# Bilbao overwhelmed by unruly ‘English invasion’ ahead of Europa League final



As the sun set over Bilbao, the Basque city braced itself for what many described as an ‘English invasion’ ahead of the Europa League final between Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester United. An estimated 80,000 fans descended on the picturesque locale, and the atmosphere quickly shifted from festive anticipation to one of distress among local residents, who voiced their fury at the drunken antics and unruly behaviour of the supporters.

Drinking heavily throughout the day, thousands of Tottenham fans congregated in two major avenues, igniting a revelry that quickly spiralled out of control. Witnesses recounted scenes of chaos: supporters climbed lampposts, vandalised public property, and engaged in aggressive behaviours that shocked those living nearby. Several residents lamented that such disruptive antics were emblematic of what they termed “yobbish behaviour” often associated with English football fans. Izaro Laka, a local resident, expressed her disappointment, stating, “I’ve never seen people so drunk and behaving so badly. The English are yobs… they come to Spain to drink and cause trouble.”

Meanwhile, Manchester United fans had claimed their own territory in Plaza Nueva, a historic square renowned for its vibrant ambience and pintxos bars. Here, fans celebrated by lighting flares and singing loudly, right up until police intervened to break up minor scuffles among rival supporters. One regular at a local bar, Odon Sanchez, articulated the shared frustration felt by many, quipping, “We love our football in Bilbao, but the conduct of these people disgusts me.”

This chaotic atmosphere was not confined to Bilbao alone; reports surfaced of tensions spilling over into nearby San Sebastian and Santander, where rival groups of fans were involved in confrontations. Despite the disruption, police confirmed that no major incidents or arrests occurred in relation to the fans' activities, though concerns lingered over the potential for increased volatility as kickoff approached.

While many fans boasted of indulging in 20 to 30 pints, the reality also highlighted deeper issues. The soaring costs of travel and accommodation compounded the experience for supporters, many of whom faced significant financial strain. With hotels in Bilbao at near-total capacity and prices soaring to exorbitant levels—some reportedly reaching £1,300 for a single night—many fans sought alternative accommodations in surrounding towns. The pressure of these costs compelled supporters to explore unconventional travel options, including possible long drives and complex itineraries involving multiple train journeys.

In anticipation of the influx and to mitigate potential violence, local authorities implemented the largest security operation in the region’s history, deploying an estimated 5,000 police personnel throughout the city. Bingen Zuperia, the Basque Government's security advisor, expressed his apprehension about the scale of the event, stating, “I won’t hide the fact that I’m nervous; this job generates moments of anxiety.” Their efforts included establishing safety perimeters around the stadium and closing certain roads to control the movement of ticketless fans, of which around 50,000 were expected to flood the city.

As the clock ticked closer to match time, the city’s infrastructure was put under immense pressure—both from the crowds and the looming threat of power outages, a major concern following a recent widespread electricity failure in Spain. Officials from Red Electrica de España worked diligently to ensure that uninterrupted power would support both the match and the significant security operation demanding immediate resources.

With giant screens erected across the city for fans without tickets, the excitement was palpable, but the undercurrent of tension remained. In this balancing act of delight and discontent, local sentiments echoed a broader distinction: a love for football artfully juxtaposed with frustrations over conduct perceived as wholly unwelcome. As the events unfolded leading up to the final, Bilbao found itself not only as a host to a significant sporting event but also as a stage for the complex social interaction between passionate fans and the residents of a city that prides itself on its culture and hospitality.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 3, 4, 5
2. Paragraphs 2, 3, 4
3. Paragraph 2
4. Paragraphs 2, 3
5. Paragraph 6
6. Paragraph 2
7. Paragraph 6

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-14734927/Man-United-Tottenham-fans-fury-Bilbao-Europa-League-final.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2025/may/09/spurs-manchester-united-fans-weigh-up-bilbao-travel-options-europa-league-final> - This article discusses the challenges faced by Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester United fans in securing affordable travel and accommodation for the Europa League final in Bilbao. It highlights the scarcity of hotel rooms, with 97% already booked, and the exorbitant prices, with some rooms starting at £1,300. Fans are exploring alternative travel options, including indirect flights, trains, and driving, to manage the high costs associated with attending the final.
3. <https://www.the-independent.com/travel/news-and-advice/ferry-to-bilbao-flights-hotel-prices-b2747007.html> - This piece reports on the surge in hotel prices in Bilbao ahead of the Europa League final between Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur. With tens of thousands of fans expected, hotel prices have skyrocketed, with some establishments charging thousands of pounds for a single night's stay. Many fans, anticipating their team's advancement, booked travel arrangements in advance, only to find limited and costly accommodation options remaining.
4. <https://www.cityam.com/europa-league-final-tottenham-and-man-united-fans-face-price-gouging/> - This article highlights the financial challenges faced by Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester United fans in attending the Europa League final in Bilbao. It details the soaring costs of flights, match tickets, and hotel accommodations, with some rooms priced over £500 per night and flights exceeding £1,000. Fans are considering alternative options, such as staying in nearby cities and traveling to Bilbao for the match.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/travel/bilbao-spain-guide-tottenham-manchester-united-europa-league-final-bars-pubs-eat-see-do-b1226892.html> - This travel guide provides insights into Bilbao, Spain, as the host city for the Europa League final between Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester United. It offers recommendations on where to eat, highlighting traditional pintxos bars in Plaza Nueva, and where to drink, suggesting various bars and pubs in the city. The guide also provides information on local attractions and activities for fans visiting Bilbao for the final.
6. <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/man-united-tottenham-europa-league-final-bilbao-b2747787.html> - This article confirms that the Europa League final between Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur will take place in Bilbao, regardless of which teams advance. It details the allocation of tickets, with each team receiving up to 15,000 tickets, and the remainder available for general sale, hospitality, and sponsors. The piece also touches upon the performances of both teams in the semi-finals leading up to the final.
7. <https://www.irishtimes.com/sport/soccer/2025/05/08/manchester-united-and-tottenham-to-meet-in-europa-league-final/> - This article reports on Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur reaching the Europa League final, set to take place in Bilbao on May 21, 2025. It highlights Manchester United's 4-1 comeback win against Athletic Bilbao, secured by a brace from Mason Mount, and Tottenham's progression to the final. The piece also notes that this will be the third all-English final in the competition's history.