According to the current U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory at the date of this report’s publication, Spain has been assessed as Level 2. Exercise increased caution due to terrorism.

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

U.S. Embassy Madrid does not assume responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the persons or firms appearing in this report. The American Citizen Services unit (ACS) cannot recommend a particular individual or location, and assumes no responsibility for the quality of service provided.

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Madrid and Barcelona as being LOW-threat locations for crime directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests. Please review OSAC’s Spain-specific page for original OSAC reporting, consular messages, and contact information, some of which may be available only to private-sector representatives with an OSAC password.

In 2017, an estimated 82 million tourists visited Spain, making Spain the second most visited country in the world.

Crime Threats
Spain is generally a safe destination for tourists, students, business travelers, and others. Violent crime is uncommon. Foreigners are the targets of choice for pickpockets and thieves, who operate in hotel lobbies, restaurants, public transit systems, airports, and other areas frequented by tourists. Upon arrival at the airport, train station, bus station, or hotel, keep a close eye on your personal belongings.

Common crime tactics include: theft of baggage while visitors check in/out of their hotels, check in at the airport, or while hailing a taxi; criminal distractions (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; and taking advantage of unsuspecting tourists who hang a purse/backpack on the back of a chair, place their cellphones on a table when at a restaurant, or place their belonging on a bench beside them. Additionally, distraction continues to be a common tactic used by highway robbers in Spain. Thieves 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.

The highest incidence of street crime is during local holiday periods (late November-early January, Easter/Semana Santa, and August) and the busy summer tourist season. There are well organized pickpocketing gangs who travel throughout Europe following the peak tourist season and major events where large groups of unsuspecting visitors will be present. Credit card skimming and cloning are a concern for travelers in Spain. Travelers should be wary of skimming devices placed on ATMs, take actions to protect card PINs, and closely monitor bank statements for anomalies. For more information, please review OSAC’s Report, “The Overseas Traveler’s Guide to ATM Skimmers & Fraud.”

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, and access is usually gained through doors or other entry points that are left unlocked.

While the incidence of sexual assault is statistically very low, such types of incidents do occur. Authorities warn of the availability of so-called "date-rape" drugs and other drugs, including GHB and liquid ecstasy. For more information, please review OSAC’s Report “Shaken: The Don’ts of Alcohol Abroad.”

A number of U.S. citizens have been victims of various scams in Spain. One scheme involves a U.S. citizen receiving an email/call requesting money to assist a relative or acquaintance who has been arrested, detained, robbed, or injured in Spain. These types of scams prey on
individuals’ emotions and desire to assist others in need. It is highly recommended that the recipient of such a message not send money and independently confirm and verify what the situation involving the relative or acquaintance actually is. If a U.S. citizen is in distress overseas, please notify the closest Embassy or Consulate.

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.

**Transportation-Safety Situation**


**Road Safety and Road Conditions**

Spain has an excellent network of roads and highways. A speed limit of 120 km/h is enforced unless otherwise posted. The Guardia Civil patrols the highways and uses radar and cameras, both fixed and mobile, to enforce the speed limits. Speed cameras enforce average speed limits in several of the tunnels and other zones along the highways and urban areas throughout Spain. Emergency phones are located on the side of the highways at regular intervals.

Drivers are required to maintain the following emergency equipment in their vehicle while driving in Spain: a spare tire and tools to replace it, two portable warning triangles, and a reflective vest. For more information on self-driving, please review OSAC’s Report “Driving Overseas: Best Practices.”

**Public Transportation Conditions**

Spain has an extensive and generally safe train, bus, subway, and airport transportation system. Taxis are also abundantly available, reliable, and considered safe. The U.S. Embassy in Madrid and Consulate General in Barcelona place no restrictions on their personnel’s use of mass transit.

**Terrorism Threat**

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Madrid and Barcelona as being **MEDIUM**-threat
Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

Credible information indicates terrorist groups continue to plot potential attacks in Europe, including Spain. All European countries remain vulnerable to attacks from transnational terrorist organizations with little or no warning. U.S. citizens are reminded to remain vigilant with regards to their personal security.

Spain maintains a national terrorism alert level which consists of five levels: 1 – low; 2 – moderate; 3 – medium; 4 – high; and 5 - very high. Since June 26, 2015, Spain’s terrorism alert level has consistently been at level 4. According to figures published by the Spanish Ministry of Interior, since 2015, Spanish security forces have arrested more than 200 individuals on terrorism-related charges associated with Islamic extremism. In 2017 and in furtherance of combating the threat of Islamic extremism, Spanish authorities carried out 51 anti-terrorism operations and arrested 75 individuals. These arrests took place throughout different parts of Spain, with the highest numbers of arrests taking place near Madrid and Barcelona. For further information see the Spanish terrorism alert level website.

Spanish security authorities continue to operate with an increased level of vigilance focused on the threat of those promoting and supporting terrorism and terrorist organizations, individuals radicalized in Spain or other parts of Europe, and returning foreign fighters. In December 2017, the Spanish Ministry of Interior created a nationwide video campaign titled “#QueHacerEnUnAtentado” that advises members of the public on how to react in the event of a terrorist attack. The video can be accessed via the Spanish Ministry of Interior Twitter feed.

On August 17-18, 2017, Spain suffered its first major terror attack in 13 years, with vehicular ramming attacks in Barcelona’s Las Ramblas pedestrian zone and in the coastal town of Cambrils, claiming 16 lives (including a U.S. citizen) and resulting in over 100 injuries. The attacks were linked to a cell of ISIS supporters radicalized by a Moroccan Imam in Spain with an extensive criminal history. The cell’s original attack plans were disrupted on August 16 when members of the group mishandled explosives in a safe house leading to an explosion that killed several terror cell members. It is believed that if the original attack plans would have been carried out, the death toll would likely have been significantly higher.

On October 2011, the Basque Separatist Group Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA), declared a “definitive cessation of armed activities” following a decades-long campaign of violence that claimed over 800 victims. Since 2011, ETA has not carried out any violent activity. In April
2017, ETA announced its intent to fully disarm.

**Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence**
The U.S. Department of State has assessed Madrid and Barcelona as being **LOW**-threat locations for political violence directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests. On October 1, 2017, the Catalan Regional government held an illegal independence referendum that was marred by clashes between security forces and voters. Subsequently, Catalonia saw numerous large-scale protests both in support and against the Catalonian independence movement. The majority of these protests were peaceful, but some protest activity did block roads and disrupt major thoroughfares and rail operations within Catalonia. The Embassy issued numerous security messages advising U.S. citizens to avoid the large gatherings due to their unpredictability and potential for violence. U.S. citizens are advised to monitor local political conditions in Catalonia as it can possibly lead to protest activity in major urban areas.

**Civil Unrest**
Public demonstrations in Spain occur often and are normally peaceful. Demonstrations require formal petition to the local government and approval. Large demonstrations are generally well controlled under the supervision of the police. 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.

**Religious/Ethnic Violence**
According to the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX), in 2017, Spain saw the number of irregular migrants detected at its Western Mediterranean border more than double to 22,900. The migrants were from Algeria, Morocco, and Western Africa. It is anticipated this migrant flow will continue in 2018.

**Police Response**
**Crime Victim Assistance**
Victims of crime can contact the consular sections at the U.S. Embassy in Madrid, the Consulate General in Barcelona, or the nearest consular agency (located in Las Palmas, Malaga, Mallorca, Seville, and Valencia) for assistance during normal business hours. In an emergency involving an American citizen in Spain, you can reach the duty officer by calling: (34) 91-587-2200.
The number for any emergency in Spain (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.

To file a complaint via telephone, U.S. citizens can call the Spanish National Police and reach a dedicated English speaker at (34) 90-210-2112. This service is available Mon-Sun from 0900-2100 hours.

For local first responders, please refer to the Embassy’s Emergency Assistance page.

Police/Security Agencies

A variety of professional law enforcement organizations operate in Spain. The Guardia Civil (Civil Guard) is an 80,000-strong national police force with broad policing responsibilities, including coverage of rural areas. The Cuerpo Nacional de Policía (Spanish National Police) 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 that have their own regional police: Ertzaintza in the Basque Country; Mossos d’Esquadra in Catalonia; Policía Foral (Foruzaino) in Navarre; Brigadas Especiales de Seguridad de la Comunidad Autónoma de Madrid (BESCAM) (Special Security Brigades for the Autonomous Community of Madrid); and the Policía Canaria in the Canary Islands.

At the local level, many cities have municipal police called Policía Municipal or Guardia Urbana.

Medical Emergencies

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.

Contact Information for Available Medical Services

For medical assistance, please refer to the Embassy’s Medical Assistance page.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

The CDC offers additional information on vaccines and health guidance for Spain.

OSAC Country Council Information

The Spain Country Council is active and meets on a quarterly basis. Interested private-sector security managers should contact OSAC’s Europe Team with any questions.
U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information
Embassy Address and Hours of Operation
U.S. Embassy Madrid
Calle de Serrano, 75
28006 Madrid, Spain
Hours of Operation: Consular Section hours open to the public Mon-Fri from 0900-1300, except for local and U.S. holidays.
Embassy Contact Numbers
Tel: (+34) 91 587 2200
Website: https://es.usembassy.gov/
Nearby Posts
Consulate General Barcelona: https://es.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/barcelona/
Consular Agency Sevilla:
https://es.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/u-s-consular-offices/consular-agency-seville/
Consular Agency Valencia:
https://es.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/u-s-consular-offices/consular-agency-valencia/
Consular Agency Las Palmas:
https://es.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/u-s-consular-offices/consular-agency-las-palmas/
Consular Agency Malaga:
https://es.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/u-s-consular-offices/consular-agency-malaga/
Consular Agency Palma de Mallorca:
https://es.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/u-s-consular-offices/consular-agency-palma-de-mallorca/
Embassy Guidance
U.S. citizens traveling to Spain should register with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to ensure they receive pertinent security updates and notices.
Additional Resources
Spain Country Information Sheet

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