

LOCATION

Country: Spain

Town: Madrid

Base: NATO Combined Air Operation Center Torrejon (CAOC TJ) HQ

Other info to consider:

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

POPULATION

Size: 3.2 million, metropolitan area is an estimated 6.5 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 an English-speaking employee. However, English is not spoken freely and commonly. French as a second language sometimes.

COST OF LIVING

Exchange rate to consider: Euro

QUALITY OF LIFE

Climate and potential for severe weather, natural disasters:

- Very hot in the summer (as high as 40C). 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.
- You must carry adequate ID, such as a passport, to provide to a police officer upon request. You could be detained until you can prove your identity.
- In Madrid, Barcelona and the Balearic and Canary islands, the consumption of alcohol in the street is banned by various municipal or regional authorities.
- It is illegal to photograph military installations.
- If local authorities consider you a citizen of Spain, they may refuse to grant you access to Canadian consular services.
- Penalties for drinking and driving are severe. The legal blood alcohol limit is 0.05 per cent or 0.03 per cent for new drivers. Convicted offenders can expect heavy fines or jail sentences, and driver's licences may be confiscated.

Safety and security:

- You must carry an international driver's permit. Apply for an international driver's licence before leaving Canada.
- Petty crime, such as pickpocketing and purse snatching, occasionally occurs, particularly on public transport and in bars and nightclubs.
- There is a threat of terrorism in Europe. Terrorist attacks have occurred in several European cities. There is a potential for other violent incidents.
- Credit card and ATM fraud is a concern, particularly in areas frequented by tourists.
- Internet scams originating in Spain are common.

Level of isolation:

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



HOUSING

- Houses are generally of a good standard, equipped with a completed fitted kitchen, patio and/or balcony, and garden.
- US Housing Office can help Canadian Families.
- It is imperative that members do not secure any type of housing without obtaining prior approval from CFSU(E) Housing Officer.

EMPLOYMENT

Are there employment opportunities for spouses?

- Due to tax and legal implications, spousal employment in Spain is not a realistic option.
- Limited, language barrier.
- There are very limited employment opportunities available through CFMWS, so families should plan to be a single-income family for the duration of the posting.

Op tempo: The op tempo will vary greatly depending on the position. TD is possible.

HEALTH CARE

Access: Satisfactory medical care is available in Spain.

- Only the military member has access to the base hospital.
- Highly accessible via private clinics (almost no wait times), public access is very similar to Canada, including wait times.
- English services are available, but French is very limited.
- All bills associated with the care of dependents are the member's personal responsibility and are to be claimed through PSHCP.

Special needs:

- Depending on the language required (English/French), area of specialization and degree of support needed.
- It may be a wait before finding an appropriate match and at times may not be possible based on the availability of English/French providers or resources.
- It is highly advised that the family consult with Medical Screening Officer in Canada and/or the Canadian Element to ensure that the required services are readily available in either English or French before accepting a posting.

Consideration for pregnancy/birthing:

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

Dental:

- Dental care can be accessed in town. You are required to pay upfront, and you can then claim your expenses.

SCHOOLING

- Schooling is typically at The American School of Madrid (IB) for grades JK-12, International College Spain (IB) for grades JK-12, British Council School of Madrid for grades JK-8, King's College – British School of Madrid for grades JK-8, V for grades JK-6, or Lycée Français de Madrid for grades JK-12.
- The British curriculum is only deemed compatible up to grade 8; access to the British curriculum beyond grade 8 requires WG B approval.

Curriculum vs. Canadian curriculum:

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

Resources for special needs 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

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



TRANSPORTATION

- Airport: Madrid Barajas Adolfo Suarez (MAD)
- You should carry an international driving permit. You
- Good public transportation throughout the city.

RESOURCES AND AMENITIES

Is there a Military Family Services centre available in that location?

- No, but remote services are available from MFS(E) Casteau/SHAPE located in Mons, Belgium.

Psychosocial/mental health resources:

- Not at the post, and the MFS(E) SW is for dependents only. The CAF SW/Mental Health Team for members and families is located in Geilenkirchen, Germany. The chaplain is located in Italy.

Communications (e.g. quality of Internet connection): Very good service & very reasonable prices.

ACTIVITIES

Access to sports or other leisure activities:

- Plenty of recreational activities and venues are available in this area for the whole family.

Availability of playgrounds: Yes, many

RESTRICTIONS TO CONSIDER

Are common-law relationships recognized? Yes

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 (2022)
https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2022-european-semester-country-reports_en
- Canadian Travel Advisories
<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>
- CIA World Factbooks (One pager 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>
- Consumer Price Index (CPI)
<https://data.imf.org/?sk=4FFB52B2-3653-409A-B471-D47B46D904B5>

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

- MFS(E) Social Worker Andrea Liss: liss.andrea@cfmws.com
- CAF Social Worker: GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca
- MFS(E) Shape: +32 (0) 44 65 5962, MFSE.Shape@cfmws.com
- MFS(E) Regional Office: +49 (0) 2451 717 173, MFS.Europe@cfmws.com