

# Andorra and Llívia

Everyone has heard of Andorra, because of its skiing and tax free status, and it is worth a visit just for the shopping, where else in Europe can you buy a litre of Whiskey for a fiver. Just make sure you check the allowances, as both the French and Spanish Customs have mobile flying squads, and have been known to check cars up to 10Km from the boarder and the fines can be very heavy.



However, if you make the effort to escape the commercialism, you'll find this little country is full of surprises, and very unique. For example it is actually ruled by The President of France, and the Bishop of Urgell (in Spain) on alternative years. My personal favourite, is that Andorra actually declared war on Germany during World

War1, and better still technically remained at war with Germany until 1958, as they were missed out of the Treaty of Versailles. And they even have an International Cricket team! In cultural terms the country is pure Catalan, something which they are very proud of. Andorra's rich cultural heritage is made up of beautiful Romanesque churches, houses bearing witness to former ways of life, cultural museums and traditions that date back 1000's of years . Andorra is home to folk dances like the contrapas and marratxa which survive in the parish of Sant Julià de Lòria. Also if you like Jazz, the Escaldes-Engordany International Jazz festival is worth a visit, its an important event in Andorra's cultural life. Great jazz musicians such as Miles Davis, BB King and Fats Domino have performed at the event. Andorra is really worth exploring !!!

## Llívia

This place should logically not exist, but it does! An enclave of Spain, totally surrounded by France. In 1659, the Treaty of the Pyrenees ceded the comarques of Roussillon, Conflent, Capcir, Vallespir & northern Cerdanya ("Cerdagne") to the French crown. Llívia did not become part of the French kingdom as the treaty stipulated that only villages were to be ceded to France, and Llívia was considered a city and not a village It's a grain of Spanish sand within France but more importantly it also houses The Esteve Pharmacy, founded at the beginning of the 15th century, it is one of the oldest pharmacies in Europe and keeps a collection of albarellos from the 16th and 17th centuries, glass from the 19th century, Renaissance boxes with portraits of saints and personages, a library, laboratory instruments, antique drugs and preparations, old prescription books, and a Baroque "cordialer" cupboard made by Josep Sunyer during the period when the Esteve family managed the pharmacy for up to seven generations. It is one of the most important collections of its kind in Europe.