

Spain

1. Flag

- Created in 1785
and adopted in 1981

Both through the choice of colours and that of the crest, the flag bears witness to the territorial construction of the Spanish Kingdom as we know it today. The regions of Castilla and Leon were the first to unite during the period of the *Reconquista*, launched in the 13th century. The Muslim forces were driven back and only managed to retain their influence around the city of Grenada, last foothold of the Moor Empire until 1492. Monarchical marriages would then intertwine the destinies of the Castilla y Leon region with that of Aragon. Charles V was born of the established dynasty, and through the marriage game he would later benefit from Habsburg and Burgundian territories, making him the most powerful European Emperor although this was short lived. He added the South-Pyrenean part of Navarra to the hands of Castilla. After his abdication, his son Philip II recovered the Spanish lands, the possessions of Southern Italy and the Netherlands.



The four previously mentioned regions would make up the main elements of the current flag. The red and yellow colours were initially those of Castilla and Leon, but also those of the domains of Navarra and Aragon, made up of today's regions of Aragon, Valencia, the Balearic Islands and Catalonia, which kept these colours. The four former components were also part of the crest, the central shield bearing their arms. At its base is the symbol of Grenada, the last region concerned by the *Reconquista*. In the very centre, the *fleurs-de-lys* recall affiliation with the reigning family in the Bourbon lineage. The pillars represent the columns of Hercules, i.e. the Rocks of Gibraltar and Ceuta. The banner wrapped around these columns bears the inscription *plus ultra*, translated as 'further beyond', reference to the Spanish colonial empire launched by Queen Isabelle of Castilla in the late 15th century and the discoveries of the navigator Christopher Columbus.

The Royal Decree of 1785 made the choice of the flag with its horizontal bands official. At this time it was a question of avoiding confusion between the maritime flags of the naval powers controlled by the monarchs of the Bourbon family as the former were too similar to be distinguished at sea. After having been adapted on several occasions, in particular the shield, the current flag was established in 1981. The emblem without the shield is used for civilian events.

2. Anthem

- *Marcha Real* (Royal March)
- Anthem without lyrics - Harmonised by Bartolomeo Perez Casas
- Created in 1761 and adopted in 1770

The *Marcha Real* is the oldest European anthem amongst those still being used today. It has the distinctive feature of not having any official lyrics. It is not sung, therefore, just like the national anthems of San Marino and Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as the European Union anthem. The first reference made to this melody dates back to 1761, under the title of *Marcha Granadera* (March of the Grenadiers), but its author is unknown. Some say that it drew its inspiration in France, others say Germany, as the musical style differs from traditional Spanish works of that time. The score was re-harmonised in 1908 by the composer Bartolomeo Perez Casas in a version still used today. Monarchs have been using it since 1770 as a march of honour. For a very short period during the Second Spanish Republic, from 1931 to 1937, another anthem, *El Himno de Regio*, was adopted by the government. But General Franco re-established the *Marcha Real* as national anthem. Its use was made official in 1997 by Royal Decree of King Juan Carlos I. Two versions coexist officially using the same music, the long version with repetitions being reserved for the King.

The anthem has been subject to much controversy since its creation. Competitions have been organised, particularly in 1870, but no air ousted the *Marcha Real*, except, as mentioned above, during the Republican years. Its title was temporarily replaced by *Himno Nacional Español* in 1975 on Franco's death and restoration of the monarchy, undoubtedly in order to link it to all the people and not just to the reigning dynasty.

But most controversy has concerned putting lyrics into the anthem. No use of a text has ever been legitimised or made official, neither under the reign of Alfonso III and General Primo de Rivera's dictatorship until 1930, nor under Franco's dictatorship. Since then, some attempts have failed, by lack of popular acceptance, but also by lack of linguistic unity around lyrics that would be written in Castilian. Such was the fate of the version sung by the tenor Placido Domingo in 2008, a version initiated by the Spanish Olympic Committee before the Beijing Games. Athletes and supporters content themselves with humming the music when the anthem is played.

