



Emergency Messages for U.S. Citizens: Madrid (Spain), Stay Alert During the Holiday Season

Crime

Europe > Spain > Barcelona; Europe > Spain > Madrid

12/19/2012

Crime rates in Madrid, Barcelona and other large cities in Spain, as in most major cities around the world, normally spike during the holiday season. Maintain a high level of vigilance and take appropriate steps to enhance your personal security.

NOTE: 112 in Spain is the equivalent of "911" in the U.S. There is always an English-speaker on duty, so don't hesitate to call in case of emergency.

Security tips for when you are out and about in Spain

- In Restaurants - Keep your bags/possessions securely in your lap. Never leave valuables unattended.
- On Public Transportation - Keep your wallet in a snug front pocket; keep your bags/possessions firmly in your hands.
- In Your Vehicle – Keep items out of sight in your vehicle. If anything is visible someone may break the window to grab it.
- Residential Security - If available use a door viewer before opening the door. Do not "hide"

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keys or give them to very young children. Never admit strangers into your residence.

· Be Aware of Scams -

o Snatch and Grab – Thieves attempt to distract you while they remove your valuables. While you are sitting at a table, someone presents you with something to look at (a map or document), covering up your cellular phone, wallet or electronic device. When they pick up their item your item goes with them.

o Vehicle Snatch and Grab – Once your vehicle is stationary, either because you were stopped (parked, stopped at a traffic light) or requested to stop (flagged down, bumped by another vehicle, etc.) you are asked to exit your vehicle; at that point someone else on the passenger side enters your vehicle and steals valuables inside (wallet, electronics, etc.).

o A very popular ruse during the holiday season at shopping centers especially is for thieves to say you have a flat tire. Once you open the door to check, the thief enters your vehicle and takes your valuables.

· Credit Card Skimming - Skimming (a form of high-tech financial fraud) is on the rise worldwide. It relies on sophisticated data-reading electronics to copy the magnetic stripe information from your credit card or debit card. It can capture both your credit card number and your PIN. And it's happening not just at restaurants but at neighborhood gas stations and ATM machines. If you have any reason to suspect that the ATM machine you are about to use may be compromised, don't use the machine. Run your finger along the card slot to see whether anything comes loose or feels mismatched. If so, report it to the bank and find another ATM to handle your transaction.

· In General

o Pay attention to your surroundings, especially when using a cellular phone. Do not allow yourself to become distracted in large crowds.

o Get in the habit of “checking in” to let your friends and/or family, know where you are and

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when to expect you.

- o Lighten your Wallet- Don't carry more than you can afford to lose. Prepare lists of documents and keep them in a safe, easily accessible location so that you can quickly and efficiently report the stolen items (credit cards, passport, carnet).
- o If you're paying cash for your purchases, don't show more cash than is necessary. Split your money into different pockets.
- o Avoid public disputes, confrontations or demonstrations.
- o Do not unnecessarily divulge your home address, phone number, or family information.

New Year's Eve: In Madrid, thousands of people welcome the New Year in front of the century old clock in La Real Casa de Correos (currently the seat for the Presidency of the Community of Madrid) in the Plaza de la Puerta del Sol. The kilometer 0 plaque is on the sidewalk in front of the main entrance.

In Barcelona, Plaza Catalunya is a popular gathering spot for celebrations. The police will increase their presence and establish a security perimeter. During New Year's Eve celebrations, some citizens smash glass bottles on the ground when the clock strikes midnight which may result in injuries. After midnight, traffic will be very heavy as most people move around the city after family dinners to attend larger parties.

Likewise, people gather in central plazas of other cities as well. As thousands gather in a limited open space, the Embassy recommends a general sense of caution against pick-pocketing, crowd-pushing and physical altercations.

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Three Kings: In Barcelona, the parade will be held on Saturday, January 5, 2013, starting at 18:30 in Avda. Rius I Taulet. A detailed itinerary is available at <http://w2.bcn.cat/nadal/en>.

Review your personal security plans; remain aware of your surroundings, including local events; and monitor local news stations for updates. Maintain a high level of vigilance and take appropriate steps to enhance your personal security and follow instructions of local authorities.

We strongly recommend that U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Spain enroll in the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <https://step.state.gov/step>. STEP enrollment gives you the latest security updates, and makes it easier for the U.S.

embassy or nearest U.S. consulate to contact you in an emergency. If you don't have Internet access, enroll directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Regularly monitor the State Department's website at <http://travel.state.gov>, where you can find current Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and the Worldwide Caution. Read the Country Specific Information for Spain at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_4965.html.

For additional information, refer to "A Safe Trip Abroad" on the State Department's website.

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Contact the U.S. embassy or consulate general for up-to-date information on travel restrictions. You can also call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free from within the United States and Canada, or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

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The U.S. Embassy in Madrid is located at Calle Serrano 75, 28006 and is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., (+34) 91-587- 2240, e-mail: askacs@state.gov.

The U.S. Consulate General in Barcelona is located at Paseo Reina Elisenda de Montcada, 23, 08034 and is open Monday through Friday 8:30 am to 5:30 p.m., (+34) 93-280-2227, email: Consularbarcel@state.gov. If you are a U.S. citizen in need of urgent assistance, the emergency number for the U.S. Embassy and Consulate General in Barcelona is (+34) 91-587-2200. Visit us on our website at <http://madrid.usembassy.gov/>.

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