



Spain 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Hotels; Financial Security; Fraud; Rape/Sexual Violence; Drug Trafficking; Burglary; Murder; Terrorism; Riots/Civil Unrest

Europe > Spain; Europe > Spain > Barcelona; Europe > Spain > Madrid

2/11/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Low

Crime Threats

Spain is considered a safe destination for tourists, students, business travelers, and others. Nevertheless, street crime continues to be a concern, most notably in urban areas and those frequented by tourists. With an estimated 1.2 million American tourists visiting Spain each year, Embassy Madrid, Consulate General Barcelona, and the five U.S. consular agencies receive reports from Americans who are robbed or victimized in a variety of scams.

Foreigners continue to be the targets of choice for pickpockets and thieves who operate in hotel lobbies, restaurants, public transit systems, airports, and other areas frequented by tourists. Common tactics include: theft of baggage while visitors check in/out of hotels, checking in at the airport, or hailing a taxi; criminal distractions (asking for directions, dropping

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



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; taking advantage of Americans who hang a purse/backpack on the back of a chair, place their cellphones on a table when at a restaurant, or place their belongings on a bench beside them; and individuals flagging down passing motorists to request assistance for “car trouble,” giving an associate the chance to steal from the Good Samaritan.

The highest incidence of street crime is during local holiday periods (late November-early January, all of August, and Easter/Semana Santa) and the busy summer tourist season.

Credit card skimming (a form of high-tech financial fraud) has been an issue. Thieves may attach a reader on an ATM to read the magnetic strip on the victim’s card or a waiter may read the card into a portable recorder for later use. Many restaurants now bring the credit card reader to the patron and swipe the card in front of him as a result of credit card skimming.

While the incidence of sexual assault is statistically very low, attacks do occur (please see below for statistics). Crime statistics from January through the end of September 2015 are listed below. Overall, crime rates dropped for all categories of crime.

Type of Crime

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



2014

2015

Percent change

Crimes and Misdemeanors

1,585,815

1,540,861

-2.8

Homicides

239

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



214

-10.5

Armed Robbery

53,922

48,649

-9.8

Residential Burglary

91,178

83,112

-8.8

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Auto Theft

32,476

30,048

-7.5

Drug Trafficking

10,440

9,405

-9.9

Thefts

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



553,955

541,561

-2.2

Sexual attacks

1,000

Unavailable

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions:

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Spain has an excellent network of roads and highways. A speed limit of 120 km/h is enforced unless otherwise posted. The Civil Guard (Guardia Civil) patrols the highways and uses radar and cameras, both fixed and mobile, to enforce the speed limits. Emergency phones are located on the side of the highways at regular intervals. Deaths due to motor vehicle accidents have been steadily falling since 1989.

Public Transportation Conditions

Spain has an extensive and safe train, bus, subway, and airport transportation system. It is recommended that travelers utilize taxis rather than public transportation, particularly during the evening hours.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Medium

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns:

ETA (Euskadi ta Askatasuna - Basque Fatherland and Liberty) is an indigenous terrorist organization established in 1959 whose objective is to establish an independent Basque

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



nation comprising the Basque autonomous region (provinces of Vizcaya, Alava, and Guipuzcoa), the autonomous region of Navarra, and the French department of Pyrenees-Atlantique. ETA directed its attacks against government officials/facilities, journalists, and business executives. ETA has been blamed for over 840 deaths. On October 20, 2011, ETA declared a “definitive cessation of armed activities.” Although ETA has not launched any attacks since the declaration, the group has also not officially disarmed or disbanded. Several members of ETA were arrested in 2015, most notably, the group’s purported top two leaders, David Pla and Iratxe Sorzabal, on September 22, 2015. ETA has reportedly paused their practice of asking local businesses for “economic support” to continue their fight for an independent Basque country. These “requests” (extortion) were normally letters sent to the businesses, some with actual amounts specified while others contained vague threats of repercussions if economic assistance was not provided. The government considers ETA effectively operationally defunct. ETA’s operational capability has been almost completely degraded after years of numerous, successful law enforcement actions in both Spain and France.

Spanish authorities increased their focus on addressing the threat of international terrorism following the March 11, 2004, bombing of the commuter railway in downtown Madrid by terrorists inspired by, but not directly affiliated with, al-Qa’ida.

Terrorism remains an ongoing concern, given Spain’s proximity to North Africa and sizeable immigrant communities. Spain serves as a gateway for Islamist extremists desiring entry into Europe and has served as a logistical hub for some operations in Europe and the Middle East. For example, Spanish authorities have apprehended several cells involved in the recruitment, funding, and travel of jihadist fighters to Syria and in support of the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIL). Spain arrested about 100 suspected terrorist collaborators in 2015.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Spain's North African exclave cities of Melilla and Ceuta are a particular challenge in this context. Recognizing this, Spain is focused on the cities and leverages excellent security cooperation with Morocco to effectively address the issue.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Political Violence Rating: Low

Civil Unrest

Public demonstrations require formal petition to the government and approval by the local police. Any large demonstrations have been well controlled under the tight supervision of the police. Such events should be avoided in case hostile elements attempt to escalate the situation. Additionally, large crowds are attractive targets for pickpockets and potentially for terrorists.

Spain continues to recover from a double-dip recession that significantly impacted the job market, and unemployment remains high, particularly for youth. Associated protests have, on rare occasions, been organized against individual companies, including U.S.-based firms. As conditions improve, the frequency of these demonstrations continues to decrease, but protests are always possible.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



General strikes infrequently cause disruptions to public transportation, temporarily shut down public services, and occasionally result in street protests. These protests are usually small and are rarely violent or aggressive but are, nevertheless, best avoided.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

Spain has a very small and not prevalent presence of right-wing anti-immigrant groups.

Police Response

Crime Victim Assistance

Victims of crime should notify American Citizen Services at the Consular Section at the U.S. Embassy in Madrid, the Consulate General in Barcelona, or the nearest consular agency during normal business hours. The number for any emergency (police, fire, ambulance) is 112. In Madrid and in most metropolitan areas of Spain, English speakers are normally on duty to assist non-Spanish speakers.

Police/Security Agencies

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



A variety of law enforcement organizations operate in Spain. While many cities have their own municipal police, the Civil Guard (Guardia Civil) have responsibility for general policing in rural areas in addition to firearms/explosives control; traffic policing on inter-urban roads; protection of communication routes, coasts, frontiers, ports, and airports; enforcement of environmental/conservation laws, including those governing hunting and fishing; and inter-urban transport of prisoners.

In urban areas (generally those with a population of more than 20,000), the National Police Corps (Cuerpo Nacional de Policía) assumes responsibility for general policing from the Civil Guard.

Spain also has several autonomous regions that have their own regional police:

Ertzaintza in the Basque Country

Mossos d'Esquadra in Catalonia

Policía Foral (Foruzaingoa) in Navarre

BESCAM in the Madrid region

Policía Canaria in the Canary Islands

Medical Emergencies

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Medical services are comparable to the U.S. Dial 112 from any phone to request assistance in a medical emergency. An English speaker is available to assist non-Spanish speakers.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

For information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at:
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/spain>.

OSAC Country Council Information

Spain has an active OSAC Country Council, which is composed of both American corporate and non-corporate members. For further information on the OSAC Country Council in Spain, contact the Regional Security Office of the U.S. Embassy in Madrid (RSO: Kristen Sivertson (34) 91 587 2550) or visit <https://www.osac.gov/>. To reach OSAC's Europe team, please email OSACEUR@state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



U.S. Embassy Madrid, Consular Section

Calle Serrano, 75

Hours of operation: 8:30AM–5:30PM.

Embassy Contact Numbers

Tel: 91 587 2200

Website: <http://madrid.usembassy.gov/index.html>

Nearby Posts

Consulate General Barcelona: <http://barcelona.usconsulate.gov/>

Consular Agency Sevilla: <http://madrid.usembassy.gov/citizen-services/offices/seville.html>

Consular Agency Valencia <http://madrid.usembassy.gov/citizen-services/offices/valencia.html>

Consular Agency Las Palmas:
<http://madrid.usembassy.gov/citizen-services/offices/las-palmas.html>

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Consular Agency Malaga: <http://madrid.usembassy.gov/citizen-services/offices/malaga.html>

Consular Agency Palma de Mallorca:
<http://madrid.usembassy.gov/citizen-services/offices/mallorca.html>

Embassy Guidance

Travelers should check the State Department Country Specific Information sheet and public announcements before traveling to Spain, and particularly when traveling to the Basque region.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Scams

A number of U.S. citizens have been victims of various scams. One scheme involves a U.S. citizen receiving an email or telephone call requesting money to assist a relative or acquaintance who has been arrested, detained, robbed, or injured in Spain. It is highly recommended that a person who receives such an email not send money until independently confirming that the person is, in fact, in Spain by checking with the U.S. Embassy. Please note that if a relative or friend were arrested in Spain, bail money would not be sent to Western Union.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Other scams include lottery or advance-fee scams in which a person is lured to Spain to finalize a financial transaction. Often, the victims are initially contacted via Internet or fax and informed they have won the Spanish Lottery (El Gordo), inherited money from a distant relative, or are needed to assist in a major financial transaction from one country to another. For more information, please see the Bureau of Consular Affairs' web page on International Financial Scams.

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Travelers should remain alert to their personal security and exercise caution. Carry limited cash, only one credit card, and a copy of your passport for identification. Secure the passport, extra cash, credit cards, and any other personal documents in a safe location—preferably a hotel safe or something similar. When you need to carry documents, credit cards, or cash, you are encouraged to secure them in a hard-to-reach place and not to carry all valuables together in the same pocket of a purse, backpack, jacket, or pants. Wallets should be carried in a buttoned or zippered front or side pocket vice the back or breast pocket. Avoid carrying anything valuable in the lower pockets of cargo pants. Purses and handbags should be clutched in front of you and avoid draping them over chairs or putting them on the floor. Upon arrival at the airport, train station, bus station, or hotel, keep a close eye on your personal belongings.

Dress as plainly as possible. Specifically, avoid wearing expensive jewelry or walking around with cameras hanging from your neck and an open map or guidebook in your hands (obvious tourist). Avoid flashing cash in public.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



The Embassy recommends that U.S. citizens remain aware of their surroundings at all times, and travel with a companion if possible, especially at night. U.S. citizens should not lower their personal security awareness because they are on vacation. Additionally, travelers should monitor the local news once in Spain.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.