**Spain's relief**

Spain occupies most of the Iberian Peninsula, the Balearic and Canary archipelagos, the cities of Ceuta and Melilla and several islands off the North African coast. Spain is one of the largest countries in Europe, with an area of 505,000 km2 . It is also one of the highest countries. Its average altitude of 660 m is double the European average.

The Iberian Peninsula is dominated by a large central plateau. There are eleven mountain ranges in   
peninsular Spain.

**Rivers**

Spanish rivers are generally short with small, irregular flows. Their flows mainly depend on rainfall, and they increase in spring when the snow melts.

* The rivers which flow into the Cantabrian Sea are short and steep. Their flow is large because they run through mountains with abundant rainfall.
* The rivers which flow into the Atlantic Ocean have large flows. Their tributaries are in mountains with abundant rainfall.
* Many Mediterranean rivers are short with small flows because there is little rainfall. However, the River Ebro is the longest river in Spain and has the largest flow.   
  Many of its tributaries begin in the Pyrenees, where there is abundant rainfall.
* There are very few rivers in the Balearic and Canary Islands.

**Climate**

Spain has a temperate climate. However, its climate and landscapes vary from one region to another.   
There are three main types:

* The Mediterranean climate is found in the Balearic Islands, and in the south and east of the   
  peninsula. It is also found in some inland areas.   
  There is little rainfall and it is irregular.   
  Temperatures vary:

- On the coast, temperatures are mild because of the influence of the sea.

- On the central plateau, temperatures are very hot or very cold.

* The Atlantic climate is found in the north and north-west of the peninsula. Atlantic winds influence   
  the climate. Temperatures are mild, and there is rainfall throughout the year.
* The subtropical climate is found in the Canary Islands. The climate is stable throughout the year.

In all of these regions, the climate and vegetation change in mountain areas as altitude increases.