

Practical Guide for foreign researchers in the Valencia Region

General Information



The Valencia Region occupies a privileged **position** on the western Mediterranean seaboard, along the central coastline of the Iberian Peninsula, which makes it possible to enjoy a mild and pleasant **climate** most of the year. With an area of 23,255 km² and over 500 km of coastline, the Valencia Region borders to the north with Catalonia and to the south with Murcia, while its long western border is shared with Castile-La Mancha and Aragon.

The Valencia Region is divided into three provinces: Alicante, Castellón and Valencia, while the capital of the Region, Valencia, is located in Valencia province. The 542 municipalities of the Region have a population of around 5 million inhabitants. The Generalitat Valenciana is the regional government of this Autonomous Region and, in accordance with its Statute of Autonomy, the two official languages are Valencian and Spanish.

Environment and natural spaces

Despite its small size, the Valencia Region is a land of deep contrasts, which houses a notable variety of ecosystems with unique plant communities, endemic species of fauna and flora, large concentrations of birds and striking, unique landscapes. In fact, its geographic diversity affords visitors the possibility of admiring a wide range of landscapes: from leafy forests and valleys crossed by rivers to steep cliffs and long beaches.

The Blue Flag of the EU on the **beaches** of the Region is the symbol of their quality and safety, a guarantee of the good condition of the sea and an effective *Environmental management system* inviting beachgoers to enjoy the warm waters of the Mediterranean.

However, the Valencia Region not only offers magnificent beaches, but also impressive natural spaces which entice visitors to spend a wonderful day in contact with nature. The **Natural Parks** of the Valencia Region are dynamic, live domains. The Region has 22 natural parks which, in total, account for a total of 170,000 protected hectares. The foregoing has made the Valencia Region one of the main touristic destinations of Mediterranean Europe.

Economy and communications

As far as **economy** is concerned, the Valencia Region's agricultural wealth provides 14.8% of all Spanish agri-food exports, making it the third most productive Region in the country. Citrus fruits are the major players and have enabled the development of an important juice industry. Machinery and electric equipment as well as chemical and pharmaceutical products are also exported around the world. On the other hand, the commercial ports of the cities of Valencia and Alicante are major hubs of outgoing and incoming trade, together with the ports of Sagunto and Gandía.

The so-called **traditional industries**, such as the footwear, textile and toy industries in Alicante province, the furniture industry in Valencia province and the ceramic industry in Castellón province, also have a strong economic impact. Also noteworthy is the Ford car factory in Almussafes, the food industry, mainly concentrated in Alzira, and the iron and steel industry that is located in the surroundings of Sagunto. Furthermore, Valencia city's rising fame as a city of design has carried the Region's name far beyond national borders.

On the other hand, the service sector provides the main income for the Region. Both Alicante and Valencia have developed a great capacity and initiative in the organisation and development of international events and trade fairs.

In addition, an excellent **communications network** provides easy access to the Valencia Region and comfortable travelling throughout the territory. By road, the AP-7 motorway, the N-340 road, the A-23 Valencia-Zaragoza dual carriageway and the Valencia-Madrid and Valencia-Alicante dual carriageways cross the entire Region. While the road enables the discovery of much of the Valencian geography, as it runs through town after town, the motorways and dual carriageways provide faster, more comfortable travelling, while linking up with other points of the Spanish geography.

Our Region also provides a comprehensive offer regarding rail travel, especially since the arrival of the high-speed train (AVE) to Valencia and Alicante from Madrid.

Moreover, the Valencia Region is perfectly communicated on an international level thanks to its two main **air-**

ports: the **Valencia airport** (in Manises) and **Alicante-Elche airport** (in Altet), which play a prominent role during the summer months and are key elements of economic and tourist development, not only of the respective cities, but of the entire Valencia Region. Furthermore, Castellón airport has also gained traction in recent years, and now offers travellers regular flights to seven European destinations. As far as passenger sea transport is concerned, the Valencia Region has three **ports:** **Valencia**, **Alicante** and Dénia.

Culture and leisure

The Valencia Region offers a rich **gastronomy**, based on natural products from the fertile inland and coastal lands. Of the gastronomic specialties, the paella is perhaps the dish most widely identified with Valencian cuisine. However, in addition to the paella, there are a large variety of rice (*arroz*) dishes to be found, such as *arroz a banda*, *arroz con costra*, *arroz caldoso* or *arroz negro*, the last so-called black rice to be cooked in squid ink. Seafoods and fish reign in the coastal cuisine, with dishes like the *fideuà*, tasty appetisers, together with the season's vegetables and produce in the inland specialities, such as the Valencian *hervido* or dish of boiled vegetables, the season's salads and the *esgarraet*.

The mountain towns and villages complete this overview with their meat and sausage dishes. Regarding beverages, the wines featuring the protected designation of origin of Utiel-Requena, Valencia and Alicante are highly recommended, together with those of the Castellón wine-growing area. The confectionery is famous for its sweet flavour, and the fruits for their great quality.

Over 600 **popular fiestas or festivals** are held in the Valencia Region every year, many of which have been declared Fiestas of National or International Tourist Interest. Good examples of these are the fiestas of the Magdalena in Castellón, or the *Hogueras* (bonfires) of San Juan in Alicante. On the other hand, the *Fallas* of Valencia, held from the 12th to the 19th of March, are the fiesta par excellence of the Region. Recognised worldwide, they have been declared a Fiesta of International Tourist Interest. Fire and humour are the protagonists of the *Fallas*, involving cardboard monuments featuring *ninots* (huge doll-like figures) that satirise prominent politicians and celebrities. On the last day of the celebrations, on St Joseph's day, the *Fallas* are set alight along with spectacular firework displays.

The Region's own festivity is on the 9th of October. Celebrations take place throughout the entire Valencia Region and they commemorate the conquest of Valencia by king Jaume I. Processions are held and most towns and cities pay tribute to the founder of the Kingdom of Valencia.

The Valencia Region also has over 200 museums, which offer visitors the opportunity to acquaint themselves in depth with our culture and historical-artistic heritage. In turn, the City of the Arts and Sciences, in Valencia city, is a point of reference and a benchmark in the culture and leisure offerings of the 21st century. In addition, numerous activities enliven the cultural life of the Valencia Region all year round.

In past years, the Valencia Region has hosted important international sports events such as the America's Cup and the Formula One European Grand Prix in Valencia or the Volvo Ocean race in Alicante, among others.

To learn more or to obtain further practical information regarding the cultural life of the Valencia Region, visitors can also read the [Practical information of interest](#) section of this Guide, where a great number of interesting references can be found. Moreover, the [tourist information offices](#), which can be found throughout the entire region, will also gladly attend to visitors personally, providing all types of general information and helping to choose between the numerous available options in regard to socio-cultural, leisure and free time activities.