



24 – hour safety and security advice worldwide







Travel to Barcelona, Spain

Client request summary: Safety and security report for British client and four friends travelling to Barcelona, Spain, in October 2008.

Overview

Barcelona, the second largest city in Spain and capital of the Catalonia region, is a very popular destination for travellers. The city is generally safe; however, petty crimes, such as pickpocketing and bag-snatching, are common problems. Terrorism is the only other major concern for travellers. As long as commonsense precautions are taken, your visit to Barcelona should be trouble-free. Please find below your general safety and security report for the city. For additional information, please visit our [Spain](#) country page and [Barcelona](#) city guide.

Risk matrix for Barcelona

Crime	 Medium	A reasonable possibility of crime affecting the individual, involving mainly minor or petty crime. Violent crime is less likely.
Terrorism/Conflict	 Medium	A specific threat of terrorism, but no recent attacks in the city.
Political	 Low	Stable political institutions.
Kidnap	 Low	Minimal K&R activity to both nationals and visitors.
Corruption	 Low	Low levels of corruption.
Infrastructure	 Low	Developed infrastructure across the city.

Safety and security

Crime

Petty crime, including pickpocketing and bag-snatching, is quite common in Barcelona, particularly in areas frequented by tourists. Certain places are considered higher-risk, and although they need not be avoided, extreme caution and vigilance should be exercised in the vicinity of these areas; these include around museums (such as the Picasso Museum), monuments and other areas popular with foreign travellers, such as restaurants and public transport systems (such as near the Sants railway station and all of the city's Metro stations). Recent statistics indicate that the Old City (*Ciutat Vella*), which includes several popular tourist

areas, such as Plaza Catalunya, Plaza Real, Las Ramblas and the Gothic Quarter (*Barri Gòtic*), is Barcelona's number one crime hotspot. Travellers should also be especially vigilant in the Port Olympic area, Parc Güell and along Barcelona's beaches due to the risk of **street crime**.

Thieves often work in groups to surround their chosen victims, or use various scam techniques to distract the attention of intended victims. In many cases, one person causes a distraction (such as asking for directions) while accomplices perform the robbery. Another reported technique is for criminals to impersonate Spanish police officers; the victim is asked to surrender identification to the "police". Travellers should consider being stopped by a non-uniformed officer as suspicious. Genuine *Guardia Civil* and police officers only ask for identification documents and do not request that you hand over bags or wallets. Travellers should also be suspicious of strangers approaching them in the street, offering help or asking for assistance, as this is a technique often used by robbers in Spain, especially in tourist areas. Incidents of fraud, most notably involving credit cards, have also been reported in Barcelona. For more information on minimising the risk of becoming a victim of this type of fraud, please click [here](#).

Violent crime is not common in Barcelona; however, if threatened, travellers are advised to hand over any belongings, as there is a possibility that the attacker may be armed. One particular area of heightened concern in the city, due to increased numbers of violent attacks, is around Montjuic and Sagrada Familia.

Below is a list of general security tips to help ensure the safety of your person and property while in Barcelona:

- Be aware of your surroundings at all times.
- Carry bags close to your body and make sure the fastener is secure.
- Carry cameras in a shoulder bag, not around your neck. Be particularly careful when walking in crowded markets, tourist sites and bus or train stations.
- Never leave your belongings unattended.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash or wearing a lot of expensive jewellery or valuables.
- When possible, leave all important documents in a safe (or safe deposit box) at your place of residence and only carry certified copies with you.
- Avoid dark, isolated areas – it is better to explore in groups after dark and to keep to well-lit, busy streets.
- Consult a map before going out so you are more confident of where you are going; if using a map in the streets, try to do it inconspicuously. If you get lost, ask a police officer or shop assistant for directions, rather than a stranger on the street.
- Be prepared to let your bag or packages go if someone tries to snatch them. Your personal safety is far more important than your belongings.
- Trust your instincts. If someone or something makes you uneasy, avoid the person or leave the area.
- Travellers should purchase their own drinks and keep sight of them at all times to ensure they are not spiked.

Terrorism

Spain faces a high threat from terrorism and terrorist attacks occur fairly frequently. **Euskadi Ta Askatasuna** (ETA) has carried out terrorist attacks in the country for many years, with the aim of establishing an independent homeland for the Basques, who form a distinct ethnic group, in an area spanning northern Spain and south west France. Although ETA operates principally in its homeland areas, it has also carried out attacks, mostly bombings, in other parts of Spain, including Barcelona. Most notably, 21 people were killed in an ETA car bomb attack at a Barcelona shopping centre in 1987. Since declaring a formal end to its latest ceasefire in June 2007, ETA has carried out a number of attacks; most of these have been against police, government or economic targets in the Basque region, but it has also planted bombs in seaside

resorts in southern Spain during 2008. However, there have been no attacks in Barcelona by the group in recent years.

Spain's worst terrorist incident to date took place in 2004, when ten bombs exploded on commuter trains in Madrid, killing 192 people and injuring 1,400. A group of Islamists purporting to be acting for **al-Qaeda** claimed responsibility for the attacks. In Barcelona, in January 2008, police arrested 14 people believed to be connected to a Pakistani terrorist cell allegedly sympathetic to al-Qaeda; it is suspected that the cell was preparing a bombing campaign in Spain. However, there is no information to confirm that they planned to carry out an attack in Barcelona.

Despite government efforts to counter it, there is judged to be an ongoing and specific threat from terrorism in Barcelona from both Basque separatist and Islamist militant groups. The following points outline some general guidelines that should be followed to minimise the risk from terrorist attacks:

- Wherever you are, be aware of your surroundings. The very nature of terrorism suggests that there may be little or no warning of an attack.
- Be aware of conspicuous or unusual behaviour. Unusual behaviour, suspicious packages and strange devices should be reported to the police or security personnel immediately.
- Do not be afraid to move away from or leave your environment if you feel uncomfortable or if something does not seem right.
- Do not accept packages from strangers or open any mail you consider suspicious.
- Do not leave luggage unattended.
- If you are in a building located close to the site of a terrorist attack, stay away from the windows. As soon as it is deemed safe, leave the building and get as far away as possible.
- If in the vicinity of an attack, do not stay to watch what is happening, as you will only get in the way of the emergency services. There is also a risk that secondary devices may target emergency personnel.
- Make a mental note of safe havens, such as police stations and hospitals.
- For more on the threat from terrorist bombings, please click [here](#).

Contact details

Emergency numbers

- Police: 091 or 112
- Ambulance: 061 or 112
- Fire: 080 or 112

Embassy

- **British Consulate-General**
Avda Diagonal 477 - 13
Barcelona
Tel.: +34 (0)933 666200
Fax: +34 (0)933 666221
Email: barcelonaconsulate@fco.gov.uk

Should you require any further information or assistance while in Barcelona, please do not hesitate to contact red24 on +44 (0)208 707 0000.

Yours sincerely,

red24 Risk Analyst team

©copyright all rights reserved red24.info

Contact red24: e-mail >> enquiries@red24.info website >> www.red24.info

This report is confidential and for use only by the intended recipient(s). It cannot be distributed by the aforementioned recipients, to any other parties, without the prior express consent of red24. red24 will use reasonable endeavours to ensure the accuracy of information contained in this report but all such information, given its nature, shall be subject to change or alteration at any time and the use of such information is at the sole discretion of the intended recipient(s). red24 accepts no liability or responsibility in respect of any goods or services recommended herein.
