

Police in Spain

The Spanish Police Force is split into 3 distinct groups, each of which has a different uniform and a different remit and responsibilities. All three groups are armed.

Guardia Civil

They wear green uniforms and have mainly military but some civilian functions. They are responsible for safeguarding public buildings, National security, crowd control at major events and customs duties. Their traffic branch patrol main highways – in cars and on motorbikes. They still carry associations for many people with the oppressive Franco regime, since which time their role has been reduced.

Policia Nacional (National Police)

Usually wear black uniform and white shirts – sometimes they wear blue combat-style uniforms. They can be heavily armed as their duties include the security of the Spanish Royal Family and major Government figures. They also deal with most crime investigations. If you are a victim of crime you must report to a Police Station and make a statement (denuncia). You will be given a copy to keep which you may need to make an insurance claim.

Policia Local (Municipal Police)

Perhaps the friendliest face of Spanish law enforcement, the Guardia Urbana is the local Police Force, responsible to the Mayor and Town Hall of the principality in which they serve. They wear navy uniforms with blue shirts. They deal mainly with traffic control and parking offences but tend to be helpful towards tourists and foreigners as they act as ‘ambassadors’ for their town. Although they do not investigate crime if you are a victim you can approach one and ask for help and they will invariably escort you to the nearest Police Station where you would report to the Policia Nacional. One of their major roles, particularly during the summer, is to carry out frequent traffic checks – especially in the more major tourist areas. Always have ID with you, your passport will suffice – and if you are driving make sure you have your licence and insurance papers.