



OSAC Country Security Report Cameroon

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This report is intended to supplement the U.S. Department of State Cameroon Travel Advisory and [Cameroon Country Information Page](#).

Embassy & Consulate Contact Information

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OSAC Country Chapter(s)

The Douala and Yaoundé Country Chapters meet semi-annually.

Contact [OSAC's Africa team](#) with any questions.

Cameroon Travel Advisory

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#) at the date of this report's publication assesses that travelers should exercise increased caution in Cameroon due to crime. Do not travel to North, Far North, Northwest, Southwest Regions, and parts of East and Adamawa Regions due to crime and kidnapping. Do not travel to Far North Region due to terrorism. Do not travel to Northwest and Southwest Regions due to armed violence, crime, and kidnapping.

Crime

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Yaoundé and Douala as being **CRITICAL**-threat locations for crime directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has included a Crime "C" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Cameroon, indicating that there may be widespread violent crime and/or organized crime present in the country, and/or that local law enforcement may have limited ability to respond to serious crimes.

High unemployment and an under-equipped police force continue to fuel criminality in Yaoundé, Douala, and other cities. An influx of refugees fleeing conflicts in the Central African Republic (CAR) and Nigeria has strained Cameroon's economy, putting pressure on already weak basic social services and exacerbating overcrowding of already densely populated urban and peri-urban areas, especially in the East Region. Cameroon's borders remain porous, increasing the potential for spillover from neighboring countries. At the same time, the ongoing unrest and resultant humanitarian crisis in the country's Anglophone regions has displaced more than one million people within the Northwest and Southwest Regions, as well in the neighboring Littoral and West Regions. Lack of access to basic services and livelihood opportunities have increased the vulnerability of displaced persons and led to negative coping mechanisms, including crime and armed banditry, particularly around areas where those fleeing instability have resettled.

Criminal activity is a major concern for the official and private U.S. communities in Cameroon. Most crime is economically motivated. Street crime is endemic in major metropolitan areas, and ranges from opportunistic to violent in nature. Low-level and more sophisticated criminals continue to target wealthy Cameroonians, expatriates, and members of the diplomatic community. Criminals have robbed expatriates as well as locals inside and outside their residences, on the street, in restaurants, and in shops. Pickpockets operate at virtually all large gatherings and soccer matches, as well as at airports. Thieves often attempt to distract a victim by asking questions or bumping/jostling them, allowing an accomplice to snatch valuables.

Criminals may be armed. Often, thieves use knives or razor blades to cut valuables out of pockets, handbags, or backpacks. Thieves may also draw victims in close and place the tip of a knife or other sharp object in the victim's side, while leading the victim to an isolated location or crowd before taking or demanding money. Thieves routinely use motorcycles to conduct drive-by snatchings of purses and other valuables. Theft by intimidation or extortion is also a common tactic, with criminal groups brandishing machetes and using them in the face of resistance or non-compliance.

Generally, there are upticks in street crime, thefts from occupied and unoccupied vehicles, residential break-ins, highway banditry, and armed robberies in the months of November and December due to the holidays. These crimes often escalate to violence, especially when victims resist or fight back; victims should comply with the demands of criminals as much as possible. Many crimes involve an "inside man" and target individuals or locations associated with payrolls, money transfers, or large sums of cash.

Theft of items from hotel rooms is common. Home invasions by gangs occur in wealthier neighborhoods, especially at locations without 24-hour guards and residential security enhancements (e.g. perimeter walls, window grilles, solid-core/metal doors).

Carjacking is less common around Yaoundé; however, it remains a concern throughout the country and has led to deadly confrontations.

Violent crime, including armed robbery and carjacking, has increased around Douala and some towns in the Littoral Region. Internal displacement and economic desperation stemming from the Anglophone crisis are likely drivers of this trend.

Commercial scams targeting foreigners, including U.S. citizens, continue to be a problem. The scams generally involve phony offers of lucrative sales/business opportunities and requests for additional funds to pay for unforeseen airport and/or customs fees.

Although crime can occur anywhere, exercise caution in areas of large gatherings, as these locations are common for theft and pocketing to occur. While walking on the street, hold bags, purses, etc. securely on the side of your body opposite the street, as it is common for taxi-motorcycles to drive by and snatch bags.

The U.S. Embassy's ability to provide consular services in remote and rural areas of Cameroon is extremely limited due to official travel restrictions and security concerns. The U.S. Embassy restricts U.S. official travel to the North and Far North Regions, along with parts of the East Region bordering CAR due to risk of violent crime and terrorism. All Embassy travel to these three regions requires advance coordination with host-nation security forces due to terrorist and criminal activities including attacks and kidnappings. Due to the increasingly violent conflict in the Anglophone regions, the Embassy also restricts official, mission-essential travel to Northwest and Southwest Regions. The Embassy and Cameroon's military authorities also restrict travel to the Bakassi Peninsula.

Cameroon's borders with many of its neighbors remain porous, allowing the activities of criminals, terrorist groups, political militants, and other armed actors to spill over into Cameroonian territory from other countries, especially Nigeria, Chad, and CAR. In addition, cross-border migration occurs frequently between Cameroon and its neighbors due to normal commercial activities or instability-driven humanitarian flight. Military operations sometimes cross into Cameroon. Exercise extreme caution within 60 miles of the following Cameroonian borders: Cameroon's border in the North and Adamawa Regions, which abuts Nigeria's Adamawa State, as Boko Haram and Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham in West Africa (ISIS-WA) elements are active in the area; the border area with Chad due to terrorist activity; and the border areas with the Central Africa Republic due to criminality and the possibility of encountering armed groups.

Avoid travel after dark throughout the country due to the heightened risk for traffic accidents and increased criminality at night.

Kidnapping Threat

The U.S. Department of State has included a Kidnapping "K" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Cameroon, indicating that criminal or terrorist individuals or groups have threatened to and/or have seized or detained and threatened to kill, injure, or continue to detain individuals to compel a third party (including a governmental organization) to do or abstain from doing something as a condition of release.

The State Department warns U.S. citizens to avoid all travel to the North and Far North Regions because of terrorist threats – including kidnapping – presented by ISIS-WA and Boko Haram. Each group has actively targeted foreign residents, tourists, and government leaders in the North and Far North Region and have reportedly kidnapped at least 37 foreigners altogether since 2013. Since 2015, these groups have carried out dozens of suicide bombings in the North and Far North Regions, including in Maroua; in recent years, successful attacks have been limited to the border areas with Nigeria.

Kidnapping and kidnapping-for-ransom are serious security concerns, especially in the Northwest and Southwest Regions, as well as areas bordering northern Nigeria and CAR. Boko Haram and ISIS-WA have several years of history engaging in this tactic to raise money for their causes. Criminal elements may also engage in this activity for financial gain. Separatist militants and criminals taking advantage of the conflict in Northwest and Southwest Regions have kidnapped Cameroonian government officials, local security force members, and foreigners. Kidnappers –criminal or separatist in nature – frequently employ brutal force against victims and have increasingly targeted locals of all backgrounds.

Terrorism

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Douala and Yaoundé as being **MEDIUM**-threat locations for terrorism directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has included a Terrorism “T” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Cameroon, indicating that terrorist attacks have occurred and/or specific threats against civilians, groups, or other targets may exist.

Two Nigeria-based terrorist groups operate in the North and Far North Regions of Cameroon: Boko Haram and ISIS-WA. ISIS-WA, which initially emerged as a splinter group from Boko Haram, is an ISIS-recognized regional affiliate; it has become increasingly active in northeastern Nigeria and neighboring areas of Lake Chad Basin countries over recent years. Since 2015, there have been over 100 documented and reported detonations of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) along roadways, in villages, and in local markets in Cameroon by Nigeria-based terrorist groups. Kidnappings of Cameroonian nationals by terrorist groups and suicide bombing attacks have also occurred in the North and Far North Regions. Boko Haram and ISIS-WA each likely aspire to target Westerners for kidnapping and attack.

Political Violence and Civil Unrest

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Yaoundé and Douala as being **HIGH**-threat locations for political violence directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Civil Unrest “U” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Cameroon. Civil unrest can develop quickly without prior notice, often interrupting logistics and services. Avoid demonstration activity, as even those planned to remain peaceful have the potential to turn violent.

Elections/Political Stability

Violence in the Northwest and Southwest Regions by the government and separatist parties to the conflict continues unabated; avoid travel to these regions. A U.S. citizen traveling by road died in crossfire between separatists and Cameroonian security forces in the Northwest Region in late 2018. In late 2019, expatriate and NGO workers were caught in a vehicle ambush that was intended for a Cameroonian military convoy.

In the ensuing years, armed separatists have conducted attacks on Cameroonian government security forces and government officials, resulting in the deaths of over a dozen police and gendarmes, and multiple kidnappings of Cameroonian officials. Some of these attacks have involved the use of remotely detonated roadside bombs targeting government and civilian vehicle convoys alike. Suspected separatist militants have also demanded that schools remain shuttered and have allegedly attacked educational buildings that have reopened.

In 2018 and 2019, the conflict increased in intensity and took on an added dimension of violence, with the razing of villages, hospitals, churches, and capital infrastructure, as well as attacks on civilians by both parties to the conflict.

Since June 2020, separatists have attempted and successfully carried out multiple IED attacks in Yaoundé and Douala, and the threat for similar attacks nationwide remains. In July 2022, an IED attack was reported in the Damas neighborhood of Yaoundé. The incident resulted in the injury of one civilian. In October 2023, there were reports of an IED defused in a travel agency in the Biyem Assi neighborhood of Yaounde. To date, most IED incidents have targeted areas of large public gatherings, such as populated markets, bars, and road junctions. Even though these IED incidents have, to date, not directly targeted U.S. citizens and the places they frequent, the possibility exists that these armed actors could target Western persons and interests at any time.

Protests & Demonstrations

Those seeking to assemble and peacefully protest must apply for and receive explicit approval from the government; otherwise, they are in violation of the law.

Demonstrations, ranging from workers' strikes to political rallies and protests, are common in many major cities in Cameroon, including Yaoundé. Following the 2018 Presidential elections, defeated opposition parties have occasionally called for demonstrations. The government usually bans these demonstrations and quickly arrests those attempting to assemble. A large-scale protest in Douala led to police-involved non-lethal shooting of members of the opposition leadership with rubber projectiles and water cannons. Ongoing political disputes, including the government's detention of senior opposition leaders, increase the potential for demonstrations. Avoid large gatherings; even peaceful demonstrations can escalate to violence. The next presidential elections are scheduled to be held by October 2025.

For the past several years, there has been a political crisis in the Northwest and Southwest Regions due of years of feelings of marginalization of Anglophone Cameroonians. Since 2016, the area has experienced widespread civil unrest that included walkouts and work stoppages that shuttered schools and businesses. Owners of stores and markets staged organized closures of storefronts, disrupting services. Elements of those expressing discontent subsequently have called for secession from Cameroon; the government often responds with violence.

The expression of anti-government sentiment has led to the detention of dual U.S.-Cameroonian nationals.

Anti-U.S./Anti-Western Sentiment

There have been no reports of any widespread anti-U.S. or anti-Western incidents or sentiment since 2015. However, the potential for lone actor terror attacks motivated by anti-Western or anti-U.S. sentiment remains.

Law Enforcement

Police: Dial **17** on landlines or **117** on cell phones.

Fire: Dial **18** on landlines or **118** on cell phones.

The Cameroonian National Police and Gendarmerie (Defense Ministry) are the nation's primary law enforcement organizations, providing traditional policing services as well as security and anti-terrorism operations throughout the country. Due to the continued terrorist activities in the Far North and North Regions, political violence in the Northwest and Southwest Regions, and border instability in the East Region, Police and Gendarmerie resources are stretched thin and are not adequate to conduct traditional law enforcement activities at the appropriate level needed in this critical crime-threat environment.

Police Response

Local law enforcement and security personnel struggle to deter and respond to criminal activities. Police response is often delayed and non-existent in some areas; perpetrators of crimes are rarely caught. Police and security forces lack training and equipment. The Police and Gendarmerie often lack transportation and/or the fuel required to respond to calls for assistance. In some cases, police and security force members have colluded with criminal elements and/or perpetrated criminal acts. Checkpoints and roadblocks often serve as a venue for police, military forces, and gendarmes to extort bribes from travelers.

U.S. citizens encountering difficulties should contact local authorities and the U.S. Embassy. Any U.S. citizens detained by local authorities should remain calm, be non-confrontational, and request to contact the U.S. Embassy immediately. You may need to repeat these requests.

The Government of Cameroon does not recognize the dual citizenship of Cameroonian nationals, even if they hold U.S. passports. As a result, authorities have detained dual Cameroonian nationals for prolonged periods, and the Embassy's Consular Affairs Section has encountered difficulties in accessing dual U.S.-Cameroonian nationals in custody.

Travelers with Special Considerations

For [specific traveler concerns](#) in Cameroon, review the local laws and circumstances on the Department of State's Country Information Page.

- [Women Travelers](#)
- [LGB Travelers](#)
- [Travelers with Disabilities](#)
- [Student Travelers](#)
- [Faith-Based Travelers](#)

Rule of Law, Arbitrary Detention, Official Harassment, Corruption, & Transparency

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Risk of Wrongful Detention "D" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Cameroon.

Corruption exists throughout Cameroon; it is not uncommon for travelers to be stopped at police or Gendarme checkpoints along major roadways and asked for a bribe or generally harassed. The U.S. Embassy advises against paying bribe money to security forces.

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government does not implement the law effectively. There are numerous reports of government corruption. Officials sometimes engage in corrupt practices with impunity. The law identifies different offenses as corruption, including influence peddling, involvement in a prohibited employment, and failure to declare conflict of interest. Reporting corruption is encouraged through exempting whistleblowers from criminal proceedings. Corruption in official examinations is punishable by up to five years' imprisonment, a substantial monetary fine, or both. In addition to the laws, the National Anticorruption Agency (CONAC), the Special Criminal Court, the National Financial Investigation Agency, the Ministry in Charge of Supreme State Audit, and the Audit Bench of the Supreme Court also contribute to fighting corruption in the country. CONAC, the most prominent of the anticorruption agencies, is constrained by the absence of a law empowering it to combat corruption. There are reports that senior officials sentenced to prison are not always required to forfeit ill-gotten gains.

Cybersecurity

The Embassy and members of federal law enforcement have identified a wide range of internet scams based in Cameroon. These schemes cover a broad spectrum of bogus activities, including

child adoptions, insurance claims, dating scams, real estate, and the offers of goods and services, such as domestic services, agricultural products, antiques, and exotic/domesticated animals. Often, these cyber scams involve “advance fee” requests; frequently, victims receive little to nothing in return.

In 2016, a U.S. citizen was the victim of attempted blackmail at the hands of an individual he had met via social media. During several video chat sessions, the victim participated in consensual, sexually explicit activity. The individual recorded the activity and threatened to turn the video over to the police as part of a criminal complaint unless the victim met the individual’s demand for money.

A recent development in cyber scams has been sending threatening emails via text message, WhatsApp, or other social media, demanding that recipients demonstrate they have “chosen a side” in the Anglophone crisis – either the separatists’ or the government’s – by sending mobile funds to the scammer. Scammer affiliation with separatist elements or the government is immaterial; they may be unaffiliated criminals exploiting the crisis for financial gain.

Import/Export Restrictions

Cameroon restricts the importation and exportation of certain items. Strict import and export regulations, particularly with regard to pharmaceuticals and wood products, are enforced. It is illegal to buy, sell, kill, or capture any protected wild animal or trade its parts without a license, including ivory. Offenders will be prosecuted and could receive a prison sentence or a fine for buying or trafficking in these goods. Satellite phones require prior authorization before usage in country.

A country-specific listing of items/goods prohibited from being exported to the country or that are otherwise restricted is available from the U.S. International Trade Agency [website](#).

Additional resources and reports can be found in the [OSAC Traveler Toolkit](#).