



OUTCAN Guide | Life in Madrid, Spain

LOCATION

Country: Spain

Town: Madrid

Base: NATO Combined Air Operations Centre Torrejón

Other info to Consider:

- Family (non-dependents) members can visit and stay 90 days without a visa.

POPULATION

Size: 3.4 million, metropolitan area is an estimated 6.7 million.

Ethnicity: 84% Spaniards (Other: Ecuadorian/Romanian/Bolivian/Columbian).

LANGUAGE(S)

Official language: Spanish

Prevalence of French or English speaking: Very limited. Some establishments will have English-speaking employees. However, English is not spoken freely or commonly. French as a second language is rare.

COST OF LIVING

Currency & Exchange rate to consider: Euro. 1 EUR = 1.47652 CAD (March 2024)

QUALITY OF LIFE

Climate and potential for severe weather, natural disasters:

- The summers are extremely hot (as high as 40C or higher). Mild winters with occasional frost.

Laws and Culture:

- Penalties for possession, use or trafficking of illegal drugs are severe. Convicted offenders can expect lengthy jail sentences.
- The consumption of alcohol in the street is banned by various municipal or regional authorities.
- Penalties for drinking and driving are severe. The legal blood alcohol limit is .05% or .03% for a new driver. Convicted offenders can expect heavy fines or jail sentences, driver's licenses may be confiscated.
- You must carry adequate ID, such as a passport, to provide to a police officer upon request. It is also highly suggested you carry electronic/paper copies of your NIE (National Identification Number) information and SOFA letter. You could be detained until you can prove your identity.
- It is illegal to photograph military installations.

Safety and Security:

- Yes, you must carry an international driver's permit when driving any vehicle. Apply for an international driver's license before leaving Canada. International driver's permits are only

valid for 12 months. For more details and contact information [**International Driving Permit - CAA National**](#).

- Petty crime, such as pickpocketing and purse snatching, occasionally occurs, particularly on public transport and in bars and nightclubs.
- There is a threat potential of terrorism in Europe. Terrorist attacks have occurred in several European cities.
- Fraud is a concern. It is recommended that you know how to protect yourself from being a fraud victim.

Level of isolation:

- There are nine Canadian families posted to this location.
- May feel very isolated due to the language barrier.

HOUSING

- Houses are generally of a good standard. The size and outdoor space will vary depending on location. If you choose to live in the city center, you will be limited to apartments potentially with a patio/balcony. If you live outside the city limits homes with yards are available.
- When securing housing, you will do this with a local agent's help (contact information will be provided once posting message received).
- Members must not secure any type of housing without prior approval from CFSU(E) housing officer.

EMPLOYMENT

Are there employment opportunities for spouses?

- Employment is extremely limited. Families should plan to be a single-income family for the duration of the posting. [**CFMWS | MFS | OUTCAN Europe | CFMWS**](#)
- Due to tax and legal implications, spousal employment in Spain is not a realistic option (SOFA agreement)

Op Tempo: Varies depending on place of work and position.

HEALTH CARE

Access:

- Medical care is good in Spain.
- Highly accessible via private hospitals/clinic (typically no wait times), public access is very similar to Canada including wait times.
- Direct billing to PSHCP is available. However, some services will need to be paid by client. All members, spouses and dependents need to ensure they approval for treatment through PSHCP.
- All bills associated with the care of dependents are the member's personal responsibility and are to be claimed through PSHCP. [**PSHCP Member Portal \(pshcp-msh.ca\)**](#)

Special needs:

- Depending on the language required (English | French), area of specialization and degree of support needed.
- There may be a wait time before finding an appropriate match and at times there may not be possible options based on availability.

Consideration for pregnancy / birth:

- Health care for pregnancy and birthing is available in Madrid through private care.

Dental:

- Dental care is good in Spain. There are multiple English speaking dental practices available.

SCHOOLING

- For an approved list of schools, please contact Children's Education Management at:
CEMGEE@forces.gc.ca
- Children's Education Management - Canada.ca
- Gestion de l'éducation des enfants - Canada.ca

Curriculum vs. Canadian curriculum:

- The curriculum varies depending on the choice of school.
- Canadian history or geography is not offered at any school.

Resources for special need children:

- Access to special needs services depends on the choice of school, language required (English | French), area of specialization and degree of support needed, so it may be very limited.
- Consult with CEM and the school before making any commitments.

CHILDCARE**Things to Consider:**

- Local childcare is available but there is no guarantee that staff will speak English or French.

TRANSPORTATION**Things to Consider:**

- Airport: Madrid Barajas Adolfo Suarez (MAD).
- Good public transportation throughout the city.

RESOURCES AND AMENITIES**Is there a Military Family Services centre available in that location?**

- No physical centre. Families in Spain are supported by the Remote Team:
MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com

Psychosocial / Mental Health Resources:

- Not at post, MFS(E) Social Workers, CAF SW/Mental Health Team for members are located in Geilenkirchen, Germany. Padre is located in Naples, Italy.

Communications:

- Cell phone and internet plans are very affordable and reliable in Spain. The houses are made of concrete walls so WIFI extenders may be needed to improve signal throughout your home. Examples of companies that provide internet and cell phones are Movistar, Digi and Vodafone.

ACTIVITIES**Access to sports or other leisure activities:**

- Plenty of recreational activities and venues are available for the whole family. Activities may not be provided in English or French.

Availability of playgrounds:

- Yes, many.

RESTRICTIONS TO CONSIDER

Are common-law relationships recognized? Yes (Referred as Pareja de Hecho).

Are same-sex couples recognized? Yes.

Medications that are illegal in the country:

- Use without a prescription for narcotic drugs or psychotropic, substances are illegal.
Cannabis is illegal.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **European Commission Country Reports (2023)**
- https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/publications/2023-european-semester-country-reports_en
- **Canadian Travel Advisories**
<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>
- **CIA World Factbooks (One Pagers from the US)**
<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/spain>
- **Living Abroad (from Gov.UK)**
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-in-spain>

For more comprehensive information, please feel free to reach out to the resources below

- MFS(E) Social Worker: MFSSocialWork@cfmws.com
- CAF Social Worker: GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca
- MFS(E) Team: MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com
- MFS(E) Regional Office: +49 (0) 2451 717 173, MFS.Europe@cfmws.com