



OSAC Country Security Report

Spain

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This report is intended to supplement the U.S. Department of State Spain Travel Advisory and [Spain Country Information Page](#).

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OSAC Country Chapter(s)

The OSAC Country Chapter in Spain is active. Contact the Spain Country Chapter at SpainOSAC@state.gov.

Contact [OSAC's Europe team](#) with any questions.

Spain Travel Advisory

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#) at the date of this report's publication assesses that travelers should exercise increased caution due to terrorism and civil unrest.

Crime

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Barcelona and Madrid as being **MEDIUM**-threat locations for crime directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Crime "C" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Spain, but there has been an increase in both street and residential crime in recent years.

Spain is generally a safe destination for visitors. While not prevalent, violent crimes, including robberies, have been reported, and some instances have required the victim to seek medical attention. More often, foreigners are the targets of choice for pickpockets and thieves who operate in hotel lobbies, restaurants, public transit systems, airports, at car rental counters, and other areas tourists frequent.

Crime rates in Barcelona returned to and, in many cases, exceeded pre-pandemic levels. Pickpocketing and vehicle break-ins and cases of "highway pirates", who target foreign-registered and rental cars, was also on the rise. Interconnected with crime, Spain continues to serve as a transit and destination country for forced labor, including pickpocketing and forced begging.

The year 2024 ended with an increase in the number of rapes and homicides committed in Spain compared to 2023, according to the crime report released the Spanish Ministry of the Interior. However, the number of crimes committed overall has slightly decreased by 0.3% compared to 2023. Additionally, the upward trend of other crimes, such as cyber fraud, has reversed, dropping from 427,448 in 2023 to 414,133—a 3.1% decrease. This criminal offense represents 88.9% of all cybercrimes and 16.9% of all crime. By regions, violent robberies in Aragón place this region at the top of the list of territories where crime has grown the most.

The provisional data from Spain's annual crime report (as of February 2025) highlights a 5.7% increase in sexual freedom offenses, although it notes that the growth is moderate compared to the trend of previous years, which had been 15%. There is an increase in recorded drug trafficking offenses (2.4%) with 500 more cases than the previous year. In 2024, 348 murders were recorded, 15 more deaths than the previous year, representing a 4.5% increase. The data on kidnappings, which is the crime that has decreased the most, shows almost a 14% reduction, dropping from 122 cases to 105. Property crimes, which include everything from robberies with or without violence, thefts, or vehicle thefts (and which constitute almost half of the total recorded) have decreased by 2.7%; specifically, those committed with violence have decreased by 6.4%, and in general, non-violent home burglaries have fallen by 4.3%.

Credit-card skimming and cloning are a concern for travelers in Spain. Be aware of skimming devices placed on ATMs, take actions to protect card PINs, and closely monitor bank statements for anomalies.

Residential burglaries primarily occur when security vulnerabilities exist and/or when residents do not implement sound residential security practices. Reports indicate thefts usually occur when occupants are away for an extended period; thieves usually gain access through doors or other entry points left unlocked.

Cases of sexual assault and abuse have increased across Spain. The U.S. Mission in Spain has received numerous reports of sexual assaults affecting U.S. citizens, especially younger travelers, students, and exchange teachers. Authorities warn of the availability of so-called "date-rape" drugs and other drugs, including GHB and liquid ecstasy. Navigating the Spanish criminal justice system after surviving a sexual assault has been difficult for many U.S. citizen victims, who report feeling judged and re-victimized throughout the very lengthy process.

Although it is not required, many U.S. citizen victims of sexual assault in Spain have found it helpful to hire a local attorney to be their advocate and defend their rights during any judicial process or use the help of the local Office of Victim's Assistance. Information about the local victim's assistance program is given out at the police station when the report is filed.

There have been numerous reports alleging sexual assaults against U.S. citizen students by a representative of a tour operator based in Seville, Spain. Of note, this individual was apprehended by local authorities and recently sentenced. Conduct research online to determine who owns and operates tour companies to make informed choices.

Many sexual assaults occur at night or during the early morning hours. In most cases, assailants take advantage of alcohol or drugs to make victims more vulnerable.

Pickpocketing and other minor crimes, such as theft, are very common in Spain including instances where the victim is purposefully distracted to facilitate the theft. Street crimes against U.S. citizens usually occur in tourist areas, including airports, train stations, and both urban and beach destinations. Thieves have stolen baggage while visitors check in/out of their hotels, stolen luggage during check-in at the airport and while picking up or dropping off a rental car, or while hailing a taxi. Visitors who have left valuables in vehicles have also been targeted.

Criminals use distractions (e.g., asking for directions, dropping coins/keys and asking for assistance, or "inadvertently" spilling something on the victim and offering to clean it up) to allow a counterpart to pick a victim's pocket, or they take advantage of unsuspecting tourists who hang a purse/backpack on the back of a chair or place their cellphones on a table when at a restaurant. They also steal from people who place their belongings on a bench beside them.

Distraction continues to be a common tactic used by highway robbers in Spain. Thieves acting as "good Samaritans" will flag down their victim and indicate there is a problem with the

victim's vehicle. While one of the assailants distracts the victim's attention, an unseen accomplice robs valuables from the victim's vehicle.

Upon arrival at the airport, train station, bus station, hotel, or other areas with large crowds, keep a close eye on your personal belongings. There have also been reports of petty crime through the airport in Barcelona, including areas beyond security checkpoints. Most recently an individual's carry-on luggage was stolen while the traveler briefly looked away to obtain money from an ATM.

Keep track of your passport at all times, including on flights and other modes of transportation. There have been reports of passports being stolen on planes enroute to Spain. Do not leave bags unattended. Keep them in sight and avoid placing passports, cash, cell phones, or other valuables in the outer pockets of backpacks or purses on tables or floors, grounds in public places. Do not leave bags slung over the backs of chairs, on hotel or store counters, on top of your suitcase or travel bag, or out of your physical control in hotel lobbies, car rental locations, train stations, restaurants, and other public places. Avoid carrying your passport unless needed for travel, especially in tourist areas. Instead, carry a photocopy and photo of your passport's biographical information page and consider leaving your passport in a secure location, such as a hotel safe. Your passport will be required to check in into any hotel in Spain and may be required for trains or tourist sites.

U.S. citizen victims of sexual assault or other violent crimes are encouraged to report crimes to the local emergency services at **112** and contact the [U.S. Embassy, Consulate, or consular agency for assistance](#). Some crimes may be reported online at Dirección General de la Policía - Oficina Virtual de Denuncias. Note that local authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting crime.

Kidnapping Threat

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Kidnapping "K" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Spain.

Terrorism

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Barcelona and Madrid as being **MEDIUM**-threat locations for terrorism directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has included a Terrorism "T" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Spain, indicating that terrorist attacks have occurred and/or specific threats against civilians, groups, or other targets may exist.

Credible information indicates terrorist groups continue to plot potential attacks in Europe, including Spain. Terrorists may attack with little or no warning, targeting tourist locations, transportation hubs, markets/shopping malls, local government facilities, hotels, clubs, restaurants, places of worship, parks, major sporting and cultural events, educational

institutions, airports, and other public areas. Maintain heightened situational awareness and incorporate good personal security practices into your daily activity, including vigilance while in public places. Spain's open borders with its Western European neighbors allow the possibility for terrorists to enter and exit the country anonymously. Additionally, Spain's enclaves in Melilla and Ceuta on the North African coast and proximate location of the Canary Islands allow for some untracked entry into Spain from the African continent.

Spain maintains a national terrorism alert level consisting of five levels: 1 – low; 2 – moderate; 3 – medium; 4 – high; and 5 – very high. Spain has maintained a level 4 alert since June 2015 when Islamist militants launched attacks in Paris. In October 2023, Spain temporarily increased its national security within that level to 4+, after a terrorist attack in Brussel that killed two Swedish football fans and an ISIS-claimed attack, which killed a French school teacher in Paris. The increase in terror alert level included the strengthening security measures at particularly sensitive locations such as foreign embassies, museums, airports, sports stadiums, public buildings, and transportation hubs as well as events, especially those of religious nature. An increase in terror alert also translates to an increase in counterterrorism efforts. At the time of this publication, Spain's national security level is at a 4.

Events occurring elsewhere in the world have also been used by Islamist extremists to try to galvanize individuals across Europe, including in Spain. Since the October 7, 2023 Hamas terrorist attack in Israel and Israel's subsequent response, there have been increased calls by terrorist organizations like ISIS and al-Qa'ida for individuals to attack targets in Europe.

While Spain has not experienced the rate of terrorist attacks as some of its neighboring European countries (last major attack occurred in 2017 in Barcelona), the threat of lone actors and self-radicalized cells remain. Across Europe, younger people, who are typically unknown to authorities, are becoming more susceptible to online radicalization. Much of the terrorism threat comes from radicalized lone-actor perpetrators, who could attack using knives, vehicle ramming, guns, incendiary devices, and other methods that do not require specialized knowledge, access, or training. Preventing such offenses is a special challenge, since these attacks are committed on short notice, involving only a short planning phase and little organizational effort, and often without relying on any network or communication structures.

Lone-actor perpetrators pose a serious risk due to their ability to remain undetected, at times, until operational and their willingness to attack civilian and soft targets, such as restaurants, markets/shopping malls, hotels, clubs, and similar locations. There also remains a potential for terrorist attacks against public transportation systems and other tourism infrastructure. Spanish authorities continue to investigate extremist groups, deport or arrest individuals considered dangerous, and conduct raids on suspected groups throughout the country.

According to the Spanish Ministry of Interior figures, in 2024, Spain conducted a total of 53 counterterrorism operations (49 in Spain, 4 in other countries) and arrested 88 detainees (81 in Spain, 7 in other countries); the majority of arrests were for jihadist-linked terrorism.

Political Violence and Civil Unrest

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Barcelona and Madrid as being **LOW**-threat locations for political violence directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has included a Civil Unrest “U” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Spain, indicating that demonstrations, protests, and/or strikes occur frequently, and/or that local law enforcement may have limited ability to respond adequately. Civil unrest can develop quickly without prior notice, often interrupting logistics and services. Avoid demonstration activity, as even those planned to remain peaceful have the potential to turn violent.

Elections/Political Stability

The political system in Spain is a parliamentary monarchy, with the ruling monarch serving as the official head of state and the prime minister as head of government.

Executive power is exercised by the Spanish government consisting of the prime minister, a deputy or deputies, and a Council of Ministers, which form the Cabinet. The prime minister has the power to appoint and fire ministers to and from the Cabinet. There is also a Council of State that exists as a consultative body giving non-binding opinions to the Spanish government.

The national parliament (Cortes Generales) consists of two chambers: the upper house, the Senate, comprises 208 elected officials and 57 appointed by regional legislatures; while the lower house, called the Congress of Deputies, has 350 members elected by the public.

Spain held early parliamentary elections in July 2023 following the ruling party’s defeat in several regional and local elections in May. Spain’s next parliamentary elections are expected to be held in 2027 to elect all 350 seats in the Congress of Deputies.

The Spanish judiciary is independent of the Spain government and parliament, composed of different courts, with the Supreme Court (Tribunal Supremo) the highest-ranking court.

Protests & Demonstrations

Public demonstrations occur often in Spain and are normally peaceful. Demonstrations require formal petition to the local government and approval. Police generally control large demonstrations well. Unannounced demonstrations also occur, which have resulted in clashes with the security forces. General strikes can cause disruptions to public transportation, a temporary shutdown in public services, and large street protests. These events typically have the greatest effect on public transportation and the industrial sectors, making travel within areas near the protests difficult.

Due to recent events in Israel and with ongoing tensions in the Middle East, several pro-Palestinian protests have been registered and conducted in Madrid, as well as across major

cities in Spain. Anti-U.S. sentiment is limited but has been directed at both Israeli and United States leadership.

In 2024, Spanish farmers demonstrated by riding their tractors on major roads and thoroughfares, impacting road access to Madrid and other big cities, as well as movement within the cities. In February, police clashed with a group of farmers and truck drivers in Madrid, as they tried to access a main road in a bid to block it. Similar protests have taken place in multiple European cities, with farmers and truckers demonstrating against perceived red tape and excessive taxes. These protests are expected to continue in 2025.

In November 2023, several thousand people gathered in front of the Spain's Socialist Party headquarters in Madrid to protest the negotiations between Spain's then acting government and Catalan separatist parties over a possible amnesty for thousands involved in Catalonia's independence movement. The acting government was in negotiation with them to help form a new government in exchange for amnesty. In October 2023, about 50,000 people reportedly demonstrated in Barcelona against the same amnesty deal.

While most demonstrations are peaceful, there is a risk of unrest or violence. Travelers should avoid demonstrations due to their unpredictability and potential for violence.

Anti-U.S./Anti-Western Sentiment

While there is no widespread anti-U.S. sentiment in Spain, the global call for self-radicalization, whether disseminated on extremist forums or via social media, continues.

Anti-U.S. sentiment and threats were more prevalent in fall 2024 and directly related to U.S. elections that occurred in November. Specifically, mass school shooting threats were made via social media against Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM). This University hosts a multitude of foreign students, to include many from the University of California. Spanish authorities quickly neutralized the individual, who was an Emotionally Disturbed Person (EDP). Of note, in the history of Spain there has never been a school shooting.

Law Enforcement

A variety of professional law enforcement organizations operate in Spain. The Civil Guard (Guardia Civil – GC) is an 80,000-strong national police force with broad policing responsibilities, including coverage of rural areas. The Spanish National Police (SNP) is an 85,000-strong national police force with broad policing responsibilities, mainly in urban areas with a population of more than 20,000.

Spain also has several autonomous regions with their own regional police forces: Ertzaintza in the Basque Country; Mossos d'Esquadra in Catalonia; Policia Foral (Foruzaingoa) in Navarre; Special Security Brigades for the Autonomous Community of Madrid (BESCAM) in Madrid; and the Policia Canaria in the Canary Islands.

At the local level, many cities have municipal police called Policia Municipal, Policia Local, or Guardia Urbana. Local police, sometimes dressed in plain clothes, can require you to produce identification to establish your identity upon request and detain you for further questioning. Carry a photocopy of your passport as proof of your identity. If you are stopped by someone who claims to be a plainclothes police officer, respectfully ask to see their law enforcement identification.

Police Response

Spanish authorities are professional and generally available to provide services commensurate with those in other Western European countries.

The emergency line in Spain for police, fire, and medical services is **112**. In Madrid, and in most metropolitan areas of Spain, English speakers should be available.

To file a complaint via telephone, call the Spanish National Police and reach a dedicated English speaker at (34) 90-210-2112. This service is available every day from 0900-2100.

If you are arrested or detained, ask police to notify the U.S. Embassy Madrid or U.S. Consulate General Barcelona immediately.

Travelers with Special Considerations

For [specific traveler concerns](#) in Spain, review the local laws and circumstances on the Department of State's Country Information Page.

- [Women Travelers](#)
- [LGB Travelers](#)
- [Travelers with Disabilities](#)
- [Student Travelers](#)
- [Faith-Based Travelers](#)

Rule of Law, Arbitrary Detention, Official Harassment, Corruption, & Transparency

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Risk of Wrongful Detention “D” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Spain.

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention and provide for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of his or her arrest or detention in court. The government generally observes these requirements.

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented the law effectively. Prosecutions and convictions for corruption are rare compared to the complaints filed, mainly because of the extensive system of legal appeals.

Cybersecurity

Financial scams are prevalent in Spain. Beware of anyone asking for money, particularly people who establish a “romantic” relationship online or anyone who claims the Spanish authorities are asking them for money. Scams are often initiated through Internet postings/profiles or by unsolicited emails and letters. Scammers almost always pose as U.S. citizens who have no one else to turn to for help. Common scams include: people claiming to be U.S. military personnel; romance/online dating; money transfers; grandparent/relative targeting; free trip/luggage; lotteries; inheritance notices; and work permits/job offers. These types of scams prey on emotions and the desire to assist others in need. The recipient of such a message should not send money and should independently confirm and verify the situation involving the relative or acquaintance.

Housing-related scams and illegal sublets are also employed by unscrupulous actors targeting foreigners, including students. Scammers may use another person's property and claim it as their own. Individuals seeking long-term lodging should conduct thorough due diligence before making any transaction and use only vetted, well-known, websites and services to find housing. Additionally, those seeking housing should not sign a contract/lease without the homeowner/landlord present and ensure the homeowner/landlord signs the contract/lease.

Import/Export Restrictions

There are no restrictions on satellite phones in Spain.

Always carry prescription medication in original packaging, along with your doctor's prescription. Check with the Spain Medication Agency to ensure the medication is legal in Spain.

Spanish regulations do not permit the international shipment of medication. Do not ship medication from the United States to Spain. Spanish customs authorities will reject and return to the shipper medication mailed from the United States. This may cause a significant delay in receiving your medications. The U.S. Embassy cannot help you retrieve medications stopped by Spanish customs.

A country-specific listing of items/goods prohibited from being exported to the country or that are otherwise restricted is available from the U.S. International Trade Agency [website](#).

Additional resources and reports can be found in the [OSAC Traveler Toolkit](#).