team answers correctly. The first team to complete their puzzle wins.

5. Practice vocabulary and recall main ideas learned in this **CultureGuide** by playing bingo (see **Geography & Climate Visual 3**). Fill in your bingo card with twenty-four words from the list provided (the middle space is free). To play the game, write the words from the bingo cards on strips of paper and place the papers in a hat. Pull each strip out one by one and read each word to the class. If the word is on your board, cover it with a piece of paper. The first student to get five in a row wins.

6. Learn how to pour cider like the Asturians. Pour cider from a bottle held high above your head into a glass held near your waist. You may spill a little at first, but pour steadily and adjust the position of the glass as you practice. Why would Asturians pour this way? Do Americans have a special way of pouring anything?

**Discussion Questions**

1. What do you think you would like most about Asturias? Think about the foods, the recreation, and the location. What would you like to try?

2. What place in the United States do you think is most like Asturias? Why? What similarities do you see? What region is most different from Asturias? Why?

3. Why do you think Asurians pour cider the way they do? Do you have traditions such as pouring cider from the head that have been passed down from generation to generation? What kind of traditions are they?

4. What would you ask a boy or girl your age from Asturias about his or her homeland? How do you think life is different for children in Asturias? What do you think that they would wonder about you?

5. People in Asurias love the outdoors and being active outdoors, mostly because the climate allows them to do so. How does the climate in your area affect your activities? What do you like to do when it is warm outside?

6. Why do you think it is important to learn about Asturias? Why should we learn about other places and people?
**Facts About Spain**

**Official Name:** Kingdom of Spain

**Capital:** Madrid

**Government Type:** parliamentary monarchy

**Area:** 504,782 sq km

**Land Boundaries:** Andorra 63.7, France 623 km, Gibraltar 1.2 km, Portugal 1,214 km, Morocco (Ceuta) 6.3 km, Morocco (Melilla) 9.6 km, Coastline 4,964 km

**Climate:** temperate; clear, hot summers in interior, more moderate and cloudy along coast; cloudy, cold winters in interior, partly cloudy and cool along coast

**Lowest Point:** Atlantic Ocean 0 m

**Highest Point:** Pico de Teide (Tenerife) on Canary Islands 3,718 m

**Natural Resources:** coal, lignite, iron ore, uranium, mercury, pyrites, fluorspar, gypsum, zinc, lead, tungsten, copper, kaolin, potash, hydropower, arable land

**Natural Hazards:** periodic droughts

**Population:** 40,341,462 (July 2005 est.)

**Ethnic Groups:** composite of Mediterranean and Nordic types

**Religions:** Roman Catholic 94%, other 6%

**Languages:** Castilian Spanish (official) 74%, Catalán 17%, Galician 7%, Basque 2%

**GDP:** $1.046 trillion (2005 est.)

**GDP Per Capita:** $25,100 (2005 est.)

**GDP Composition By Sector:** agriculture: 3.4%; industry: 28.7%; services: 67.9% (2005 est.)

**Labor Force:** 20.67 million (2005 est.)

**Unemployment Rate:** 10.1% (2005 est.)

**Industries:** textiles and apparel (including footwear), food and beverages, metals and metal manufacturers, chemicals, shipbuilding, automobiles, machine tools, tourism, clay and refractory products, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment

**Agricultural Products:** grain, vegetables, olives, wine grapes, sugar beets, citrus; beef, pork, poultry, dairy products; fish

**Exports:** $194.3 billion f.o.b. (2005 est.) machinery, motor vehicles; foodstuffs, other consumer goods, pharmaceuticals, medicines

**Imports:** $271.8 billion f.o.b. (2005 est.) machinery and equipment, fuels, chemicals, semifinished goods; foodstuffs, consumer goods; measuring and medical control instruments

**Trade Partners:** EU, OPEC, U.S., U.K., Japan, Latin America

**Currency:** euro

**Exchange Rate:** 0.79 euros = $1 U.S. (2005)
TIME LINE

209 B.C.E.  Hannibal’s army in Italy declines and the Roman conquest of Spain begins
600 C.E.  Military capital established in Toledo for Visigoths
653   The eighth Council of Toledo completes and approves the great legal code, *Forum Judicum*, a combination of Roman code and Visigoth laws
711   End of Visigoth Empire in Spain; Muslim occupation of Spain
1469  Isabela and Ferdinand are married and become the *Reyes Catolicos*, or the Christian Rulers
1492  Granada is taken, ending the Christian Reconquest against Muslim rule in Spain; Christopher Columbus discovers the Americas
1494  The Inquisition
1588  Spanish Armada is defeated in the English Channel
1812  Spanish constitutionalism begins
1898  End of colonialism in Spain; Spain loses the last of its overseas colonies (Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines) to the United States
1914–1918  First World War—Spain remains neutral
1931  Spain is proclaimed the Spanish Republic; the revolutionary committee becomes the provisional government, with Niceto Alcalá Zamora as the first president
1936–1939  Spanish Civil War; the *nacionales* [nah-shay-oh-nah-less], or nationalists, prevail and make a victorious entry into Madrid on 28 March 1939; Francisco Franco becomes leader of Spain
1947  Franco announces the restoration of the monarchy when he dies or retires (Law of Succession); Juan Carlos de Borbón y Borbón is selected as successor
1959  A group of leftist students from the University of Madrid form the ETA, a terrorist organization hoping to achieve autonomy for the Basque region located between Spain and France
1978  King Carlos transforms the Francoist regime into a monarchy; the Spanish Constitution is unanimously approved by Parliament and 87.8 percent of the citizens
1992  Summer Olympic Games are held in Barcelona
1998  First major ETA cease-fire
Jan 2002  Euro becomes official currency
Feb 2002  Peseta expires
Nov 2002  Massive oil spill off Spanish coast
Mar 2004  Bombing of Spanish railways by Basque separatists
### HOLIDAYS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Holiday Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Jan</td>
<td>New Years Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Jan</td>
<td>Reyes Magos (Three Kings Day)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>Carnival held in Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Canary Islands, during second week of February; festivities include costumes, parades, and music</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr</td>
<td>Semana Santa (Easter Holy Week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 May</td>
<td>May Day (Labor Day)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6–14 Jul</td>
<td>Festival de San Fermines</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 Jul</td>
<td>Santiago Apóstol (celebration for St. James, patron saint of Spain)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 Oct</td>
<td>Spanish National Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Nov</td>
<td>All Saints’ Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Dec</td>
<td>Day of the Constitution</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 Dec</td>
<td>Christmas Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 Dec</td>
<td>Santos Inocentes (similar to April Fool’s Day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Dec</td>
<td>New Year’s Eve</td>
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