



Drinking in Spain: Staying Safe and Having a Good Time

There are **real and serious risks to drinking** in Spain. Below you will find important precautions that everyone should take in order to stay safe and have a good time while studying in Spain.

If getting drunk is your approach to having fun, this is a serious problem, and you may need counseling. Talk to a friend, counselor, or faculty member, and contact counseling and/or wellbeing services at your home institution.

In the past there have been students who have caused embarrassment by binge drinking at school-sponsored events – especially abroad. **In a study abroad context, you represent your family, your home institution, your country, and even your local friends, host institution, and host families.** Irresponsible drinking is a behavior that makes you, your family, your friends, and your university, and the host universities look bad. If you get drunk, it is not funny. Most people will look down on you, even if you think you are being funny. People will not laugh *with* you. They will laugh *at* you, and/or the situation. If any social or family event has an open bar, stop yourself before you have too many drinks (two is more than enough in a professional/academic/social context where you are a foreigner).

Since most students WILL go out drinking while traveling or studying in Spain, here are basic common sense rules to follow so as to stay safe:

Don't ever do any drugs; and never while you are abroad.

Don't mix alcohol with drugs.

Do not drink more than you can handle in order to remain fully conscious of your surroundings and/or your own safety and the safety of your friends. This means: (1) Do not do shots; (2) Do not mix drinks; (3) Do not have more than 2/3 drinks depending on your physical capacity when you are a study abroad student.

Additionally, take these precautions while abroad, and make sure you will be looking out for yourself and for your friends.

- 1. Respect the local alcohol habits.** Having one drink with friends, host families, colleagues during lunch or dinner is completely normal. It's a part of cultural enrichment to sample local wines, beers, and liquors. Do not feel obliged to participate if you feel uncomfortable.
- 2. Use the buddy system.** Spain is a very safe country. Still, in big cities such as Madrid or Barcelona, but even in San Sebastian and Pamplona, it is **CRITICAL** that you bring a friend with you to be vigilant and look out for you and your drink, and you should reciprocate this care and concern.
- 3. Have a "designated walker."** Make sure someone looks out for the group. When you are in a different country where you are clearly a foreigner, it is a good strategy to have a designated walker. This sober friend makes sure the whole group makes it to the destination, and the whole group makes it back home.
- 4. Leave valuables in a secure place at your apartment, hotel, and not on you.** Bring as little as possible with you when you go out for a night of partying. Some cash, your I.D. (that is not your passport), and a credit card if you need it.

5. Make sure you have the local emergency number saved in your phone (Dial 112), as well as the emergency contact at your school if you end up needing help.

If everyone in your group has this information saved, at least one of you will still have it at the end of the night.

When you are out for a night of partying, your study abroad program is only peripherally responsible for you. As an international student in Spain, you need to abide by rules and regulations at your home institution, your local institution, your home country laws, and Spanish laws.

If something happens to you or your friends, notify the student leader and/or faculty leader in your program immediately.

We know you are going to have a great time in Spain. We hope you enjoy this time responsibly for your own safety and happiness.