



Namibia 2012 OSAC Crime and Safety Report

Crime; Political Violence

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Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Crime is a serious concern in Windhoek and other areas throughout Namibia. The U.S. State Department identified Namibia as a critical crime threat location in April 2008, and that rating has remained the same since. Robberies, muggings, and thefts occur frequently, especially in downtown shopping areas and locations where foreign visitors tend to congregate.

American visitors to Namibia have regularly fallen victim to street crime. Incidents occur more frequently after dark than during daytime hours. In most incidents, victims who surrender their belongings without resistance survive the encounter unharmed. Criminals sometimes display knives and occasionally firearms. The Namibian Police recently established a Tourist Protection Unit, but they continue to be severely hampered by resource constraints that hinder effective deterrence of crime.

The most common incidents are non-violent crimes of opportunity, committed by thieves who rely on stealth and surprise, such as pick-pocketing, purse-snatching, vehicle theft, and vehicle break-ins. Common sense measures, such as not leaving valuables in parked cars, safeguarding purses, keeping wallets in front pockets, and being alert to one's surroundings, are the best deterrents against crime. Visitors should not leave valuables unsecured in their rooms. The vast majority of crime that now occurs in Windhoek is petty street crime. Americans visiting Windhoek should not expect to experience any hostility or aggression because of their citizenship. In fact, the atmosphere for Americans is welcoming and receptive. There have been no visible signs of anti-Americanism displayed by the press or the government of Namibia. Americans who visit Namibia are encouraged to register on the State Department website before travelling or with the Consular Section at the Embassy, as well as to review the most recent Country Specific Information sheet on Namibia at <http://travel.state.gov>.

Crime Threats

Theft from motor vehicles remains a concern in all major cities. This crime usually involves smash and grab patterns and is sometimes associated with violence. Personal robberies and



residential break-ins and thefts remain prevalent. In November 2011 a residential break-in occurred at an Embassy residence in Klein Windhoek. Several items, including cash were taken. Also in early January 2012, a theft occurred from an Embassy residence in the Luxury Hill suburb of Windhoek. A laptop and a camcorder were stolen out of a room through an open window. In both these cases the police have not made any arrests nor have they recovered any of the stolen items.

Road Safety

Driving can be very hazardous in Namibia. Traffic fatalities among foreign visitors are frequent. Although major roads are generally very well maintained, Namibia's network of gravel secondary roads can be treacherous, particularly during the rainy season. Defensive driving is essential to safely manage road conditions and the excessive speed used by many drivers. Driving at night outside urban areas is dangerous, as unlit roads make it difficult to see road obstructions and the large animals that frequently cross the roads. Visitors planning to drive outside Windhoek should plan to arrive at their destination before dark. Vehicles should be in top condition and equipped with spare tires and one should bring plenty of water, food, and emergency medical supplies. Drivers in urban areas should be aware that taxis often stop abruptly to pick up and discharge passengers, resulting in frequent rear-end collisions.

Namibian police checkpoints are positioned approximately 15 kilometers outside the principal cities and towns on all major highways. During the holiday season, additional checkpoints are sometimes established along the Windhoek- Swakopmund highway and near medium-sized towns. Most vehicles are allowed to proceed without inspection, but drivers should be prepared to produce vehicle registration documents, personal identification (passport, Namibian identification cards), car rental contracts, and/or drivers' licenses on request. All drivers should plan to stop and proceed only when waved through. Police have fired "warning shots" at vehicles ignoring roadblocks.

Political Violence

Political violence is rated low for Namibia. Demonstrations are rare and, if held, are usually non-violent. In September 2009 police prevented a group of five persons from demonstrating near the Embassy because they had not obtained a required permit. The group left without incident.

Historical Perspective

In March 21, 2012, Namibia will celebrate 22 years of independence. There has been little political violence in Namibia, due in large part to its stable, democratic government. Namibia's national elections in November 2009 were mostly peaceful, although there were several clashes between political parties.

Bilateral relations between Namibia and the United States are good. Occasional, small scale demonstrations to protest U.S. foreign policy have been held. Most recently in June 11, 2011,



demonstrators gathered at the Supreme Court, protesting U.N., NATO, and U.S. involvement with Libya. Protestors then marched from the Supreme Court, to the U. N., and then to the American Embassy. There were approximately twenty protesters who carried signs and banners and spoke to members of the media. The protestors were staged in front of the Embassy for approximately 45 minutes then the crowd dispersed without incident. Police coverage for the event was adequate. Notwithstanding these infrequent demonstrations, there have been no reports of hostility directed toward Americans on the streets.

Regional Terrorism and Organized Crime

Namibia is rated low for indigenous terrorism. No incidents with terrorism-related links have been reported. No reports have been received from official sources or media reports about the presence of known regional terrorist groups in Namibia. There are no known organized criminal groups in Namibia. Individuals sometimes group together for a specific criminal activity but they are often apprehended during or after these incidents which are mainly robberies from vehicles carrying cash to or from banks or businesses. During 2009, the Prevention of Organized Crime Act and the Financial Intelligence Act entered into force, which are laws aimed at the suppression of organized crime, money laundering, and terrorist financing.

International terrorism or transnational terrorism

Namibia is rated medium for transnational terrorism. There have been no reports of the presence of international terrorist groups in Namibia.

Civil unrest

Namibia enjoys a stable political democracy. During the 2009 presidential and parliamentary elections, there were isolated incidents involving clashes between supporters of different political parties. The Namibian police were able to restore order quickly in those cases. Street demonstrations are rare, with labor unions occasionally staging marches. Organizers generally enforce discipline in their ranks and avoid direct confrontation with the authorities.

Post –Specific Concerns

Environmental hazards

Namibia is an arid semi-desert country. It can experience extreme temperatures especially during summer time with seasonal flooding during the rainy season (October-March) in the central and northern regions. Dry river beds occasionally flood resulting in gravel roads becoming inaccessible. Motorists should adhere to warning signs posted at these riverbeds and not try to cross them when the water is flowing.

Industrial and Transportation Accidents



As indicated above, road accidents in Namibia remain a major concern despite a relatively good road infrastructure and good road conditions. Road accidents remain one of the highest single contributors to fatalities in Namibia.

In recent years Namibia has had several fatal aircraft accidents involving privately owned air operators. No major industrial accidents were reported in 2009.

Kidnappings

Very few incidents of kidnapping have been reported in the past. However, the few that were reported were not politically motivated but rather criminal or related to domestic disagreements. No major incidents of kidnapping against foreigners were reported.

Drug and Narcoterrorism

Namibia is not a drug producing country. Most of the drugs that are locally available are illegally smuggled into the country. The drug of choice is marijuana and is relatively cheap. Other types of drugs such as cocaine, crack cocaine and heroin are also available. Namibia is being used as a transit route for drugs destined for countries in the region and elsewhere. Anti-drug laws are strictly enforced and no bail is granted without a court appearance. This applies to both drug sellers and users. A very cheap, but destructive drug in the form of methamphetamine (commonly known by the street name "tik") is becoming more popular and is readily available.

Police Response

Local police lack the resources, training, and personnel required to effectively deter street crime, and to fully respond and investigate reported crimes. Long-term visitors should register with the Embassy and report to the Embassy if they are detained or arrested. Travelers should not challenge the authority of police or soldiers. U.S. Embassy Windhoek maintains excellent relations with the national and local police forces. During an emergency, visitors to Namibia should contact the local police in their area.

How to handle incidents of police detention and harassment

Under Namibian law, any law enforcement officer is required to produce credentials and identify himself before carrying out a lawful arrest. Whenever an arrest is imminent it is advisable to comply with the arresting officer's request. An arrested person has the right to contact his legal representative. The police are obliged to afford the arrested person an opportunity to contact his/her family and/or legal representative. Incidents of police harassment can be reported to any police station, the office of the Inspector-General of Police, or the Office of the Ombudsman.

Where to turn for assistance if you become a victim of a crime

The Namibian police department recently opened a Tourist Protection Unit (TPU) to assist tourists who have become victims of crime. As a pilot project, TPUs were established first in the Khomas and Erongo regions and subsequently will be expanded to all 13 regions. The



Tourist Protection Unit in Windhoek is located at the corner of Independence Avenue and Bahnhof Street.

Contact numbers (emergency/non-emergency):

Windhoek

Police: 10111 /209-4111

Fire/Ambulance: 211-111

Outside Windhoek

	POLICE	FIRE
Swakopmund:	064-10111	402431
Mariental:	063-240666	10111
Luderitz:	063-10111	202255
Gobabis:	062-10111	562315
Tsumeb:	067-2235017	0111
Rundu:	066-255014	255014
Oshakati:	065-10111	223600
Otjiwarongo:	067-10111	300600

Visitors can also contact U.S. Embassy Windhoek at telephone number (264-61) 295-8500 if assistance is needed in communicating with law enforcement officials.

Medical Emergencies

Windhoek has a number of adequate medical facilities and medical evacuation companies, including:

MediClinic Hospital in Windhoek (061-222687)

Roman Catholic Hospital (061-2702911)

International SOS (private ambulance and medical evacuation)

--061-230505

--081-129-6300

--112 from a local cell phone

Windhoek Municipal Emergency Services (061-290-2702)

For medical emergencies outside Windhoek, visit the closest hospital in the region. For serious injuries, medevacs throughout Namibia may be arranged through ISOS offices located in Windhoek, Tsumeb, Kombat, Otjiwarongo, Walvis Bay and Swakopmund:



The telephone numbers for International SOS (ISOS):

Tsumeb:	081-1285501
Kombat:	081-1285501
Otjiwarongo:	081-1296300
Swakopmund:	064-200-200
Walvis Bay:	064-200-200

The Embassy recommends that all visitors have medical evacuation insurance before arrival in Namibia. The Embassy receptionist and after-hours duty officer can be reached at 264-61 295-8500 and can provide a list of doctors, dentists, hospitals and pharmacies.

Visitors face no specific health threats in Windhoek. Windhoek's 5,600-foot elevation can cause fatigue or light-headedness. Windhoek's dry, windy climate can cause dry skin. Because of fine dust and pollen in the air, visitors who suffer from allergies or respiratory ailments should bring appropriate medication. Visitors who anticipate spending time outdoors should use sun block, hats, and skin-covering clothing. Tap water is generally potable throughout Namibia; however if preferred, bottled water is also widely available. While Windhoek, the coast and southern Namibia are malaria-free, malaria prophylaxis is recommended for visitors to rural areas in eastern Namibia and anywhere north of Otjiwarongo. Meningitis immunizations (types A,C,Y and W) and an adult booster for Polio are also recommended.

Visitors to Namibia should be aware that HIV/AIDS is common, with an estimated general prevalence rate of 13.3 percent of the population infected.

How to Avoid Becoming a Victim of Crime

The precautions useful in any large city will help prevent one from being a victim of crime in Windhoek. Visitors should maintain a high level of personal security awareness at all times.

Most confrontational crimes involve lone victims and take place in isolated areas. Visitors are advised to travel in groups and remain in high-traffic areas of town. Walking after dark is not recommended.

Pick-pocketing and purse-snatching are more likely to take place in downtown shopping areas and other high-traffic locations where foreign visitors congregate. Maximum awareness is recommended in these areas. Carry only as much cash as is required for the day's business



and store the remainder (along with passports, credit cards, and other valuables) in a secure location.

Criminals tend to target victims who carry backpacks or similar personal bags, apparently believing that backpackers carry all their valuables in the bags. Durable plastic shopping bags from local retailers provide a lower-profile alternative.

Cell phone theft is particularly common; visitors should keep cell phones out of sight and use them only in safe locations.

Theft from vehicles is frequently reported. Visitors should refrain from displaying valuables in parked cars. When driving, doors should remain locked and windows should be closed.

Local scams include offers to sell rough diamonds or precious stones to tourists, an illegal transaction under Namibian law. Often, the “diamonds” turn out to be worthless glass. Other scams simply consist of one person attempting momentarily to divert the victim’s attention (street children, requests to translate documents, etc.), so that a second perpetrator can take the victim’s wallet, bag or cell phone. Visitors are advised to maintain maximum awareness if approached by strangers for any reason. Residential burglaries in affluent neighborhoods were frequently reported in 2010. Residents who relied on centrally monitored alarm systems, security guards provided by reputable companies, and high-quality door locks and window grillwork were generally less likely to be targeted than those who failed to use such safeguards.

For Further Information

The Consular Section urges all visitors to register with the Embassy upon arrival or before their trip at <http://www.travel.state.gov>. The Embassy is located in downtown Windhoek at 14 Lossen Street, Ausspanplatz, (264-61) 295-8500. The Consular Section, Commercial Officer, and Regional Security Officer (RSO) are all located at the Embassy and can be reached at the above numbers. The web site for the U.S. Embassy in Namibia is <http://windhoek.usembassy.gov>.

OSAC Country Council Information

Windhoek does not have an active country council program. The nearest OSAC affiliate is in Gaborone, Botswana.