



# OSAC Country Security Report Portugal

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

## Embassy & Consulate Contact Information

### U.S. Embassy Lisbon

Av. das Forças Armadas, 1600-081 Lisbon.

Tel: +351 21 770 2122; Emergency After-Hours Tel: +351 21 770 2122 or +351 21 727 3300.

Hours: Monday-Friday, 0800 to 1700.

### U.S. Consulate in the Azores

Av. Príncipe do Mónaco No, 6-2 F, 9500-237 Ponta Delgada, Açores.

Tel: +351 296 308 330. Emergency After-Hours Tel: +351 21 727 3300.

Hours: Monday-Friday, 0800-1700

## OSAC Country Chapter

OSAC Portugal is revitalizing it's Country Chapter based in Lisbon. Contact [OSAC's Europe team](#) or [RSOLisbon@state.gov](mailto:RSOLisbon@state.gov) with any questions.

## Portugal Travel Advisory

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#) at the date of this report's publication assesses that travelers should exercise normal precautions in Portugal.

## Crime

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Lisbon and Ponta Delgada as a **LOW**-threat location for crime directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Crime "C" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Portugal.

Portugal has a relatively low rate of crime, but non-violent street crime does occur in major cities. Petty thefts and other crimes of opportunity (e.g., vehicle break-ins, pickpocketing, surreptitious bag snatching) occur frequently, particularly in the major cities and in/around tourist locations. Thieves have been known to loiter in tourist locations, near beaches, and at transportation hubs (e.g., metro, bus, train stations) to take advantage of disoriented/distracted travelers. Pickpockets take advantage of crowds getting on/off public

transportation, using the jostling of the crowd as a distraction. Wallets and cellphones are particularly vulnerable. Crime reporting typically increases during the summer, primarily due to the increase in tourism. Avoid standing near the doors on public transportation, as thieves will often strike just as the train doors open and then dash onto the platform, before disappearing into the crowd.

Pickpocketing in the Lisbon area is most likely to occur in buses, hotel lobbies, restaurants, the airport, trains, train stations, and trams. Purse snatchings occur in restaurants and bars from bags left on the backs of or underneath chairs. Theft of belongings from inside vehicles continue to be a problem as the number of tourists to Portugal continues to increase. Thieves will often pop locks on vehicle doors and trunks, taking all personal belongings found in the vehicle, even if those belongings are out of sight. While recently updated laws have increased regulation of private-security activities (to include bouncers at bars and nightclubs), exercise caution in dealing with nightclub security. Bouncers are prone to violence, and police often struggle to find evidence or witnesses to any events related to an escalation of force by the security staff.

Illicit drug transactions increase at night, and travelers are often approached by drug dealers in the downtown area of Lisbon, especially near the bars and restaurants. Some travelers have reported incidents in which criminals used drugs to assault or rob them. Use caution when accepting open drinks at bars or clubs, and do not leave drinks unattended.

Organized crime is not a major issue. Criminal organizations are present, and predominantly engage in racketeering, extortion, and vice-related criminal activity (e.g., gambling, prostitution, narcotics). Other gang activities are generally focused on narcotics, petty crimes, and turf protection.

ATMs are widespread and accept most U.S. cards for fund withdrawals. Avoid using ATMs in isolated or poorly lighted areas, or on open sidewalks; instead, use machines inside bank alcoves, and secure cash and belongings before departing the bank area. Many local establishments will only accept cash payments or credit cards with a chip.

Reports of thefts from rental homes and online rental apartments have increased. Secure belongings and lock windows while away or sleeping.

Criminal incidents occur with less frequency in Madeira, and significantly less in the Azores, than in mainland Portugal.

There are no off-limits areas for U.S. Embassy personnel. Within Lisbon, take special care for petty crime in the Oriente, Santa Apolonia, Entrecampos, Marques do Pombal, and Rossio metro and train stations; the Sete Rios bus station; the Alfama, Martim Moniz, Baixa, and Bairro Alto districts; and the tourist area of Belém. Popular Tram 28 is particularly notorious for pickpocketing; pay very close attention to all belongings while waiting for or riding on the 28.

The tourist area of Sintra reports a particularly high rate of vehicle break-ins; take special care when parking in the areas around the castles and palaces there. Thefts are common in the popular tourist destinations of Cascais, Mafra, Obidos, Fatima, Coimbra, Setubal, Porto; in the Algarve; and at the beachfront areas of Peniche, Nazaré, Guincho, Cabo da Roca, and Boca do Inferno.

In Madeira, pickpocketing, while infrequent, may occur in the Old Town and Santa Catarina Park areas of Funchal in Madeira. On São Miguel Island, in the Azores, petty crime is more likely in the areas of Ponta Delgada and Rabo de Peixe. In the Azores, police occasionally receive reports of theft of belongings from vehicles parked at turnouts by walking trails.

Safeguard passports and other identity documents when traveling throughout Portugal. Do not leave valuables in rental cars, especially those with stickers identifying the vehicle as a rental car. Tourists are frequent victims of petty crime and/or car break-ins. Keep doors and windows of private rentals locked at all times, taking extra care if easily accessed from the street or other places. Do not leave personal items or valuables unattended while at the beach.

### Kidnapping Threat

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Kidnapping “K” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Portugal. There are no significant or specific threats of kidnapping in Portugal.

### Terrorism

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Lisbon and Ponta Delgada as being **LOW**-threat locations 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 Portugal.

While Portugal has been free of any recent major terrorist incidents, it maintains open borders with its neighbors, allowing the possibility of terrorist operatives to enter/exit with anonymity. Portugal maintains a public alert system for terrorism ranging from 1-5 on the threat level and communicates threat-level changes online and through social media. In October 2023, out of abundance of caution, Portugal raised its terror threat level from 2 “Moderate” to 3 “Significant” after the start of the Israel-Hamas conflict. This level of threat classification enables the Portuguese security forces to have access to additional resources, including increasing security at certain locations. Since the October 7 Hamas terrorist attack in Israel and Israel’s subsequent reaction, there have been increased calls by terrorist organizations like ISIS and al-Qa’ida to attack targets in Europe. At the time of this publication, the threat level remains at 3.

The call for self-radicalization, whether disseminated on extremist forums or on social media platforms, continues to be a global concern, as much of the threat comes from radicalized lone-actor perpetrators. They could attack using knives, vehicle ramming, guns, incendiary devices,

and other methods that do not require specialized knowledge, access, or training. Lone-actors perpetrators pose a serious risk due to their ability to remain undetected, at times, until operational and their willingness to attack civilian and soft targets, such as restaurants, markets/shopping malls, hotels, clubs, and other similar locations.

Law enforcement and security officials, in close cooperation with neighboring countries, maintain an effective anti-terrorism effort and a welcoming environment for tourism and business.

Authorities remain alert to potential recruitment and radicalization threats, and work closely with U.S. and European partners to counter associated risks.

## Political Violence and Civil Unrest

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Lisbon and Ponta Delgada as being **LOW**-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 Portugal. 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

Portugal, which includes the archipelagos of the Azores and Madeira, is a constitutional semi-presidential representative democracy with a president, prime minister, and parliament elected in multiparty elections. Elections occur routinely, with peaceful transitions of power.

Portugal held snap parliamentary elections in March 2024 following the prime minister’s resignation in November 2023. Portugal will hold another round of snap elections as early as May following a no-confidence vote held in March. This will be Portugal’s third general election in three years.

## Protests & Demonstrations

Protests and demonstrations occur in Portugal in response to political or economic issues, on politically significant holidays, and during international events. Generally, they do not target the U.S. Embassy or U.S. interests in Portugal. All public demonstrations in Portugal require prior police approval; police are present at protests to ensure adequate security for participants and passers-by. Portugal has experienced a notable period of political and social tranquility. However, social, economic and labor-related protests and demonstrations are not uncommon and are generally peaceful. Even peaceful demonstrations can become violent and unpredictable; avoid them, if possible.

Sometimes fights occur leading up to and just following soccer matches. Be cognizant of local culture and team colors when traveling in the area of or attending a game.

## Anti-U.S./Anti-Western Sentiment

Portugal is a country with relatively low public anti-government and anti-U.S. sentiment.

## Law Enforcement

Law enforcement is the main responsibility of five bodies:

- Polícia de Segurança Pública (PSP) - Public Security Police. PSP is a civilian police force that works in larger urban areas and has tourist units to provide additional assistance. PSP safeguards internal security and the rights of citizens. PSP is the leading agency responsible for maintaining public order, countering violent acts, and performing tactical intervention.
- Guarda Nacional Republicana (GNR) - National Republican Guard. The GNR is a military police office with civilian policing responsibilities (gendarmerie) that work predominantly in rural areas too small to warrant the PSP; it also provides a national highway patrol.
- Polícia Judiciária (PJ) - Judicial Police. Overseen by the Public Ministry, the PJ mandate focuses on prevention, detection, and investigation of violent, organized, and financial crime.
- Policia Maritima (PM) - Maritime Police. PM focuses on law enforcement operations on the waterways, but also has jurisdiction along the waterfront and the assorted bars and restaurants located near the river.

Portugal experienced a complete overhaul and re-delegation of immigration, refugee, and asylum responsibilities in a 2023 decision by the Government of Portugal (GOP). The agency formerly known as Immigration and Border Service (SEF) was completely dissolved. Former officers and employees of SEF have been transferred to the newly delegated agencies responsible for immigration enforcement.

- Administrative functions for immigration and asylum programs, without a law enforcement nexus, are managed by the newly formed Agency for Migration, Asylum, and Integration (AIMA).
- Border control points at airports have been delegated to the Public Security Police.
- Maritime and land-based borders are controlled and staffed by the National Republican Guard (GNR)
- Criminal investigative functions are managed and run by the Judiciary Police (PJ) under the umbrella of the Ministry of Justice.

## Police Response

Portuguese law enforcement authorities are generally very professional.

The emergency number in Portugal is **112**. For social welfare emergencies (domestic violence, child abuse), dial **144**. English-speaking operators are available. Portugal has a crime victim's assistance program, administered through an organization known by its acronym, APAV.

- Lisbon: Rua José Estêvão, 135 A, Pisos ½. Tel.: +351 21 358 79 00.
- Porto: Rua Aurélio Paz dos Reis, 351. Tel.: +351 22 834 68 40.
- Estoril: Tel.: +351 21 466 42 71.
- SOS immigrant line with English speaking operators (from 0830-2030): +351 808 257 257.

## Travelers with Special Considerations

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

Portugal places a premium on privacy rights and individual freedoms; reports of unlawful detention, intimidation, harassment, and graft are rare. The constitution and federal law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention. Persons arrested or detained, whether on criminal or other grounds, are entitled to challenge in court the legal basis or arbitrary nature of their detention and any delay in obtaining judicial rulings. If the court finds persons to have been detained unlawfully, they are entitled to prompt release and compensation. The government generally observes these practices.

The constitution and law provide detailed guidelines covering all aspects of arrest and custody, and authorities generally followed the guidelines. Individuals are normally arrested only on a judicial warrant, but law enforcement officials and citizens may make warrantless arrests when

there is probable cause that a crime has just been or is being committed, or that the person to be arrested is an escaped convict or suspect.

Authorities must bring the suspect before an investigating judge within 48 hours of arrest. By law the investigating judge determines whether an arrested person should be detained, released on bail, or released outright. Authorities generally inform detainees promptly of charges against them.

Investigative detention for most crimes is limited to four months. If authorities do not file a formal charge within that period, they must release the detainee. In cases of serious crimes such as murder, armed robbery, terrorism, and violent or organized crime, and crimes involving more than one suspect, the investigating judge may decide to hold a suspect in detention while the investigation is underway for up to 18 months, and up to three years in extraordinary circumstances.

Bail exists, but authorities generally do not release detainees on their own recognizance. Depending on the severity of the crime, a detainee's release may be subject to various legal conditions.

Detainees have the right to legal counsel from the time of arrest, but media reports cite instances when police, in particular the Judiciary Police, did not inform detainees of their rights. An attorney must accompany detainees appearing before a judge for the first hearing. If detained persons cannot afford a private lawyer, the government appoints one and assumes legal costs.

Based on the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, bilateral agreements, and customary international law, you have the right to request that the police, prison officials, or other authorities alert the U.S. Embassy/Consulate of your arrest and to have communications from you forwarded to the Embassy/Consulate. To ensure that the U.S. government is aware of your circumstances, request that the police and prison officials notify the U.S. Embassy or Consulate upon arrest or detention. Seek legal counsel for appropriate assistance for improprieties, and report incidents to the nearest U.S. Embassy/Consulate.

U.S. firms do not identify corruption as an obstacle to foreign direct investment. Portugal has made legislative strides toward further criminalizing corruption. The government's Council for the Prevention of Corruption, formed in 2008, is an independent administrative body that works closely with the Court of Auditors to prevent corruption in public and private organizations that use public funds. The Portuguese government encourages (and in some cases requires) private companies to establish internal codes of conduct that, among other things, prohibit bribery of public officials. Most private companies use internal controls, ethics, and compliance programs to detect and prevent bribery of government officials.

## Cybersecurity

Cybercrime, in the form of online extortion and IT scams, continues to rise in Portugal, much like in the rest of the EU.

The Portuguese National Cybersecurity Center is the operational coordinator and national authority on cybersecurity. Cybersecurity remains a priority for Portugal, especially as cyberattacks increased by 79% in 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and its effects. In 2024, Portugal introduced new legislation to strengthen cybersecurity and create a new legal scheme to strengthen cybersecurity measures of health facilities, public administration bodies, communications and transportation infrastructures, and larger companies. The legislation also grants the National Cybersecurity Center added oversight authorities.

## Import/Export Restrictions

The importation and possession of firearms, pepper spray, tasers, extendable batons, and certain knives is restricted and requires licensing in most cases. Permissions to operate high range radios is also required, with many frequencies prohibited and restricted to government use.

If traveling with prescription medication, check with the Government of Portugal to ensure the medication is legal in Portugal. Portuguese law prohibits the mailing of prescription medicines from the United States to Portugal. Any prescription medications mailed to Portugal will be impounded by the Portuguese customs office.

There are no restrictions on satellite phones in Portugal.

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](#).*