

Mag *aux* ine

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conversaSpain
Auxiliares de conversación

Christmas in Spain!



**First wintery Christmas
for our *auxi* Larissa Miller!**

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**Christmas, sweet
Christmas**

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Which Wise Man are you?
(Page 18)



A17463248

I t's time!

There's something magical about spending Christmas in Spain.

The streets glow with lights, the air smells of *castañas* and *churros*, and every plaza feels alive.

Over the holidays, families gather for dinners that last for hours while children write letters to the *Reyes Magos*. It's a time to pause, take it all in, and reconnect with family and yourself.

Go see the *cabalgata*, taste every holiday treat: *turrón*, *mazapán*, *roscón*... (you'll thank us later), and raise a toast with *cava* at midnight. Whether you're with friends, family, or fellow *auxis*, these are the moments you'll treasure.

¡Feliz Navidad!

PS: Don't forget to eat twelve grapes as the clock strikes midnight on New Year's Eve for good luck!

Tomás

CEO, Multilingual Education Development & Support



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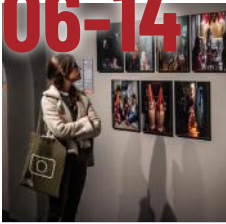
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December						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	●		●	●		●
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
●	●					●
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
●				●		
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
	●					
28	29	30	31			
			●			

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¡Inocente, Inocente!

APPROVED BY REMY

If you're in Spain around the end of December, don't be surprised if someone tricks you into believing something completely ridiculous and then cries "*¡Inocente, inocente!*" That's Spain's version of April Fools' Day, known as *El Día de los Santos Inocentes*, celebrated every year on December 28th.

One of the most classic pranks? Sticking a white paper cutout, called a *monigote*, on someone's back without them noticing. When I was a kid, I'd spend days with my dad cutting out those little figures and planning who we'd prank next. It's way more fun when you're a kid, maybe your students would love it too! Always respectfully, of course. For grown-ups, it's more about playing small tricks or making someone believe a made-up story.



It seems this celebration dates back to a biblical episode involving King Herod, but over the centuries, the sad story turned into something far more cheerful. Nowadays, it's a lively day when even newspapers join in the fun, publishing wild and obviously fake stories to trick their readers.

But that's not all, in many parts of Spain, December 28th comes with its own unique traditions. In Ibi (Alicante), the *Festa dels Enfarinats* turns the



streets into a high-spirited "battlefield" of eggs, flour, and firecrackers. In Jalance (Valencia), the *Fiesta de los Locos* puts a "crazy mayor" in charge for 24 hours. Murcia celebrates with music and dances at the *Fiesta de los Santos Inocentes de Nogalte*, while in Fuente Carreteros (Córdoba) locals perform the *Danza de los Locos*. And in places like Burgos, Palencia, or León, the *Obispillo* tradition makes a local child a bishop for a day.

Think of it as Spain's April Fools' Day, just with a twist of Spanish humor. So, on December 28th, don't believe everything you hear, and definitely check your back for a *monigote*. After all, when someone shouts "*¡Inocente, inocente!*", it's already too late!



Christmas in Spanish

The holiday season in Spain feels familiar to most of us, and yet it definitely hits a little differently here. For a start, it lasts all the way from Christmas Eve to Epiphany on January 6th. Get ready to navigate the holidays in December with this list of essential vocabulary.



Spanish

English

<i>Navidad</i>	Christmas
<i>Nochebuena</i>	Christmas Eve
<i>Las fiestas</i>	Holidays
<i>Año Nuevo</i>	New Year
<i>Nochevieja</i>	New Year's Eve
<i>Adornos</i>	Decorations
<i>El Belén</i>	Nativity scene
<i>Papá Noel</i>	Santa Claus
<i>Los Reyes Magos</i>	The Three Wise Men
<i>Villancicos</i>	Christmas carols
<i>Feliz Navidad</i>	Merry Christmas
<i>Próspero Año Nuevo</i>	Happy New Year

Spanish Christmas Movies:



Prime Video
Reyes contra Santa



RTVE Play
Noche de reyes



Atresplayer
Padre no hay más que uno 3



Netflix
Klaus

Get Your Classroom Christmas-Ready

This is a great time of year to bring your home culture into the classroom. You'll find that you have plenty to share with your students and a lot to learn about Spanish Christmas traditions. Cultural exchange is a two-way street!

Decorate your classroom: cut out snowflakes, make a winter mural or create tree decorations

If there is a variety of nationalities in your class, ask them how they celebrate the holiday season

Play Christmas music in class, prepare a Christmas song gap-fill activity

Prepare a presentation on how you celebrate back home

If you're thinking of bringing in traditional Christmas food, remember to check with your school first!

Project: Make Your Own Advent Calendar!

Make an Advent Calendar with your students for your classes in December. You could make this out of card or buy/make a structure or small bags to hold each day's activity or game. You could also devise an Advent Challenge along the same lines.

- Play Christmas bingo to practice vocabulary
- Sing a Christmas song
- Decorate the classroom
- Make a Christmas card
- Tell someone your fav thing about Christmas
- Play a Christmas-themed game
- Learn relevant vocabulary

You can use the same structure for all levels and ages!





Recipes by Nûpelda

The Festive Four of Spanish *Navidad*

Four sweet reasons to fall in love with Spanish Christmas traditions.

Spain takes Christmas seriously, and it's sweet! From almond-packed goodies to lucky midnight grapes, this time of year is a delicious mix of centuries-old traditions and cozy get-togethers. You'll see festive treats filling supermarket shelves throughout the holiday season, ready to carry you all the way through to Three Wise Men Day in January.

No matter where you celebrate, these treats are the tastiest way to jump into Spanish holiday cheer.



Polvorones and *Mantecados*

Crumbly, messy, and totally worth it

These melt-in-your-mouth cookies are Christmas classics made from flour, sugar, and lard (*manteca*). Wrapped in colorful paper and dusted with sugar, they're the perfect pairing for a hot drink and a holiday movie night in your pajamas.

Be warned: they crumble the second you unwrap them, but that's part of their charm!



Turrón

Sweet, nutty, and everywhere you go

Spain's most iconic Christmas sweet, this almond nougat comes in soft (*blando*) and hard (*duro*) varieties. If you like something creamy, try *Turrón de Jijona* first. Prefer a crunch? Go for *Turrón de Alicante*.

Fun fact: anything sweet and rectangular turns out to be *turrón* this time of year, even chocolate bars!

Roscón de Reyes

A royal ending to the holidays

Round, fluffy, and topped with jewel-like candied fruit, this brioche ring is Spain's answer to King Cake. You'll find it all over in early January, filled with whipped cream, chocolate, or custard.

Each *roscón* hides two treasures: a figurine for luck, and a dry bean for the unlucky buyer of the cake. The stakes have never been sweeter!



Las Uvas de la Suerte

Twelve grapes, good luck

No Spanish *Nochevieja* (New Year's Eve) is complete without *las uvas de la suerte* (lucky grapes). As the clock strikes midnight, everyone tries to eat twelve grapes, one for each chime of the bell.

Tradition says each grape brings good luck for one of the twelve months ahead. It's trickier than it sounds, especially the last few!

Interview by Ainhoa

LARISSA MILLER

Age: 28 years old

Role:

From: Australia

Auxiliar in a primary school

Region: Community of Madrid



“

One thing I really love about Christmas in Spain is the sense of community, celebration and rich tradition”

At 28 years old, Larissa Miller has swapped the sunny beaches of Australia for the bustling streets of Madrid, where she's a language assistant in a primary school. For someone used to celebrating Christmas in the middle of summer back home, experiencing the holiday season in Spain: complete with chilly weather, festive lights, and traditional celebrations feels like stepping into another world.

In this interview, Larissa shares what it's been like settling into life in Madrid, from finding an apartment and navigating paperwork to building a social circle, and reflects on how she'll spend her first wintery Christmas far away from home.

Let's start at the beginning. How was first arriving in Madrid and settling in?

A mix of emotions, honestly! Living and working in Spain has been a dream of mine for years, so finally arriving felt surreal. I landed super early in the morning after 26 hours of travel - exhausted, jet-lagged, but incredibly excited. I was definitely a bit overwhelmed at first because I had no idea where I'd end up living, and Madrid moves fast.

Those first few days were a blur of metro rides, exploring different neighbourhoods, and trying to adjust to the rhythm of Spanish life. But even in the chaos, I felt this amazing sense of calm, as I stepped into this new chapter.



Finding a place to live can be tricky in a big city. What was your experience like with apartment hunting?

Apartment hunting started out as a bit of an adventure, but it turned into one of the most exciting parts of settling in. I visited quite a few flats, some with very unique layouts, but it actually gave me a real feel for the city. The rental market in Madrid moves quickly, but that's a good thing: new options pop up every single day, and there truly is something for everyone.

In the end, I found a beautiful apartment in a neighbourhood I hadn't even considered at first, and now I honestly couldn't imagine living anywhere else. If you stay open-minded and patient, you'll be amazed at how the perfect place finds its way to you.



And once you had a roof over your head, there's always the paperwork. How did you manage things like the TIE, bank accounts, SIM card...?

A lot of patience. Spain loves paperwork, and things don't always happen quickly. I booked my appointments early, made multiple copies of everything, and brought every document I could think of - just in case! For the SIM card and bank account, I asked other *auxiliares* what they used and followed their recommendations, which made the process easier.

Communicating with others is always key!

As you mention, helping each other is key. So, how would you help other *auxis*? Are there any tips or tricks they should know to make bureaucracy less stressful?

Absolutely!

- Book appointments as soon as you arrive (if you can!)
- Make copies of every document. Even ones you think you won't need.
- Go early in the morning. Lines are shorter and people are less stressed.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help. Other *auxiliares*, Facebook groups, and even your school's staff can be great resources.
- And most of all, accept that some things will take longer than expected. It's just part of the experience!



Beyond the practical side, settling in also means building a social life. How did you start meeting people and making friends here?

The *auxiliar* community is incredibly welcoming, so I met a lot of people through orientation and group chats. I also made friends through language exchanges, coworkers at my school, and other expats I met while exploring the city.

It helps that Madrid has such a social culture. There's always something happening, which I loveeee!



What apps, groups, or communities helped you connect more easily?

WhatsApp groups for *auxiliares* were a total lifesaver, as they made it so easy to meet people right away. Going to language exchanges and social events has helped me connect with others who are also new to the city. Facebook groups, especially the *auxiliares* ones and expat communities, have been incredibly helpful for everything from finding events to getting advice. Those spaces really made the transition to Madrid feel a lot less overwhelming.

So you found the place and you met the people. After all this settling in process, what is something you would've appreciated knowing beforehand?

That it's okay not to have everything figured out right away. I thought I needed a perfect plan before I arrived, but so much of this experience unfolds naturally. Madrid is a city where things eventually fall into place. You just have to give yourself time to adjust.

Now that you're feeling more settled in Madrid, let's talk about what's coming next: the holiday season. How are you feeling about spending Christmas away from home this year?

A mix of excitement and something new. It's my first cold Christmas, which already feels super magical, and also my first one away from my family. Family is such a huge part of how I normally celebrate, so I'm finding little ways to stay connected with them while embracing this new chapter and creating fresh traditions here in Spain.



Do you already have plans for how you'll celebrate Christmas? Going back home? Staying in Madrid? Traveling across Europe?

This year, I'll be spending Christmas in London with my partner, surrounded by his relatives. After that, we might head to Germany just before New Year to visit some relatives on my side of the family. Two celebrations, two beautiful cities, and a little taste of home from each.

Back in Australia, Christmas falls right in the middle of summer! How different does it feel to celebrate it here in Spain's winter?

Completely different, but in the best way! Back home, Christmas means beaches, barbecues, and trying not to melt in the heat. Here, it's scarves, coats, hot drinks, and culturally rich traditions. It feels more like the Christmas movies I grew up watching.

On the flip side, what traditions from your country do you miss the most during this time of year?

I miss spending the day outside, having lunch on the patio, and ending the night with a swim. And of course, being with my family. The festive season in Australia is loud, sunny, and chaotic, but in the most comforting way.

I imagine there are some differences between Spanish Christmas traditions and those back home. What has stood out to you the most?

One of the things I love most about Christmas in Spain is that the celebrations don't end on December 25th - they continue all the way until Three Kings' Day on January 6th. Everything has such a warm, festive charm, and it actually reminds me a lot of my own heritage. My mum is from Honduras and growing up I saw how Latin American holiday traditions share many similarities with Spanish ones. Celebrating here has made me feel connected to both cultures at the same time, which makes the season feel even more special.

Have you discovered any Spanish customs that you'd like to adopt into your own celebrations in the future?

Christmas in Australia is very casual and laid-back, so one thing I really love about Christmas in Spain is the sense of community, celebration and rich tradition. The streets are beautifully decorated, there are parades, and special days when the city lights turn on and everyone comes together to celebrate.



Finally, what message would you share with other language assistants who are also spending the holidays away from home this year?

Give yourself grace. It's normal to feel homesick, but it's also a chance to create new memories and traditions. Surround yourself with people who make you feel at home, even if they're not family. Make it your home away from home. And remember, you're living an experience that you'll look back on and be proud of.



Did you know... ?

In Spain, the gift-giver at Christmas isn't Santa

In Cataluña, children look after a log called the *Tió de Nadal*, which they “feed” in December and beat on Christmas Eve so it spews out sweets and little gifts.

In País Vasco and Navarra, it's the *Olentzero* (and in some towns his friend *Mari Domingi*) who brings the presents: a coal miner known for his big belly, a taste for drinking, and coal stains on his face.

And that's not all! Spain has even more regional gift-bringers: *L'Anguleru* in Asturias, the *Apalpador* in Galicia, and the *Esteru* in Cantabria. Each region has its own way of keeping the Christmas spirit alive.

However, what they all have in common is the *Reyes Magos*.

The Ritual: “The Light You Carry”

A simple ritual to slow down, breathe, and feel more connected this Christmas.

Let's be real: Christmas abroad can feel like a mix of things. Cozy and magical one moment, homesick and chaotic the next. Whether you're counting down the days until vacation or trying to soak in every bit of Spanish holiday cheer, taking just a few minutes for yourself can help you feel more grounded and connected.

This easy little ritual is all about pausing, checking in with yourself, and remembering what you bring to the people and spaces around you. No pressure, no perfection; just a quiet moment to reflect, wherever you are.

What You'll Need:

- A candle or small light (your phone flashlight works too!)
- A quiet-ish corner
- Pen and paper (if you feel like writing)

Step 1: Just Breathe

Sit down somewhere cozy: on your bed, by a window, or even on the floor. Let yourself get comfortable. Take a few slow, deep breaths. Inhale gently through your nose and exhale slowly through your mouth. Let your shoulders relax. No need to rush. This moment is just for you.

Step 2: Light It Up

Turn on your light or light your candle and just watch the glow for a moment. Ask yourself: What light do I bring into the world? It could be your sense of humor, your patience, your way of making people feel seen. Let whatever comes to mind be enough.





Step 3: Think of Silence

Close your eyes for a moment and just listen. Notice the quiet, whether it's complete silence or soft sounds around you. Let that stillness wrap around you like a blanket. Ask yourself: Where can I find more moments like this in my day? Silence doesn't have to be empty; it can be where you hear yourself best.

Step 4: Let It Settle

When you're ready, gently blow out your candle or switch off your light. Watch the flame fade or the glow disappear, as if quietly exhaling. Take one final deep breath, slow and steady, and notice what's shifted. That's it. Nothing fancy. Just a few minutes of calm, connection, and reflection.

Turning Off the Light, Keeping the Warmth

This time of year doesn't have to be about perfect gifts. What really counts is showing up or simply being there (especially when you're far from home).

It's about sharing a little light in your own way, whether that's a smile, a kind word, or just your presence. So, take a breath, notice how you're feeling, and give yourself permission to just be. That's more than enough, seriously!

The light you carry doesn't have to be flashy or perfect. It's the little things you do every day, like being kind to others, being pleasant, or simply being yourself that really matter and make this season feel a bit brighter.

01

Which of these is a typical holiday treat?

- A) Roscón
- B) Donuts
- C) Magdalenas

02

How many grapes are eaten on Nochevieja (New Year's Eve)?

- A) 10
- B) 12
- C) 24

03

Who brings the students their gifts?

- A) Christkindl
- B) Los Reyes Magos
- C) Ratoncito Pérez

04

Which is a unique holiday tradition in Spain?

- A) Watching for shooting stars (*las estrellitas*)
- B) Eating marshmallows (*las nubes*)
- C) The lottery (*el Gordo*)

06

What are the names of the Reyes Magos?

- A) Melchor, Gaspar, Baltasar
- B) Juan, Pablo, Sergio
- C) Antón, Felipe, Mateo

05

Which one is not a Spanish holiday season celebration?

- A) Nochebuena
- B) Boxing Day
- C) Nochevieja

Answers

Are You a Local Yet? (1) A, (2) B, (3) B, (4) C, (5) B, (6) A
Connections
1. Christmas food: Turrón, Roscón, jamón, Marisco - 2. Decorations: Lucas, Arbol, Adornos, Espumillón - 3. Gift-givers in Spain: Reyes Magos, Tío Nadal, Olentzero, Papa Noel - 4. Winter holiday events: Lotería, Cabaigata

Connections

CREATE GROUPS OF FOUR:

12 Uvas

Marisco

Roscón

Cabalgata

Turrón

Luces

Adornos

Árbol

Lotería

Espumillón

Jamón

Reyes Magos

Tió Nadal

Olentzero

Papá Noel

Inocentes

Example: Colors :

Red

Yellow

Crimson

Teal

Christmas food :

Decorations :

Gift-givers in Spain :

Winter holiday events :

Which of the Three Wise Men are you?

Answer honestly (or dramatically, like Gaspar) and find out which one you would be!

01 Your ideal plan for a Sunday:

- Coffee, blanket, and a movie. → 3 pts
- Improvise a plan, whatever comes up. → 2 pts
- Brunch, photos, and social media. → 1 pt

02 Your suitcase before a trip:

- Folded, ready, and double-checked. → 3 pts
- I've thrown in three things that don't match. → 2 pts
- It's been half open for three days. → 1 pt

03 In a group, you are...

- The one who organizes everything. → 3 pts
- The one who always gets lost. → 2 pts
- The life and soul of the party. → 1 pt

04 At school or work, you were...

- Responsible, reliable. Never without a pen. → 3 pts
- Creative. Always doing things my way. → 2 pts
- Popular. Nailing it without trying. → 1 pt

05 If you had to choose a gift for someone:

- Something useful and meaningful. → 3 pts
- Something weird but with a story behind it. → 2 pts
- Something that makes them laugh. → 1 pt

06 Which social network do you use the most?

- Facebook (and proud of it). → 3 pts
- TikTok, but only to watch. → 2 pts
- Instagram, TikTok, BeReal, everything. → 1 pt

07 Your most "you" phrase?

- "Don't worry, I've got it under control." → 3 pts
- "Well, we'll just improvise." → 2 pts
- "If there's no video, it didn't happen." → 1 pt

08 When facing an unexpected challenge, you...

- When facing an unexpected challenge, you... → 3 pts
- Wing it with creativity and hope for the best. → 2 pts
- Turn it into a story everyone will laugh about later. → 1 pt

20-24 pts: MELCHOR

The leader of the group, the one who always has a plan B (and C). People trust you to follow through on what you say you'll do. Boomer vibes, in the best possible way.

14-19 pts: GASPAR

The misunderstood one, the black sheep, the one who always survives even when nothing goes as planned. You don't follow the map, but you get there.

8-13 pts: BALTASAR

You're everyone's favorite. Total Gen Z energy. Always up for anything, fun, creative, and sociable. If there's a party, you're there. We can't help but love you.

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