12 scams to avoid in Barcelona

Barcelona is safe for violent crime, but pickpockets work the tourist areas. Know these tricks and you are no longer a target.

1 · The door squeeze
A small group crowds you at the metro door (lines L1, L3, L5). One takes your phone. Stand back, bag in front.

2 · The escalator grab
Phone lifted from a back pocket on station escalators. Front zipped pocket only.

3 · The friendly question
Someone asks for directions with a map held over your phone or bag. Step back, keep a hand on your things.

4 · The stain
Sauce or “bird mess” on your clothes, a stranger helps clean it, a partner empties your pocket. Say no thanks, walk away.

5 · The petition
A clipboard pushed against you to sign. Under it, a hand in your bag. Don’t stop.

6 · Lookalike ticket websites
Sites copying the Sagrada Família name sell the same ticket for more. Book on sagradafamilia.org or a well-known partner.

7 · The fake police officer
Asks to check your wallet or passport. Real police don’t look inside your wallet. Offer to go to a police station.

8 · The table phone
A flyer or menu is placed over your phone on a café table and lifted with it. Nothing on the table.

9 · The chair-back bag
Bags on chairs vanish on terraces, phones from beach towels at Barceloneta. Bag between your feet; take turns to swim.

10 · Fake ETIAS websites
Sites already sell “ETIAS applications” and fast-track border passes. ETIAS was not running in November 2026. When it starts, use only travel-europe.europa.eu.

11 · The airport taxi tout
Someone offers a taxi inside the terminal. Use only the official rank outside, or the Aerobús.

12 · The currency offer
A card machine or ATM offers to charge you in dollars. The rate is worse: always choose euros. Prefer bank ATMs to the independent ones on tourist streets, which often add high fees.

IF SOMETHING IS STOLEN
Block cards · lock phone · police report (Mossos d’Esquadra) · insurer within 24 h

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Want the full kit? Entry rules, a 4-day itinerary, tipping and useful phrases, emergency numbers, budget planner in dollars. Barcelona Anshin, US edition.