Spain

Risk Ratings

LOW MEDICAL RISK for Spain

Risk Summary

Petty crime poses the main risk to business travellers, with levels increasing in major cities, particularly Madrid and Barcelona, and during holiday seasons and festivals. There is a credible risk of attacks by Islamist extremist terrorists. The risk previously posed by the Basque separatist group ETA, which occasionally targeted tourist infrastructure, ceased following the organisation’s official abandonment of armed struggle in December 2011.

This information is intended as a summary of the travel security environment; however, the risks can change at short notice during a crisis or evolving situation. Please check our travel security alerts to ensure you are informed of the most recent developments.

STANDING TRAVEL ADVICE

Alerts

- Seville: Anticipate disruption, avoid demonstrations by taxi drivers on 21 November
- Locally-acquired dengue
- Measles in 2018

View All Alerts

Vaccinations For Spain

Hepatitis A Many travel health professionals recommend Read more

Hepatitis B Recommended for health care workers and anyone Read more

Routine Vaccinations

- All routine vaccinations should be current; these include Measles-Mumps-Rubella, Polio, Tetanus-Diphtheria-Pertussis, and Varicella.
- Annual influenza vaccination.

Other Medical Precautions

- Before you go - See your doctor and dentist and ensure you are in the best health before you leave. Other preparations:
- Malaria
- Zika Virus
- Health Threats

Before You Go

See your doctor and dentist and ensure you are in the best health before you leave. Other preparations:

- Check your routine vaccinations
  Check your routine vaccinations are up to date (polio; varicella; measles, mumps and rubella; tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis, seasonal influenza). See a travel health practitioner 6 to 8 weeks before departure for destination-specific health preparations. You may need additional vaccinations, some of which require several doses, or be recommended malaria medication which may need to be started a week or more before arriving in the malarial country.
- Documentation: Arrange a copy of your personal health record to carry with you when you travel. Include a letter from your doctor explaining your need for all medications you are carrying, including any over-the-counter medications, in English and the language of your destination(s). Make sure you have copies of your prescriptions.
- Medication: Check the regulations of your destination country regarding importation of your medication, as some drugs may be strictly prohibited (especially narcotics and psychotropics) and may result in severe penalties. Take any medicines you require in their original packaging, including any information leaflets, with them clearly labelled with your name (matching your passport name), and your doctor’s name. Have enough to cover the trip, and extra in case of delays, however note that many destinations limit quantities of certain drugs to a 30-day supply. Carry medication in your hand luggage, with copies of your prescriptions.

Vaccinations for Spain

Recommendations may vary for short-term visitors. Always consult your travel health advisor or contact International SOS to discuss your specific needs.
Hepatitis A
Many travel health professionals recommend hepatitis A vaccination for all travellers regardless of destination, especially those who are at higher risk, such as men who have sex with men, people who use illicit drugs or those with liver disease.

Hepatitis B
Recommended for healthcare workers and anyone who may have a new sexual partner, share needles or get a tattoo or body piercing.
Many travel health professionals recommend hepatitis B vaccination for all travellers and expatriates, regardless of destination.

Malaria
There is no malaria in Spain.

Zika Virus
There is no Zika Virus in Spain.

Standard of Care

Emergency Response
Always try to call International SOS whenever medical care or advice is required, especially in emergencies.

SINGLE EU EMERGENCY NUMBER
Use 112 to contact all emergency services in EU countries. In Spain, calls are answered in Spanish, and, in tourist regions, in English, French or German.
The public ambulance system is recommended, however attendants may not speak English. Private hospitals do not have ambulances. For emergencies, they use the public emergency medical system. Private ambulance companies are only used for non-emergency transportation.

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Standard of Health Care
The Spanish medical system offers an international standard of care. Medical facilities in smaller cities and towns may be limited, but there is a well-developed emergency internal medical transportation system.

English speaking physicians are often found in both the public and private facilities. Generally, public hospitals offer a broader and higher level of care than private hospitals, especially for major medical and surgical emergencies and highly complex procedures. However, the emergency rooms of public hospitals are usually crowded with long wait times. Waiting list for elective surgical procedures may be long.

Private hospitals are generally small to medium-size facilities with 40 to 150 beds. They will often have an emergency room, intensive care unit, surgical facility, EKG, laboratory and pharmacy. However, not all private hospitals have a fully staffed and equipped emergency room or intensive care units. Specialists are on call.

OutPatient Care
General practitioners (GPs) manage most outpatient care in both the private and public sectors. GP facilities are equipped with basic diagnostic tools. Higher level medical equipment can be found in facilities managed by private specialists.

Paying for Health Care
Private physicians will usually expect cash payment. However, some medical facilities will accept credit card payments. Foreign insurance plans will not be accepted without a guarantee of payment.

Citizens of the EU and certain other countries where a reciprocal health agreement is in place are entitled to emergency public medical treatment, as per the old E111 form. As of January 2006, the form has been replaced with a European Health Insurance card, or EHIC. A valid card must be presented to take advantage of the agreement. Service under the EHIC may involve expenses that might be provided free of charge in your home country.

New regulations affect patients whose medical expenses would be covered by private insurance. Their private insurance will be claimed initially, and the public system will be claimed on an in-excess-of basis.

Do not defer medical treatment because of financial concerns. Contact International SOS, and if our terms allow, we will make financial arrangements on your behalf.

Dental Care
Dental care in Spain is of an international standard.

Blood Supplies
The blood supply in Spain is considered safe and is screened according to international standards.

More on diseases in Spain
Even in areas where the blood supply is considered safe, it’s best to avoid blood transfusions if possible. Screening cannot detect every blood-borne disease, and immune reactions can vary from minor to life-threatening. If a blood transfusion is recommended and circumstances permit, seek a second opinion from International SOS or your health advisor.

**Medication Availability**

There are many reputable pharmacies in the major cities, and virtually all international medications are available in Spain.

Since brand names vary, know the generic (chemical) names of your medications. It is always advisable to bring an adequate supply of prescription and other medications from your home country. Check the expiration date on all medications.

**Clinics & Hospitals**

**Medical Providers**

No matter where you are, contact International SOS first if you are sick, injured or need medical advice.

Our medical staff will advise you, help you select the correct doctor, hospital or clinic, and make any necessary appointments on your behalf. If our terms allow, we will also make financial arrangements for you.

It is recommended that you contact International SOS before accessing medical care in Spain.

**Hospitals / Clinics**

If you are unable to contact International SOS, the following list of hospitals and clinics is provided in case of medical emergencies.

**Barcelona**

**HOSPITAL QUIRÓN BARCELONA**

Category: Hospital

Address: Plaza Alfonso Comín 5
Barcelona, Barcelona 08023

Telephone: 34 901 123 456 (G24)
34 902 444 446
34 932 554 000

**Madrid**

**Hospital Ruber Internacional S.A.**

Category: Hospital

Address: La Masó 36
Urbanización Mirasierra
Madrid, Madrid 28034

Telephone: 34 901 123 456 (G24)
34 91 387 5000

**Food & Water**

**Food and Water Precautions**

Travellers have a small risk of developing diarrhoea in any country. It may be advisable to drink bottled water only, especially on short trips. Always wash your hands with soap before eating, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. See the following country-specific recommendations:

**Water and Beverages**

Tap water is considered safe.

**Food Risk**

Food is considered safe.  
[More on food and water safety](#)

**Health Threats**

Health threats present include:

**Rabies | Threat from : Animals**

Rabies is a viral disease contracted when bitten or scratched by an infected (rabit) animal, often a dog. Once it enters the body, the virus travels along nerves and causes paralysis. As it reaches important organs like the spinal cord and the brain, it causes coma and death.

In countries where rabies is present in animals or bats, **ALL animal / bat bites, scratches and licks to broken skin must be treated seriously. Rabies vaccination is very effective in preventing rabies, even after a bite/scratch by a rabid animal.**

**Rabies vaccination**

Pre-exposure vaccination is often recommended for expatriates and long-term visitors to destinations where rabies is present. It's especially recommended if quality medical care may not be available after being bitten or scratched by an animal. Pre-exposure treatment can be especially useful for children, since they may not tell their parents that they have been bitten/scratched.
Pre-exposure vaccination makes it easier to treat a bite or scratch. That's important because some types of rabies treatment can be in short supply in many countries, even in cities.

If bitten, scratched or licked (on broken skin) by an animal:

- Immediately cleanse the wound with soap and water and a povidone-iodine solution if available.
- Seek medical advice from a qualified source or your assistance company.
- Notify local health authorities immediately. You may need post-exposure vaccination, even if you have had pre-exposure vaccination. (THIS CAN BE LIFE SAVING.)

**Spain**

Rabies is generally present in bats only and the risk of exposure for average travellers is low.

**HIV, Hepatitis B and C, & STIs | Threat from : Sex/blood/needles**

HIV/AIDS, hepatitis B, and hepatitis C are spread by contact with bodily fluids (especially blood and semen).

- unprotected sex,
- needle sharing during IV drug use, or
- unsafe blood or medical/dental instruments.

Genital herpes (HSV), genital warts (HPV), gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and most other sexually transmitted diseases are spread by genital contact.

**Prevention:**

- In many countries, hepatitis B is now a routine childhood immunisation and need not be repeated. All non-immune travellers should consider vaccination.
- Always use new condoms (preferably brought from your home country).
- IV drug users should not share needles.
- Avoid having tattoos or piercings done.
- In healthcare settings, make sure that needles and syringes sterile and not shared between patients.
- Call International SOS or your corporate medical department if you are hospitalised.
- Be aware of your risk when assisting anyone with an injury. Protect yourself from contact with bodily fluids.
- Seek medical attention within 24 hours if you accidentally come into contact with someone else's bodily fluids.

**Leishmaniasis | Threat from : Bites and Stings**

**Leishmaniasis** is a disease caused by a parasite that can infect humans, dogs, rodents and other small animals. It is transmitted by sandflies that bite mainly between dusk and dawn and can occur in both rural and urban environments. Sandflies breed quickly in unsanitary conditions, and the spread of the disease is exacerbated by war, chronic food shortages and urbanisation like deforestation and building of dams and irrigation systems, changes in temperature, heavy rainfall and population movement. The disease can manifest in one of the three forms, cutaneous (is the most common form and causes skin ulcers), mucocutaneous (is a rare form which affects the inner parts of the nose and mouth) or visceral (which is the more severe form and can lead to death). There is no vaccine or drug to prevent leishmaniasis.

**Prevention**

The only way to avoid leishmaniasis is to prevent sandfly bites.

- Minimise outdoor activities from dusk to dawn—this is when sand flies are most active.
- Use protective clothing and insect repellent.
- Consider using an insecticide treated bed net with fine mesh if there are sandflies in your living quarters. The standard bed nets used to prevent malaria are not effective, as sandflies are about one-third the size of mosquitoes and can fly through the malaria nets.
- Note that sandflies are small and do not make noise while flying. This makes it difficult to determine whether they are in your environment. Their bites cause mild symptoms and might not be noticed.

**Spain**

Since 2009, over 500 people are known to have been infected with visceral and cutaneous leishmaniasis in areas surrounding the capital, Madrid. This has mainly affected the municipalities of Fuenlabrada, Getafe, Humanes de Madrid and Leganes.

**Hantaviruses | Threat from : Animals**

Hantaviruses are a group of viruses that belong to the bunyaviridae family. They can cause two different types of illness in humans: hemorrhagic fever with renal failure syndrome (HFRS) and hantavirus pulmonary syndrome (HPS). The latter also known as hantavirus cardiopulmonary syndrome (HCPS). It is a widely distributed disease and occurs across Americas, Europe, and Asia.

Regardless of which illness they cause, hantaviruses are carried by infected rodents that can carry the virus for their entire lives without any signs of illness. Virus is present in the animal's saliva, urine and feces. Humans become sick when they inhale the aerosol droplets of these excretions.

Although not clearly known, symptoms of HCPS appear about one to eight weeks after exposure to the virus. Early symptoms include fatigue, fever, and muscle aches. About 50 percent of all patients also experience headache, dizziness, and abdominal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, pain). Late symptoms are cough/shorthness of breath and a feeling of overall tightness in the chest. Heartbeat and breathing may both become rapid at this stage. Most people recover from the disease. The overall case fatality rate is about 30 percent, and most deaths occur rapidly - within 24 hours of hospitalization.

The incubation period for HFRS is usually 2 to 4 weeks, but could be as short as a few days. Patients usually experience a fever that begins suddenly, headache, muscle pain, gastrointestinal upset, eye pain and blurred vision. Patients may later develop hemorrhage, including bleeding from the skin, conjunctiva of the eye, and mouth. Complications include kidney failure. Most patients fully recover. The overall mortality ranges from 5-15 percent, depending on the strain of the virus.
The best way to avoid infection is to eliminate rodents from your living space and worksite, and/or avoid contact with them. Keep food tightly contained, clean dishes immediately after use, do not leave pet food out all day, and seal holes to the outside—generally, make your environment inhospitable to rodents. When in an area known to be infested with rodents, avoid activities that can stir up dust, like vacuuming or sweeping, as there may be virus-containing rodent feces, urine, or saliva present. Do not sit in meadows, on haystacks, or woodpiles where rodents are likely to nest.

Treatment is supportive. Ribavirin has improved the chances of surviving HFRS although its effectiveness has not been proven in HCPS. A vaccine is available to protect against certain viruses that cause HFRS, most especially those that are prevalent in mainland China.

Altitude | Threat from: Environment

Altitude illness is a potentially fatal condition that can affect people who normally live at a low altitude and travel to a higher altitude. It can occur from elevations of 1,500 meters upwards, but is more common at elevations above 2,500 meters (8000 feet).

People most at risk are those who have experienced altitude illness before, people who have heart or lung problems and people under the age of 50. There are three different types of altitude illness: Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE) and High Altitude Pulmonary Edema (HAPE). AMS is the most common and mild form of altitude illness, HACE and HAPE are more severe. HACE is a medical emergency and if not treated and managed quickly, can result in coma and death. Management of altitude illnesses involves immediate descent and oxygen treatment. Most people who are affected, even those who develop HACE or HAPE, recover completely if moved to a lower elevation. There are medicines that can be administered by trained medical professionals.

Anyone travelling to high altitude, especially higher than 2,500 meters, should be aware of and recognise the symptoms of altitude illness. See your travel health professional before departure, for individual advice on preventive measures, especially if you have ever suffered altitude sickness in the past, or if you have an underlying medical condition.

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