



OSAC Country Security Report

Madagascar

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

Embassy & Consulate Contact Information

U.S. Embassy Antananarivo:

Lot 207 A, Point Liberty, Andranoro-Antehiroka, Antananarivo (105).
Tel: +261(20) 23-480-00; After-hours emergency: +261(33)-443-2407.
Hours: Monday-Thursday, 0800-1600; Friday, 0800-1300.

OSAC Country Chapter(s)

Antananarivo does have an active Country Chapter. Contact [OSAC's Africa team](#) with any questions.

Madagascar 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 Madagascar due to crime and civil unrest. Travelers should reconsider travel to the following areas due to violent crime and banditry:

- The area in and around the city of Tsaratanana in the Betsiboka Region;
- The area along the unnamed road connecting the city of Tsiroanomandidy in the Bongolava Region with the coastal city of Maintirano in the Melaky Region; and
- The area in and around the city of Betroka in the Anosy Region.
- The area along the road from Miandrivazo to Malaimbandy. This road is part of the National Road number 34 (RN34) that connects Antsirabe-Miandrivazo-Malaimbandy-Morondava and is located 220km west of Antsirabe.
- The area along the road from Ihosy to Betroka. The road is part of the National road number 13 or (RN13). Note that, the RN13 connects Ihosy-Ambovombe-Fort Dauphin.
- The Menabe Region south of Morondava.

Crime

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Antananarivo as being a **CRITICAL**-threat location 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 Madagascar, indicating that there is 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.

Accurate government statistics on crime rates are not generally available due to limited data collection capabilities. The most common crimes involving U.S. citizens are petty theft or robbery. Skilled pickpockets are very active in downtown Antananarivo and other crowded areas of large cities. They primarily target mobile phones, purses, and jewelry for financial gain. There have been no reports of the reuse of stolen identification.

Reports of more serious crimes (e.g., home invasions) are increasing, especially in areas with limited police/gendarme presence. While there were numerous reports of residential break-ins and home invasions in recent years, most involve Malagasy households. There is, however, a noticeable shift from property crimes involving makeshift weapons to general criminality involving handguns.

The U.S. Embassy regularly receives reports of physical attacks, armed robberies, and home invasions against local staff or diplomats’ domestic staff. Crimes targeting foreigners are uncommon but not unheard of. In 2023, there were several break-ins at diplomatic homes including two Ambassadors’ residences; however, there were no similar incidents reported in 2024.

There are allegations of security forces using official weapons to conduct home invasions and kidnappings or loaning their issued weapons to criminal elements. Highway banditry is prevalent throughout the country, especially on the major highways at nighttime. These incidents generally involve armed individuals operating in rural areas at night. Criminal elements are generally bold, committing more crimes in public areas and during the day.

Violent confrontations between the *dahalo* (criminal gangs that have their historical origins in cattle rustling and which have now branched out into general banditry) and security forces remain steadily high in several regions of Madagascar, particularly in areas south and west of the capital. In September 2021, there was a large, coordinated attack involving approximately 150 *dahalo* that left 17 civilians and two Malagasy military personnel dead in the Atsimo-Atsinanana Region.

Violent crime, such as armed robbery and assaults, is common in cities around Madagascar, notably Toamasina, Mahajanga, Nosy Be, Ankarana and Montagne d’Ambre National Parks adjacent to Diego, Isalo, the area surrounding Tolagnaro/Ft. Dauphin, Batterie Beach, and north of Toliara (Tuléar). Exercise caution when traveling through these designated areas due to violent highway robberies. The region south of the National Route (RN) 7 and RN 27, including RN 10, RN 13, and the surrounding areas, is a major area of concern due to insecurity and lack of police presence. There are some excepted areas with better security in the region, including the tourist

area on the coastal roads between Ambovombe and Farafangana; Fort Dauphin/Tolagnaro area; and RN 1B to the west of Antananarivo, between Tsiroanomandidy and Maintirano.

Kidnapping Threat

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Kidnapping “K” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Madagascar.

Kidnapping is an uncommon occurrence, largely affecting wealthy Malagasy communities, the Indo-Pakistani community, and, on rare occasion, expatriates. Kidnappings are usually financially or politically motivated and end with a paid ransom and the safe release of the victim. Most of the victims are affluent locals or their children, especially within the Indo-Pakistani business community.

Terrorism

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Antananarivo as being a **LOW**-threat location for terrorism directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Terrorism “T” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Madagascar.

There is no known or suspected terrorist activity or active terrorist groups present in Madagascar. Madagascar's limited border security capabilities create a permissive environment for smuggling people and weapons and facilitating other illicit activities such as terrorism.

Political Violence and Civil Unrest

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Antananarivo as being a **MEDIUM**-threat location for political violence directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has included a Civil Unrest “U” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Madagascar, indicating that demonstrations, protests, and/or strikes occur frequently, and/or that local law enforcement may have limited ability to respond adequately. 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

Madagascar has a history of political unrest, including numerous coups d'état. There are occasional, unconfirmed rumors that claim antigovernmental or opposition elements are seeking to destabilize the government. The political opposition accepted the results of the 2018 presidential election and supported a peaceful transition of power in 2019.

Madagascar held presidential elections in November 2023, voting to re-elect President Andry Rajoelina. In the lead up to the November 2023 elections, opposition candidates organized numerous protests in the capital, Antananarivo. Supporters of opposition candidates organized political rallies and protests throughout October and November, routinely clashing with security forces and installing home-made roadblocks. Some opposition candidates called for an electoral boycott, resulting in low voter turnout ranging from 15%-30% by district.

Protests & Demonstrations

In the capital, Antananarivo, there is historical precedence for large groups to gather near the Presidential Palace, along Avenue de l'Indépendance, and near Lake Behoririka to protest various grievances. The area around Avenue de l'indépendance, also known as 13 May Square, is a symbolic location for demonstration activities due to previous events culminating in major political upheaval. The government regularly denied requests in 2023 from various groups to demonstrate in these areas and deployed a heavy security presence to prevent anyone from gathering in the downtown area. There are frequent protests at universities around Madagascar demanding the payment of student stipends. These protests escalated to confrontation with security forces and fatalities in some cases. Other sectors, such as healthcare workers, also regularly protest over unpaid salaries. Most protests are generally peaceful but can escalate into a more serious situation with little to no warning.

Anti-U.S./Anti-Western Sentiment

Historically, there is limited anti-U.S. sentiment throughout Madagascar. The French have a complicated relationship with their former colony—public sentiment and views on France and the effect of colonialization are nuanced and subject to change depending on variety of socio-economic factors. Additionally, there are some disagreements between the Malagasy and French governments regarding the ownership of several uninhabited islands to the west of Madagascar. In Antananarivo, there have been several demonstrations by various Malagasy groups at/near the French Embassy, but to date these events have not been violent. While Americans are generally viewed favorably, many Americans are visibly foreign or *Vazaha* and may be confused for another western nationality such as the French.

Law Enforcement

The emergency line in Madagascar is **117**.

Entry-mid law enforcement and security officials primarily speak Malagasy. Some senior officials speak French fluently, but prefer to speak in Malagasy. Most law enforcement and military personnel have limited or no English language skills.

National Police, under the authority of the Public Security Ministry, are responsible for maintaining law and order in urban areas. The National Gendarmerie and military report to the Ministry of Armed Forces. The Gendarmerie are responsible for maintaining law and order in rural areas at the village level, protecting government facilities, and operating a maritime police

contingent. The military is also active in rural areas, particularly to maintain order in areas affected by cattle rustling and banditry. Civilian authorities do not generally maintain effective control over the security forces, especially outside of the capital city. There are regular reports of law enforcement and other security forces' personnel committing crimes, abuses against local populace, and other illegal activities.

Due to rising criminality, the country is experiencing an enhanced police presence and crackdown on crime, which has led to more frequent stop-and-search incidents. The U.S. Embassy has received an increase in reports of individuals being threatened or stopped for bribes during traffic checkpoints.

Police Response

Due to the lack of resources and equipment, police response from both the National Police and Gendarmerie to victims of a crime is often limited, slow, or nonexistent. This is primarily due to the lack of staffing, training, and funding, and reflects the broader economic situation. The likelihood of the security forces responding to an incident depends on availability of personnel, vehicles, and fuel for vehicles. Although the National Police and Gendarmerie normally take incidents involving foreigners seriously and deal with them quickly, there are reports indicating a failure of law enforcement response when called.

Travelers with Special Considerations

For [specific traveler concerns](#) in Madagascar, 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 Madagascar.

Weak governance, poorly trained/equipped law enforcement, varied geography, deteriorating infrastructure, lack of capacity/resources, and widespread corruption make Madagascar a safe haven for illegal activities and businesses, including wildlife trafficking, deforestation, and illegal fishing.

The Embassy has received reports of police harassment of the local populace, primarily solicitations for bribes related to traffic stops or while walking in public areas. Police

occasionally use reasons such as stopping people in vehicles for incorrect data or visa paperwork as leverage to obtain bribes, but in some reported cases, the police simply ask for a *cadeaux* (“gift,” code for a bribe). The U.S. Embassy recommends not paying any bribes, and reporting incidents to the Consular Section.

Cybersecurity

There are limited cybersecurity issues in Madagascar, as there is limited penetration of the internet throughout most of the country. Although there have been allegations of technical sabotage of some websites, the internet is considered among the more reliable sources of information, as many internet servers are located outside the country.

Import/Export Restrictions

The Government of Madagascar restricts the export of certain rare materials, to include precious gems and rosewood. Before purchasing or transporting gemstones, seek clarification of the applicable laws. Any precious materials should come with a certificate of authenticity and a certificate to allow for exportation from Madagascar.

The use of satellite phones requires authorization from the local regulatory agency (ARTEC).

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](#).