



A Kingdom and its History

Navarra is an ancient and independent kingdom that has been at the crossroads of history for more than 1,000 years. Located in the foothills of the Pyrenees between France and Spain, Navarra shares the history of both countries, while still retaining its unique character as part of Spain.

More than 1,000 years ago when most of Spain was conquered by the Moors, Navarra became the frontier between Islam and Christianity. Charlemagne fought here, and during the Middle Ages, Navarra and its capital, Pamplona, became important stops on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela: along with Canterbury, one of the great pilgrimage sites in Europe. This steady traffic of religious visitors from all over Europe gave Navarra exposure to many different cultures and traditions, including contact with winemakers in the major wine regions of France.

The Kingdom has played a role in history that is far larger than its geographic size. Princess Berenice of Navarra was the wife of the legendary Richard the Lionheart, King of England; while King Henri of Navarra became King Henri IV of France. And it was King John II of Navarra who arranged the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon to Isabella of Castille, a romance that not only succeeded, but also created the political union that became modern Spain.

The capital of Navarra is Pamplona, famous today for its festival of San Fermin and the running of the bulls. San Fermin is the social expression of a local culture. The city comes alive with hundreds of thousands of people, all celebrating a history and shared experience that goes back more than a thousand years. And while the early morning running of the bulls is the signature event of the San Fermin Festival, it lasts only a few minutes. Far more time is spent in parks, plazas, and streets of Pamplona, singing the traditional songs of Navarra.

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