

International Travel Tips: Spain Seekers

Latest updates are highlighted in blue font.

Entry/Exit Requirements

- Your passport must not expire within six months of your travel dates.
- Global entry facilitates your return to the US. It includes TSA Precheck. Neither is required. If you don't have Global Entry, you can download the US Customs and Border Patrol's free Mobile Passport Control (MPC) app.
- The US State Dept offers a Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive alerts and be located in an emergency – www.state.gov/travelers
- European entry requirements:
EES - The Entry & Exit System has been implemented in many Shengen countries in Europe. It replaces manual passport stamping by collecting certain biometric data (facial photo and/or fingerprints.) See travel-europe.europa.eu/pub for more information.
- ETIAS - The European Travel Information and Authorization System is scheduled to launch in the fourth quarter of 2026. It is a visa waiver program.

Preparing for Departure

- Currency - order this at least two weeks ahead of time from your bank. Ask if they can provide small bills (single and 5 euro notes) for your convenience. Also check to see if they will convert foreign currency back to USD when you return. [Terri Hempstead notes that she paid a higher fee to exchange money at a bank where she did not have an account, so try your own bank first.](#)
- If you have an iPhone, you should be able to perform currency exchange calculations on it. While in your Calculator tool, click the calculator icon at the upper right corner of the display. Choose Convert and select the currency type you want to convert to by touching the three-letter code above the calculator buttons (i.e., "USD.")
- Ask the bank if credit/debit card charges incur international transaction fees.
- Let your bank know you'll be traveling so they don't flag your purchases as suspicious. You can do this online or over the phone.
- Debit and credit cards are widely accepted in Spain but small shops and street vendors might prefer cash.

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- Electrical adapters—Spain uses both Type C and Type F adapters. [Type C is two-pronged and will fit in an F outlet. F has three prongs.](#) You can purchase a combined adapter through Amazon for \$9.99, or a universal adapter. Check the description of the universal adapter to see which countries' outlets they accommodate.
- Electrical converters—dual-voltage devices like tablets and cell phones do not require a converter. For higher-draw, single-voltage appliances like hair dryers or straighteners, you will also need a step-down voltage converter to avoid ruining your equipment.
- Pickpockets seek out easy targets. Consider bringing a purse that is cross-body and/or theft proof.
- Arrange for your mail delivery to be stopped, if needed
- Find pet sitter, if applicable
- Arrange for daily roaming passes with your phone provider or purchase an eSIM plan if you're comfortable with researching the options. You can also use the free WhatsApp app to stay in touch with friends and family (it does not require wifi to operate.)
- Take a picture of your passport. If it's lost or stolen, you'll have to go to an embassy or consulate, but having a photo will facilitate the process.
- Public restrooms charge a small fee, so keep single euro notes handy
- Let me know if you have emergency contact that I should keep on file.

Packing insights

- Keep your medicines in your carryon bag, along with anything else you can't afford to be without if your luggage is delayed or lost. It's best to keep prescriptions in their original containers in case anyone questions what you're transporting.
- Also put a change of clothes (at least underwear) in your carryon.
- Keep your phone charger and power bank in your carryon or personal item.
- Stock up on prescriptions if needed. You can ask your pharmacy for a travel override.

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- Pack clothing that can be layered to accommodate a range of temperatures. It's a good idea to include a lightweight rain jacket and/or umbrella. [Temperatures should average between 50 and 60 degrees Fahrenheit during our trip, but could be warmer.](#)
- Packing cubes and hanging toiletry bags can be helpful.
- It's a good idea for women to pack a scarf or lightweight shawl for layering and entering cathedrals.

While traveling

- When you arrive in Europe, look for EES self-service kiosks where you can provide your biometric information. This should make going through Customs quicker.
- If using a backpack, do not place valuables/passports/IDs in a front pocket that can easily be accessed by a pickpocket.
- Do not use an airport currency exchange. If you need it, wait until you arrive and use an ATMs connected to a bank to get a more favorable exchange rate.
- If asked whether to pay in US Dollars or local currency or USD, choose local currency to save merchant fees.
- The most widely used rideshare app in Spain is Cabify. It's available in more locations than Uber or Lyft.

Etiquette and Local Customs

- Cover your head and shoulders in cathedrals.
- Learn a few words of the local language.
- Tipping in a bar or restaurant is optional. Consider rounding up the bill or leaving small change. You can tip 5% to 10% for excellent service.
- The main meal of the day is lunch, often eaten between 1:30 and 3:30 pm. Dinners are also served later. On our tour, they will be scheduled for 7:30 pm or later.
- Many businesses close between 2:00 pm and 5:00 pm, so this is a good time for resting up or sightseeing.
- Loud voices are considered rude, so moderate your voice in public.

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Insurance

- In the event of sickness or injury, take pictures and document everything