



France 2011 Crime and Safety Report

Riots/Civil Unrest; Crime; Terrorism

Europe > France

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France 2011 OSAC Crime and Safety Report

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Prior to travel to France, the United States State Department recommends that all visitors check the Department's website for updated security advisories: <http://www.travel.state.gov>

France is a relatively safe country. Most crimes are non-violent. According to recently published statistics from the Minister of Interior, general crime in France dropped by 3 percent in 2010 compared to 2009. Violent crime, however, rose by 2.5 percent; this is attributed to an increase in the theft of smartphones on public transport in Paris and its suburbs. Of note, the number of homicides in France has dropped by 40 percent since 2002 to an all-time low.

The majority of crimes directed against foreign visitors, including Americans, involve pick-pocketing, residential break-ins, and other forms of theft with minimal violence. However, as in any big city, robberies involving physical assault do occur in Paris and other major urban areas. Visitors to congested areas and known tourist sites (e.g., museums, monuments, train stations, airports, and subways) should be particularly attentive to their surroundings. Crimes against visitors are generally crimes of opportunity; they can become violent, however, when the victim detects the theft and a physical confrontation ensues.

Paris

Crime in Paris is similar to that in most large cities. Violent crime is relatively uncommon in the city center. Pickpockets are by far the most significant problem. In Paris, pickpockets can be any gender, race, or age and are commonly children under the age of 16 because they are

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difficult to prosecute. Pickpockets are very active on the rail link (RER B) from Charles de Gaulle Airport to the city center. In addition, passengers on the Metro line 1, which traverses the city center from east to west, servicing many major tourist sites, are often targeted. A common scheme is for one thief to distract the tourist with questions or disturbances, while an accomplice picks pockets, a backpack, or a purse. Thieves often time their pickpocket attempts to coincide with the closing of the automatic doors on the Metro, leaving the victim secured on the departing train. Many thefts also occur at the major department stores (e.g., Galeries Lafayette, Printemps, and Le Bon Marché), where tourists may leave wallets, passports, and credit cards on cashier counters during transactions. Popular tourist sites are also popular with thieves, who favor congested areas to mask their activities. The crowded elevators at the Eiffel Tower, escalators at museums, and the area surrounding Sacre Coeur Basilica in Montmartre are all favored by pickpockets and snatch-and-run thieves. There have been some instances of tourists being robbed and assaulted near less populated Metro stations as well. The area around the famous Moulin Rouge, known as Pigalle, is best avoided after dark, unless with a tour group headed for a show. Pigalle is an adult entertainment area known for prostitution, sex shows, and illegal drugs. Unsuspecting tourists have run up exorbitant bar bills and been forced to pay before being permitted to leave.

Strasbourg

Strasbourg's historic center enjoys a fairly low rate of violent crime. Pickpockets and snatch-and-grab thieves tend to concentrate their efforts in the Petite France historic district popular with visitors. Vehicle arson has become more common, with an unofficial New Years Eve "competition" claiming roughly two dozen vehicles a year. While some acts of arson are motivated by insurance fraud, others are simple vandalism.

Province Alpes Maritimes (PACA) : Marseille, Avignon, Aix en Provence, Arles, Cannes, Nice

PACA enjoys a fairly low rate of violent crime directed at tourists. The most common problems in the region are thefts from cars (both stopped in traffic and parked) and from luggage trolleys at the major transportation hubs (e.g., Nice Airport, and the railway stations at Marseille, Avignon, and Aix en Provence). The U.S. Consulate in Marseille has noted an increase in holiday rental home burglaries and in necklace snatching. Car doors should remain locked and windows rolled up at all times, and valuables should be hidden out of site

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to prevent snatch and grab attempts. Visitors should secure cars and all valuables when visiting tourist sites or stopping to enjoy panoramic views, even for a short period, especially in seemingly isolated spots. Passports should be kept separate from other valuables.

Political Violence

Please refer to the U.S. Department of State website for the most updated threat warning.

Political violence in Paris and throughout France is still relatively uncommon, however, this past year has seen outbursts of violence and lawlessness in Lyon, western Paris, and other French cities due to a change in French law regarding the minimum age of retirement for French workers. Large demonstrations in Paris are generally managed by a strong police presence, but such events have the potential to become dangerous and should be avoided. In addition, the congestion caused by large demonstrations can cause serious inconveniences for a visitor on a tight schedule. Likewise, some sporting events, such as soccer matches, have occasionally degenerated into violence that continued into the streets.

Political unrest has developed in some Francophone countries with historic ties to France this past year (e.g., Cote d'Ivoire and Tunisia). Some French citizens and residents with ties to such countries have protested in front of the countries' embassies or consulates located in France in response to the unrest. Although these protests are infrequent and do not target Americans, visitors should avoid such demonstrations.

ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna), the Basque terrorist group that has killed more than 850 people in half a century of violent agitation for an independent state in northern Spain and southwest France, has been substantially weakened by arrests of its senior members and a rise in support among Basques for peaceful participation in the political process. A total of 62 suspected ETA members were arrested in France in the first six months of 2010. Police arrested the group's top leader in France in February 2010 in a joint Spanish-French pre-dawn raid. The shooting of a French policeman near Paris in March 2010 during a bungled getaway was ETA's most recent fatal attack and the first murder of a French policeman, leading to vows from President Nicolas Sarkozy to hunt down the group's supporters. In April 2009, the GOF formed a joint security committee to fight terrorism and drug trafficking. The committee, an expansion of existing police cooperation targeting ETA, created a joint general staff

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headquarters on security to lead the fight on terrorism. Less than 18 months later, on September 5, 2010, ETA called for a halt to all armed attacks and is actively seeking talks with the Spanish government.

Post-Specific Concerns

Throughout August, the month when most French residents take summer vacations, and in December, there is generally an increase in the number of residential break-ins in Paris. The majority are attributed to residents not utilizing security measures already in place, including double locking doors and locking windows. Home invasions are often preceded by phone calls to see if the resident is at home. Often thieves who manage to gain access to the apartment building will knock on apartment doors to see if anyone answers, offering the excuse they are taking a survey or representing a utility company.

In 2009, three U.S.-based companies experienced the phenomenon of “boss-napping,” in which French labor unions detained corporate officials as a labor negotiation tactic. While the detained persons were not physically harmed, these instances were a disturbing development for U.S. businesses with operations in France. There were no instances of “boss-napping” in 2010.

Police Response

The Ministry of the Interior controls the National Police, civilian force of approximately 118,000 persons responsible for all urban areas with more than 10,000 people and has operational control of the military Gendarmerie, a force of approximately 90,000 responsible for non-urban areas. These two separate organizations and the domestic intelligence service (DST) comprise the policing system in France. These services are professional, competent, and pro-active in fighting crime and violence and maintaining overall state security. Note: In 2003, the French Parliament passed a law that expanded the police powers in order to enhance their abilities to counter threats posed by both terrorism and organized crime.

In an emergency, calling 112 on a mobile phone or 17 on a land line phone will put the caller in contact with the emergency services desk. Non-French speakers may experience a delay

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while an English speaker is located. Under French law, identification with a picture should be carried at all times.

For non-emergency assistance, visitors should go to the nearest police station (commissariat) in order to file an official report. There are commissariats located in each of the 20 arrondissements (districts) of Paris.

Medical Emergencies

Medical care is of comparable quality to that found in the United States. Dial 18 on a landline telephone for emergency medical response.

SAMU (Service d'Aide Médicale d'Urgence) is a specialized emergency service that works in close liaison with the emergency or intensive care units of the large public hospitals. Its ambulances are manned by teams of trained medical personnel and equipped with miniature emergency rooms containing materials necessary for cardiac or respiratory resuscitation.

SAMU is organized on a geographical basis, with a central telephone number for each area in France. Dialing number 15 allows you to reach SAMU almost everywhere in France. Calls are answered under the direction of the physician on duty who decides whether to dispatch a mobile unit or, in the case of a less critical emergency, to refer the call to another ambulance service or to an on-call physician service for a home visit. Each SAMU center has a list of bed availability and locations of specialty teams in all public hospitals. This list is updated three times a day. If patients need to be hospitalized, they are usually taken to a private hospital only on specific request. SAMU can also arrange emergency transportation by helicopter, boat, or airplane for accident victims or people who are ill.

SOS Medecins is a private company for less critical medical emergencies and house calls. To reach SOS Medecins, dial 01 47 07 77 77.

Parisian Hospitals with an Emergency Rooms

HOTEL DIEU - 1, parvis-de-Notre-Dame, Paris 4th - tel: 01.42.34.82.33

LARIBOISIERE - 2, rue Ambroise-Paré, Paris 10th - tel: 01.49.95.64.45

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SAINT-LOUIS - 1, avenue Claude-Vellefaux, Paris 10th - tel: 01.42.49.91.17
SAINT-ANTOINE - 184, rue du Faubourg Saint-Antoine, Paris 12th - tel: 01.49.28.27.08
PITIE-SALPETRIERE - 47-83, boulevard de l'Hôpital, Paris 13th - tel: 01.42.17.72.47
COCHIN - 27, rue du Faubourg St-Jacques, Paris 14th - tel: 01.58.41.27.21/27.22/27.35
GEORGES POMPIDOU - 20, rue Leblanc, Paris 15th - tel: 01.56.09.32.24
BICHAT-CLAUDE-BERNARD - 46, rue Henri-Huchard, Paris 18th - tel: 01.40.25.81.36

In case of a mental emergency:

SAINTE ANNE C.P.O.A. (Observation Unit)- 1, rue Cabanis, Paris 14th - tel:
01.45.65.81.09/81.10
Day and night: 17, rue Broussais, Paris 14th.
AMBROISE-PARE HOSPITAL - 9, avenue Charles de Gaulle, Neuilly - tel: 01.49.09.55.17
AMERICAN HOSPITAL OF PARIS - 63, blvd Victor Hugo, Neuilly - tel: 01.46.41.25.25

PACA Hospitals

BOUCHES DU RHONE (13)

Hôpital De La Conception 00 00 147, Boulevard Baille, 13005 Marseille	Tel: 04 91 38
Hôpital Nord 00 00 Chemin Des Bourrely, 13915 Marseille Cedex 20	Tel: 04 91 38
Hôpital Ste Marguerite 00 00 270, Boulevard Ste Marguerite, 13009 Marseille	Tel: 04 91 38
Groupe Hospitalier La Timone 00 00 Boulevard Jean Moulin, 13005 Marseille	Tel: 04 91 38
Hôpital Militaire Laveran 70 00 B.P. 50, 13013 Marseille	Tel: 04 91 61

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Fondation Hôpital St Joseph
65 00 Tel: 04 91 80

26, Bd De Louvain, 13008 Marseille
Centre Hospitalier
50 00 Tel: 04 42 33

Avenue Tamaris, 13616 Aix en Provence Cedex 1
Centre Hospitalier
16 16 Tel: 04 42 16

109, Av. Du Petit Barthélémy, 13617 Aix en Provence Cedex 1
Mental Health and Drug Recovery
HERAULT (34)

Centre Hospitalier Universitaire (CHU) (University Hospital Center)
67 33 Tel: 04 67 33

Hôpital La Colombière
Centre Hospitalier
74 95 Tel: 04 67 35
3, rue Valentin Haüy, 34500 Béziers

PYRENEES ORIENTALES (66)

Centre Hospitalier Saint Jean
66 33 Tel: 04 68 61
20, Avenue Du Languedoc, BP 49954, 66046 Perpignan Cedex 09

VAR (83)

Centre Hospitalier
24 00 Tel: 04 94 00

Bd Du Maréchal Juin, 83400 Hyères
Centre Hospitalier Intercom
61 61 Tel: 04 94 61

Toulon La Seyne Sur Mer
1208, Avenue Colonel Picot, BP 1412, 83056 Toulon Cedex

VAUCLUSE (84)

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Centre Hospitalier Henri Duffaud
33 33
305, rue Raoul Follereau, 84000 Avignon

Tel: 04 32 75

ALPES MARITIMES (06) AND MONACO (98)

Broussailles Hospital, 15 avenue des Broussailles , 06400 Cannes,
Princesse Grace Hospital, Avenue Pasteur , 98000 Monaco
99 00

Tel: 04 93 69 70 00

Tel: (377) 97 98

** Cardio-Thoracic Center, 11 bis ave d'Ostende, 98000 Monaco
80 00

Tel: (377) 92 16

Pasteur Hospital, 30 avenue de la Voie Romaine, 06000 Nice,
77 77

Tel : 04 92 03

Saint Roch Hospital, 5 rue Pierre Dévoluy, 06000 Nice,

Tel : 04 92 03 33 33

Sainte Marie Psychiatric Hospital, 87 avenue J. Raybaud, 06000 Nice,
13

Tel: 04 93 13 56

Be brief and concise when speaking with one of the above medical emergency services and give the precise address or location, phone number, the caller and the patient's names, the age of the patient, and a description of his/her medical condition. You may be transferred directly to a specialist in resuscitation who will identify the type of emergency based upon the information you give.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Common sense security precautions will help a visitor enjoy a trouble-free stay. Most problems can be avoided by being aware of one's surroundings and avoiding high-risk areas.

Carry only essential items. Avoid carrying high-value jewelry and large amounts of cash.

Valuables should be kept out of sight and in places difficult for thieves to reach, such as internal coat pockets or in pouches hung around the neck or inside clothes. Shoulder bags and wallets in hip pockets are an invitation to a thief.

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Crowded elevators and escalators at tourist sites and crowded metro cars should raise awareness levels. When possible, take a seat or stand against a wall to deter pickpockets and try to maintain a 360-degree awareness of the surrounding area.

Do not leave valuables in hotel rooms. Know also that valuables stolen out of hotel room safes will be compensated by the hotel up to a multiple of the nightly price of the room, but only if the safe has been obviously forced open or removed from the room. If you must leave valuables in the hotel, consider using the hotel safe instead of a room safe.

Be aware that thieves often operate in groups and will come to each other's aid if confronted. If a thief is caught in the act, a simple pick-pocketing could turn into an assault (or worse) if an attempt is made to capture the thief. The best response would be to verbally alert both the thief and bystanders that you are aware of his/her activity. With the thief detected and others aware, the thief will most likely flee.

Adult entertainment districts, such as the Pigalle metro area, are to be avoided, particularly at night. Many nightclubs in these areas engage in very aggressive marketing, charging exorbitant rates for drinks. Hidden charges of five hundred to six hundred euros for drinks are not uncommon and there have been reports of threats to coerce customers into paying these charges by physically preventing customers from leaving until the tab is settled.

Additionally, public parks should be avoided after dark as they are often frequented by drug dealers and prostitutes.

Further Information

RSO Paris can be reached during business hours in France at international telephone number: 011.33.1.43.12.21.19.

The Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Paris, Office of American Services, is located at 4 Avenue Gabriel, 75382 Paris Cedex 8 (near the Place de la Concorde, Metro: Concorde).

International telephone number: 011.33.1.43.12.22.22 or in France: 01.43.12.22.22, fax: 01.42.61.61.40.

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The Consulate General in Marseille is located at Place Varian Fry, 13086 Marseille. The telephone number in country is 04.91.54.92.00, Consular Section extension is 304. The fax number is: 04.91.55.09.47.

American citizens in the following areas whose passports are lost or stolen and who have urgent travel needs should contact U.S. Embassy Paris for assistance.

The Consulate General in Strasbourg is located at 15 Avenue d'Alsace, 67082 Strasbourg Cedex. The telephone number in country is 03.88.35.31.04. The fax number is 03.88.24.06.95. The Consulate General in Strasbourg does not produce passports on the premises.

American Presence Post Bordeaux, 10 Place de la Bourse B.P. 77, 33025 Bordeaux Cedex. Telephone in country is 05.56.48.63.80.

American Presence Post Lyon, 1 Quai Jules-Courmont, 68289 Lyon Cedex 02. Telephone number in country is 04.93.88.89.55.

American Presence Post Rennes, 30 Quai Duguay-Trouin, 35000 Rennes. Telephone number in country is 02.23.44.09.60.

American Presence Post Toulouse, 25 Allee Jean-Jaures, 31000 Toulouse. Telephone number in country is 05.34.41.36.50.

OSAC Country Council

OSAC country council meets twice a year in Paris, generally in the spring and the fall. For specific dates, please monitor the OSAC web site at www.OSAC.gov or contact RSO Paris at international telephone number: 011.33.1.43.12.21.19.

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