

SPAIN OBSERVES ITS CONSTITUTION DAY



CONSTITUTION DAY DATE: DECEMBER 6

Constitution Day is a public holiday in Spain.

Constitution Day is a celebration of when Spain became a democracy. On December 6, Spaniards approved by referendum a new Constitution, which had been passed by Parliament in October, on how Government should be run, the powers they should have, and the Government system to be implemented in the country.

HISTORY OF CONSTITUTION DAY IN SPAIN

Francisco Franco died in 1975, after several years ruling in Spain as a dictator. In 1977, a general election resulted in the approval of the Constituent Cortes, the Spanish parliament that was supposed to draft and approve a new constitution. The constitution was approved by the Cortes on October 31, 1978, and then by the Spanish people through a referendum on November 30. King Juan Carlos signed the Constitution on December 27, and it came into effect on December 29, after publication in the Official Gazette. Ever since then, Constitution Day has been a public holiday in Spain. The Spanish constitution has only been retouched once; to extend voting rights and to make eligible for local elections all European Union citizens.

SPAIN'S CONSTITUTION DAY TRADITIONS, CUSTOMS AND ACTIVITIES

For a holiday that is of such historical significance in Spain, not many Spaniards participate in the celebrations which tend to be formal affairs full of protocol and are typically for royalty, politicians, and celebrities. Primarily the generation over 40 years of age truly remember the referendum with passion and have pride in the Constitution. For the general public it is just another day off work. In more recent

years, Constitution Day has been an opportunity for protests in the streets and political statement.

Often it is the time some extended vacations begin as December 8, the Day of the Immaculate Conception, is another holiday in Spain. In Spain the government does not change the days on which the holidays fall. While some countries may be change the day of celebration to the next Friday or Monday, Spaniards will make "el puente"—the bridge. El puente is the practice of taking an extra day off work, particularly when the holiday falls on a Wednesday or Thursday. This allows one to "bridge" the gap between the holiday and the weekend.