

Spain - OVERVIEW

Updated: February 12, 2014



Country Name Long Form: Kingdom of Spain

Government Type: Parliamentary monarchy

Languages Spoken: Spanish, Catalan, English

National Flag



Spain is a Tier III Country. Significant security measures are necessary.

	Overall Assessment	Political Violence	Crime	Terrorism	Travel Safety
Spain					
Key: (L) Low – (M) Medium – (H) High – (C)Critical					

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Political Violence is rated at LOW in Spain

Public demonstrations happen frequently with varying size and intensity. All demonstrations require formal petition to the government and approval by the local police. Typically, there are two common locations for these demonstrations: Puerta del Sol and Plaza de Neptuno. Usually, these demonstrations are well controlled under the tight supervision of the police.

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. On rare occasions, these protests have turned violent. In addition, groups have sometimes protested against individual American businesses, voicing concerns over employment and environmental issues, among other.

Spain - OVERVIEW

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 in reality. General strikes have the greatest effect on public transportation and industrial sector while social services and the overall economy do not suffer as greatly as anticipated. Mostly, it does not succeed in its goal of forcing the government to end austerity measures.

TERRORISM

Terrorism is assessed as Medium

The overall terrorist threat in Spain is rated as medium and terrorist attacks occur sporadically. Targets have included resort areas along the coast and public transport facilities in the capital, Madrid, and elsewhere. The threat stems from two main sources, namely the Basque separatists and Islamist militants.

ETA (Euskadi ta Askatasuna – Basque Fatherland and Liberty) is an indigenous terrorist organization established in 1959. The stated objective of ETA is to establish an independent Basque nation in the area of northern Spain comprising the Basque autonomous region (provinces of Vizcaya, Alava and Guipuzcoa) and the autonomous region of Navarra, as well as the French department of Pyrenees-Atlantique. Although ETA operates principally in its homeland areas, it also carries out attacks, mostly bombings, in other parts of Spain. The group usually directs its offensives at police, military, journalists, local politicians and government targets. It also hits economic targets, such as tourist resorts, in an effort to inflict damage on the economy. The group normally gives a telephone warning of impending attacks several hours in advance; however, some of these targeting police and government facilities have occurred with no advanced warning.

Terrorism remains an ongoing concern given Spain's proximity to North Africa and its large Islamic population. Spain serves as a natural gateway for Islamic extremists desiring entry into Europe and serves as a logistical hub for operations in Europe and the Middle East.

RULE OF LAW / CORRUPTION

The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2013 gave Spain a score of 59, indicating that the country has moderate levels of corruption. The CPI rates countries by the perceived levels of corruption in the public sector, with the least corrupt receiving a maximum score of 100.

CRIME

Crime is assessed as Medium

Petty crime, including pickpocketing and bag-snatching, is common in Spain, particularly in urban areas frequented by tourists. The highest incidence of such crimes is during peak holiday periods, from late November to early January as well as the summer months of July and August. Criminals frequently

Spain - OVERVIEW

target major attractions, such as museums and monuments, and other areas frequented by tourists, including restaurants, bars, internet cafes, hotel lobbies, beach resorts, city buses, Metros, trains, train stations, and ATMs. Airports are known to be pickpocketing hotspots, with thieves particularly targeting arrival halls and car hire collection points. Criminals often work in groups, surrounding the victim, or use various scam techniques.

Travelers should be wary of non-uniformed officers; genuine police officers only ask for identification documents and do not request that you hand over bags or wallets. Travelers should be wary of strangers approaching them in the street or while they are in vehicles, offering help or asking for assistance.

Violent crime is less common; however, if threatened, travelers are advised to hand over any belongings as there is a possibility that the attacker may be armed. Personal attacks, including sexual assault and rape, are infrequent.

With its proximity to North Africa, Spain is a major crossroads in the world narcotics trade; as a result, drug-related criminal activity is increasing.

KIDNAPPING

While unusual, cases of express kidnapping have been reported in several parts of the country, including major cities. Express kidnapping is a type of crime that occurs when a victim is abducted and their family or employer is made to pay a relatively small ransom for their release. In some cases, the victim may be forced to withdraw funds from their personal bank account. Express kidnappings more often affect business people; however multiple cases of non-business people being abducted have been reported in recent years. In recent years, Spanish police have undertaken significant efforts to curb this kind of crime.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Recent information indicates that instances of physical assault in Spain have risen slightly in recent years; however, there is little indication that western travelers were especially susceptible to these crimes. Of greater concern is a significant increase in sexual assault cases in some parts of the country. Some areas of Spain with the highest rates of sexual assault include islands of Ibiza and Majorca, which are located off the eastern coast of the country. While, this information is of concern, reasonable precautionary measures can help to reduce a traveler's chances of becoming a victim.

NATURAL DISASTERS

During the summer months (June to September), droughts, wildfires and heat waves occur regularly in some regions. Droughts can lead to water shortages and rationing in places. The weather in summer also has the potential to cause heat stroke and exhaustion.

Spain - OVERVIEW

The region of Valencia as well as the Balearic Islands often experience severe winds and heavy rainfall between September and November.

STANDING TRAVEL ADVICE

- English is spoken widely in business circles and more generally understood in tourist areas, although any attempts at speaking Spanish will be warmly welcomed.
- During the summer time, wear appropriate clothing, to limit exposure to the sun at the hottest times of the day, use ample sun lotion and drink plenty of liquids to prevent heat stroke and exhaustion.
- Stay in groups, travel in a caravan consisting of two or more vehicles, and stay on the main roads.
- Ensure that someone not traveling with you is aware of your itinerary.
- Avoid hotels that do not have adequate security.
- It is preferable to stay in the main tourist destinations.
- Pay close attention to your surroundings, especially when walking or driving in Spain
- Official taxis are a suitable means of travel in daylight hours in urban areas. It is highly recommended that taxis be arranged through your hotel, or program office. Negotiate the price in advance.
- Women should be especially careful when traveling alone and avoid staying out late without a trusted male escort.
- Make sensible security precautions to mitigate the risk of petty crime, particularly pick pocketing and bag snatching.
- Carry a photocopy of your passport when traveling to avoid losing it in a robbery.
- Do not resist if you are being robbed and avoid eye contact and do not make any sudden movements. Victims have been killed when they resisted attack or refused to give up their money or other valuables.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times and keep a low profile.
- Never leave your belongings unattended.
- Carry bags close to your body and make sure the fasteners are secure.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash or wearing expensive jewelry or valuables.
- Leave all important documents in a safe or safe deposit box at your hotel and only carry certified copies.
- Trust your instincts. If someone or something makes you uneasy, avoid the situation.

Important Contact Details:

International Dialing Code: +34

International Dialing Prefix: 00

Spain - OVERVIEW

Victims of crime in Spain should contact the following phone numbers for assistance:

POLICE: The local equivalent to the “911” emergency line in Spain is 112

FIRE DEPARTMENT: 080

AMBULANCE: 061

Note: Police, ambulance or fire department response may be unreliable in some parts of the country.

TRAVEL & ROAD SAFETY

- Travel to rural areas and poorer parts of Spain should be avoided.
- The standard of infrastructure in Spain is generally very high.
- The supply of basic amenities, such as power and water are reliable.

RECOMMENDED TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

- No rural travel after dark.
- No deviation from approved travel routes.
- No use of ATMs after dark.

HEALTH

Spain has good medical care in both private and state-run facilities, but services can be limited outside urban centers. Although many doctors speak some English, not all medical personnel have a good knowledge of the language, so the ability to communicate in Spanish may be advantageous. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate payment for medical services. Pharmacies are available in all cities and towns, and all basic medical supplies are readily available.

- Tap water in Spain is safe to drink but we still recommend that travelers drink bottle water as a precaution.
- Unpasteurized milk should be boiled before consumption, or powdered or tinned milk should be used as an alternative.

The following vaccinations are recommended or required if travelling to Spain:

- Hepatitis A (recommended for travelers going to rural areas)
- Hepatitis B (recommended)
- Rabies (recommended for travelers at risk of bites from bats)

SIGNIFICANT DISEASES

Spain - OVERVIEW

- **Brucellosis** – Highly contagious zoonotic infection is usually acquired in Spain through consuming unpasteurized dairy products from infected cattle, sheep, or goats. Most cases are reported in Andalusia, Castilla – La Mancha, Aragon, Castilla y Leon and Estrmadura.
- **Visceral leishmaniasis**- A parasitic disease transmitted by the bite of a sand fly, is present across Spain.
- **Echinococcosis**- A parasite that lives on or in a host and gets its food from or at the expense of its host. Those in close contact with farm animals are at highest risk of catching disease.
- **Mediterranean Spotted Fever**- A tick-borne disease reported sporadically in Andalusia, Castilla- La Mancha, Castilla y Leon, Cataluña and Estrmadura.

It is also important to ensure that routine vaccinations are up to date for diseases including influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), polio, measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus.

HOSPITALS – Spain

Centro Medico Infanta Mercedes
Calle de la Infanta Mercedes
8 28020 Madrid Spain
Phone: +34 (0) 915 79 6705
Fax: +34 91 570 6204

Centro de Rehabilitacion Eva Maria Sanz SL
Calle Florida 26, Villaviciosa de Odon
28670 Madrid, Spain
Phone: +34 (0) 916 163 162

US EMBASSY – CONSULATE LOCATIONS

The US Embassy in Spain

Calle Serrano, 75
28006 Madrid, Spain
Phone: (34) 91 587 2240
Fax: (34) 91 587 2303
Internet website: <http://madrid.usembassy.gov/>
Email: askacs@state.gov
Emergency Telephone: (34) 91 587 2240

U.S. Consulate General Barcelona

Spain - OVERVIEW

Paseo Reina Elisenda de Montcada, 23-25
08034 Barcelona, Spain
Tel: (34) 93 280 2227
Fax: (34) 93 280 6175
Email: barcelonaACS@state.gov

U.S. Consular Agent – Seville

Plaza Nueva 8-8 Duplicado
2nd Floor, Office E-2 No. 4
41101 Seville, Spain
Tel: (34) 95 421 8751
Fax: (34) 95 422 0791
Email: sevillecons@telefonica.net

USF INTERNATIONAL HOTLINE

USF 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 813-317-5815

AXA Assistance 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 1-877-577-9504 / +1-203-399-5130 (Call collect from abroad)

ASSIST ID #: GLMN 04983932. <http://www.culturalinsurance.com/resources/>

* Information derived from CIA World Fact Book, US Department of State, OSAC, and Travel Guard. This travel overview summarizes some of the most important concerns; however, it does not negate the need for detailed trip planning.