# Bilbao’s Europa League final marred by fan disorder despite festive atmosphere



In the aftermath of the UEFA Europa League final held on 21 May 2025 in Bilbao, tensions have flared between local residents and British football fans. The match, which saw Tottenham Hotspur defeat Manchester United 1-0, was marred not only by the intensity of the game but also by reports of unruly behaviour from supporters. Images surfaced of fans clambering up traffic signals and engaging in public drinking and urination, prompting outrage among the locals who expressed their disdain online. Many were particularly vocal about the implications of the disorderly conduct on the community, noting that taxpayers would eventually shoulder the burden of any damage incurred.

Social media quickly became the platform for citizens’ frustrations. As one user pointed out, any comparable disturbance linked to events outside football would have typically led to arrests and penalties, yet football seems to afford a disturbing leniency to such conduct. Another observation highlighted the continued impact of such fan behaviour on popular destinations like Benidorm, suggesting that the problem is not isolated to specific events but rather indicative of a broader issue facing popular tourist destinations in Spain.

In the lead-up to the final, acquiring accommodation in Bilbao had already proven challenging, with approximately 97% of available hotels sold out or priced excessively—some charging upwards of £1,300 for just one night. Many fans, eager to support their teams, faced not only logistical challenges but also substantial financial strain, leading to plans for travel adjustments, including indirect flights and regional transport options. Reports indicated that easyJet flights from Manchester and Gatwick saw ticket prices soaring to over £600, highlighting the exploitation that often accompanies major sporting events.

Despite the disruptive behaviour by some fans, it is essential to recognise the overall atmosphere during the final. In Bilbao's vibrant Plaza Nueva, local bars buzzed with celebratory English supporters, as hospitality workers noted that most fans displayed respectful behaviour, cultivating a festive yet harmonious environment. The city managed to showcase its organisational capabilities and cultural embrace amidst the cacophony of footy chants and festive spirits.

However, criticism has also emerged regarding the playing styles demonstrated during the final match itself. Observers lamented the ultra-defensive tactics employed by Tottenham, which, despite ultimately securing the win, detracted from the spectacle. Athletic Club supporters, disappointed by their absence from the final after years of striving, expressed a sense of justice missed in the overall narrative of the event.

The juxtaposition of jubilant celebrations and lapses in decorum encapsulates the complex relationship between local populations and the influx of international fans during pivotal moments in sports. While local communities strive to balance the economic benefits associated with tourism and events like the Europa League, the social ramifications of fan behaviour demand ongoing consideration and dialogue.

As this latest episode unfolds, it reinforces the vital importance of recognising the impact of sports on community dynamics—both positive and negative. The hope remains that future events will foster respect and celebration without allowing the darker aspects of fan culture to overshadow the joy that football can bring.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2060215/spanish-locals-furious-alcoholic-lowlife), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/football/2025/may/09/spurs-manchester-united-fans-weigh-up-bilbao-travel-options-europa-league-final)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2060215/spanish-locals-furious-alcoholic-lowlife), [[5]](https://cadenaser.com/euskadi/2025/05/22/como-en-santo-tomas-o-aste-nagusia-pero-con-vodka-los-bares-de-la-plaza-nueva-celebran-la-fiesta-inglesa-radio-bilbao/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/football/2025/may/09/spurs-manchester-united-fans-weigh-up-bilbao-travel-options-europa-league-final), [[3]](https://www.the-independent.com/travel/news-and-advice/ferry-to-bilbao-flights-hotel-prices-b2747007.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[4]](https://as.com/opinion/ahi-tenias-que-haber-estado-tu-athletic-n/), [[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025_UEFA_Europa_League_final)
* Paragraph 5 – [[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Football_hooliganism)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2060215/spanish-locals-furious-alcoholic-lowlife> - 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 travel challenges faced by Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester United fans ahead of the UEFA Europa League final in Bilbao. With limited accommodation and high prices, many supporters are considering alternative travel options, including indirect flights, trains, or driving. The piece highlights the scarcity of hotel rooms, with Booking.com reporting 97% of venues already sold out, and the high costs of direct flights, with prices around £1,300 for a single night. Fans express concerns over the exploitation by airlines and hotels due to the surge in demand.
3. <https://www.the-independent.com/travel/news-and-advice/ferry-to-bilbao-flights-hotel-prices-b2747007.html> - This article highlights the surge in hotel prices in Bilbao ahead of the UEFA Europa League final between Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur. Some establishments are charging thousands of pounds for a single night's stay, leading to frustration among fans. Many supporters, anticipating their team's advancement, booked travel arrangements in advance, only to find limited and costly accommodation options remaining. The piece also touches upon the high prices of flights, with easyJet tickets from Manchester and Gatwick to Bilbao costing over £600.
4. <https://as.com/opinion/ahi-tenias-que-haber-estado-tu-athletic-n/> - This opinion piece expresses frustration and disappointment following the UEFA Europa League final, where Athletic Club did not qualify, leaving the impression that they deserved more. It criticizes the quality of the semifinal match between Manchester United and Tottenham, highlighting poor play from the finalists. The author laments the ultra-defensive approach of Spurs, who won the title after 17 years without success, despite being close to relegation in the Premier League. The atmosphere in Bilbao was extraordinary, with streets filled with fans and the city shining in event organization, despite 400 tickets remaining unsold for the final.
5. <https://cadenaser.com/euskadi/2025/05/22/como-en-santo-tomas-o-aste-nagusia-pero-con-vodka-los-bares-de-la-plaza-nueva-celebran-la-fiesta-inglesa-radio-bilbao/> - This article describes the festive atmosphere in Bilbao's Plaza Nueva during the UEFA Europa League final, with thousands of English fans, especially from Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur, gathering in the area. Local bars experienced a celebration reminiscent of major city festivities, with English chants and notable consumption of vodka and beer. Despite the large influx and consumption, hospitality workers praised the respectful behavior of the fans, with no incidents reported. The day was so intense that some establishments couldn't meet the demand for non-alcoholic beverages, and some bars reportedly doubled prices for English customers.
6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025_UEFA_Europa_League_final> - This Wikipedia page provides detailed information about the 2025 UEFA Europa League final, which took place on 21 May 2025 at San Mamés in Bilbao, Spain. The match featured English clubs Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester United. Tottenham Hotspur won the match 1–0, securing their third UEFA Cup/Europa League title and their first European trophy since 1984. The page includes details about the match, teams, venue, and the significance of the victory for Tottenham Hotspur.
7. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Football_hooliganism> - This Wikipedia article discusses football hooliganism, defined as violent and destructive behaviors by spectators at association football events. It covers the history, causes, and manifestations of hooliganism, including conflicts between rival fan groups, stadium violence, and clashes with police. The article also distinguishes between hooligans and other supporter groups like ultras and barras bravas, noting that while ultras are fanatically supportive, they do not necessarily engage in violence. The piece provides a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon, its impact on football culture, and measures taken to address it.