



Spain 2017 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Terrorism; Political Violence; Crime; Cyber

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

2/3/2017

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 ACS Unit 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 AS BEING A LOW-THREAT LOCATION FOR CRIME DIRECTED AT OR AFFECTING OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERESTS.

Please review OSAC's Spain-specific webpage for proprietary analytic reports, Consular Messages, and contact information.

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. In 2016, an estimated 2 million Americans visited Spain. As a result of the increase of American visitors (up from 1.2 million in 2015), there was an increase in the number of reports to U.S. Embassy Madrid, Consulate General Barcelona, and the five U.S. Consular Agencies regarding Americans who were 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. Upon arrival at the airport, train station, bus station, or hotel, keep a close eye on your personal belongings. Common 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

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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 belonging 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 a Good Samaritan.

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. Credit card skimming has been an issue. Thieves may attach a reader on top of an ATM to read the magnetic strip on the victim's card or a waiter may scan 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 them as a result of credit card skimming. While the incidence of sexual assault is statistically very low, attacks do occur. Crime statistics from January-end of September 2015 are listed below. Despite some minor increases to some crime categories, overall crime decreased over the past year.

Type of Crime

2015

2016

% of Change

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Crimes & Misdemeanors

1,542,066

1,520,487

-1.4

Homicides

214

227

+6.1

Armed Robbery

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48,287

47,360

-1.9

Residential Burglary

84,934

85,355

+ .5

Auto Theft

32,040

32,222

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+6

Drug Trafficking

9,415

9,606

+2

Thefts

542,134

540,853

-.2

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Sexual attacks

(2014) 9,468

(2015) 9,869

Statistics for 2016 not available until June 2017.

A number of U.S. citizens have been victims of various scams. 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. It is highly recommended that a recipient not send money until independently confirming that the person is, in fact, in Spain by checking with the U.S. Embassy. If a relative or friend were arrested in Spain, bail money would not be sent to Western Union.

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

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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. 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. During late evening hours, it is recommended that travelers utilize taxis rather than public transportation.

Terrorism Threat

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS ASSESSED MADRID AS BEING A MEDIUM-THREAT LOCATION FOR TERRORIST ACTIVITY DIRECTED AT OR AFFECTING OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERESTS.

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns:

On October 20, 2011, ETA (Euskadi ta Askatasuna - Basque Fatherland and Liberty) declared a "definitive cessation of armed activities." Although ETA has not launched any attacks since the declaration, the group has not officially disarmed or disbanded. However, the government considers ETA effectively operationally defunct. ETA's operational capability has been almost completely degraded after years of numerous, successful law enforcement actions, both in Spain and France. In addition to the arrest of several members of ETA in 2015 (including two of the groups' leaders), another leader (Mikel Irastorza) was arrested in 2016 in southwestern France.

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Authorities aggressively mobilized to deal with the threat of international terrorism following the March 11, 2004, bombing of the commuter railway at the Atocha station by terrorists inspired by, but not directly affiliated with, al-Qa'ida (AQ).

Terrorism remains an ongoing concern, given Spain's proximity to North Africa. The national threat level of Spain remains at a level 4 out of 5 since June 2015. Spain may serve as a gateway for Islamist extremists desiring entry into Europe and serves as a logistical hub for operations in Europe and the Middle East. For example, authorities continue to actively target and apprehend individuals and groups involved in the recruitment, funding, and travel of jihadist fighters for the civil war in Syria, and the operations of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Spain arrested about 69 suspected terrorists and collaborators in 2016.

Spain's North African enclave cities of Melilla and Ceuta are particular problem areas in this regard; however, Spain leverages excellent security cooperation with Morocco to address the issue.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS ASSESSED MADRID AS BEING A **LOW**-THREAT LOCATION FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE DIRECTED AT OR AFFECTING OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERESTS.

Civil Unrest

Public demonstrations occur often and are normally peaceful. Demonstrations require formal petition to the local government and approval. Large demonstrations have been well controlled under the supervision of the police.

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Spain has a strong anti-capitalism movement that has organized protests with as many as 30,000 participants against the government's failure to address the economic crisis. Groups have protested against individual companies, including U.S.-based firms. The frequency of these demonstrations has decreased in recent years, but protests are always possible. On rare occasions, these protests have turned violent. Additionally, large crowds are attractive targets for pickpockets and thieves, and the potential exists for terrorist interest.

General strikes can cause disruptions to public transportation, a temporary shutdown in public services, and large street protests. The size and tenor of protests is often anticipated to be much worse than the outcome. General strikes have the greatest effect on public transportation and the industrial sector, while social services and the overall economy do not suffer as greatly as anticipated.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

Both objectively and compared to other countries in Europe, Spain has a very small presence of right-wing anti-immigrant groups.

Post-specific Concerns

Drug-related Crimes

Authorities warn of the availability of so-called "date-rape" drugs and other drugs, including GHB and liquid ecstasy.

Police Response

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Crime Victim Assistance

Victims of crime should notify American Citizen Services, at the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Madrid, the Consulate General in Barcelona, or the nearest consular agency during normal business hours. In an emergency involving an American citizen in Spain, you can reach U.S. Embassy Madrid 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.

Police/Security Agencies

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 and explosives control; traffic policing on interurban roads; protection of communication routes, coasts, frontiers, ports, and airports; enforcement of environmental and conservation laws, including those governing hunting and fishing; and interurban 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

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Mossos d'Esquadra in Catalonia

Policía Foral (Foruzaingoa) in Navarre

BESCAM in the Madrid region

Policía Canaria in the Canary Islands

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

U.S. Embassy Madrid maintains a medical services list.
Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

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

OSAC Country Council Information

There is currently no active Country Council in Spain. Please contact OSAC's Europe team if you are interested in private-sector engagement in Madrid or have questions about OSAC's Country Council programs.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

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U.S. Embassy Madrid, Consular Section

Serrano 75

28006 Madrid, Spain

Embassy Contact Numbers

Tel: (+34) 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>

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

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Travelers should check the State Department Country Specific Information sheet, enroll and review the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), and any public announcements before traveling to Spain.

Additional Resources

Spain Country Information Sheet

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