



Mozambique 2012 OSAC Crime and Safety Report

Crime; Travel Health and Safety; Political Violence

Africa > Mozambique > Maputo

3/30/2012

Mozambique 2012 OSAC Crime and Safety Report

Overall Crime and Safety

Mozambique is a developing country in southern Africa which has been steadily rebuilding its economy and civic institutions since ending a 16-year civil war in 1992. The country stabilized following Mozambique's first multi-party elections in October 1994, and the current president was reelected in October 2009. Despite high economic growth rates in recent years, Mozambique remains among the world's poorest countries, with a GDP per capita of \$440. Facilities for tourism in Maputo, the capital city, are steadily improving but remain limited in other areas as many of the goods and services taken for granted in other countries are not yet available. The official language is Portuguese, although English is spoken in many tourist areas, and in some rural areas only local languages are widely spoken.

Currently, the U.S. Department of State classifies Mozambique as "critical" for crime on a scale ranging: low-medium-high-critical. The factors that contribute to the high crime rates are generally related to the country's continued rebuilding from the civil war. Ranked near the bottom of the UN's Human Development Index, poverty is endemic in Mozambique. High unemployment rates, little investment in employment-generating industries, and low incomes associated with work in the informal sector create conditions of gross economic hardship. The number of violent crimes in Mozambique is comparable to most other African countries. The chances of being victimized by crime in Mozambique are approximately the same as in most major U.S. cities. In Mozambique, the assailants often use forceful tactics, operate in semi-organized groups, and carry crude weapons to facilitate their activities, increasing the possibility of physical harm. As is common in most developing countries, expatriates are frequent targets due to their perceived wealth. Therefore, it is essential that visitors to Mozambique maintain heightened awareness and take the necessary security precautions. The majority of crimes against Americans are non-violent confrontations characterized as crimes of opportunity (i.e., pick pocketing, theft of unattended possessions in public places or hotel rooms, and bag snatching).

Narco-trafficking in Mozambique is an increasing problem. Porous borders, coupled with endemic poverty and its proximity to South African markets makes Mozambique vulnerable to organized criminal elements. Narco-trafficking and human smuggling represents a growing threat to stability and security in Mozambique and the region.



Driving in Mozambique is a serious challenge and a dangerous activity. Maputo's streets are narrow, crowded, and in a state of constant disrepair. The lack of street lights, stop lights/signs, sidewalks, and guardrails, combined with potholes and unpaved road surfaces increases the risk of injury or death for drivers and pedestrians. Local drivers are impatient and exhibit little consideration for pedestrians, other motorists' right-of-way, and general safe driving practices. Motorbikes weave in and out of traffic, will drive on any flat surfaces or section of the road, and adhere to no rules. Roads outside of Maputo are unpaved, unlit, poorly maintained, and can be hazardous to drive. The risk to drivers outside Maputo is heightened due to locals who are familiar with the road conditions driving at high speeds, and the presence of numerous disabled vehicles which are often parked in the middle of the road. For these reasons, U.S. Embassy personnel are highly discouraged from driving outside of Maputo during the hours of darkness. Drinking and driving is also a major concern and poses a significant risk at all times.

Taxi cabs, motorbikes, and the ubiquitous mini-van transports (Chapas) present a hazard due to the fact they are poorly maintained, crowded, and drive erratically. These conveyances should be given a wide berth when driving in their proximity and their usage is off limits to U.S. Mission personnel. Other forms of public transportation (i.e., bus, train) hardly exist. During the rainy season, mud, deep puddles, flooding, glare from oncoming headlights (if used), and near zero visibility present an even greater challenge for travelers. Depending upon the destination, several hours of travel time may be added to a trip. During the dry season, dusty conditions can also impair visibility. Fuel stations and police assistance are rare, so motorists should plan accordingly.

Political Violence

The threat of political violence against American interests in Mozambique is rated as "medium." There were no instances of political violence or terrorism directed against Americans in 2011. Although political demonstrations and rallies are normally peaceful, spontaneous rioting and attacks may occur at any time. September 2010 saw violent unrest in and around Maputo due to the lifting of government subsidies on staples, affecting the street price of bread, gas, and other essentials. Police response to these protests was violent with reportedly dozens of protestors losing their lives. While the Maputo-based FRELIMO government has made some efforts to prevent future unrest, the possibility for renewed protests is ever-present and there is no reason to believe a police response to more protests would be any less violent.

Currently, there is no known organization targeting American citizens or affiliated interests in Mozambique. There is very little anti-American sentiment, but visitors are cautioned to avoid any large crowds, public gatherings, or demonstrations. These scenarios have the potential of becoming unruly, which can result in physical injury and possibly death.



Post Specific Concerns

Mozambique is neighbored by Tanzania to the north; the Indian ocean to the East; Swaziland and South Africa to the south; and Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe to the west. All borders, to include the eastern coast and airports, are entirely porous, with varying levels of refugee traffic depending on the conditions in neighboring countries at the time. While lack of opportunity prevents most mala fide traffic from settling in Mozambique, the large, continuous flow of migrants brings with it a host of nefarious elements and businesses.

The increase in narcotics trafficking through Mozambique, with links to international organized crime syndicates, is a disturbing trend. The considerable wealth associated with the drug trade, probably channeled through corruption and involvement of government officials, could have a destabilizing impact on the country.

Maputo, seasonally beset by torrential rains, lacks the drainage infrastructure to accommodate storm water runoff. As a result, low lying parts of the city and major vehicle thoroughfares flash flood during the rainy season (November – April). Familiarize yourself with and avoid these areas if possible. Travel in a 4x4 vehicle is preferable.

The greatest threats in Mozambique are posed by malaria and motor vehicles. Be sure to take properly prescribed anti-malarial medication and exercise extreme caution when near any road or motor vehicle traffic. Drivers and pedestrians should be aware of their surroundings at all times and take extra care at night. The Marginal (coastal) road is an area of increased criminal activity and this popular area demands constant vigilance.

There have been no incidents of piracy along Mozambican territorial waters since the four incidents in December 2010, however private security contractors continue to be caught up in murky customs laws and regulations regarding the importation of firearms into Mozambique. All private security companies are strongly encouraged not to attempt the importation or exportation of firearms and related security equipment at any port of entry in Mozambique.

Police Response

The Mozambique Police Force (PRM) suffers from limited resources and corruption. Police are under-funded, under-staffed, and poorly equipped. Police response is often slow and unreliable, and the quality of service declines as one moves farther from Maputo. Within the city of Maputo, police are far more likely to interact with citizens in furtherance of soliciting a bribe than in furtherance of bona fide police work. Receiving police assistance can be especially difficult for Americans because:

Local police stations do not have working landline telephones. Most police officers rely on private cell phones for communication and these numbers are not publicized. Mozambican police do not understand English. The police frequently lack transportation to respond to the scene of the incident. When transportation is available, fuel often is not. Most PRM officers lack conventional police equipment (two-way radios, restraints, defensive weapons,



flashlights, etc.) required to be effective in their jobs. While the abilities of the PRM are on par with some other African nations, they do not compare to a U.S. police force in terms of capability, responsiveness, or professionalism. Corruption is a problem throughout the ranks of the PRM. Low-pay and morale create an environment in which even bribes of a few dollars can make allegations disappear. Tolerance of corruption breeds a complacent attitude toward dealing with it in the PRM. All persons should attempt to cooperate and follow the instructions of police at checkpoints to avoid problems. It is not recommended to pay bribes or on-the-spot fines.

Security procedures and passenger screening precautions at the Maputo International Airport are poor to non-existent.

Medical Emergencies

Medical facilities in Mozambique fall critically short of U.S. standards. People with serious medical conditions that require medications or frequent treatment are discouraged from traveling to Mozambique. Most medications are in short supply, of inferior quality, or are fraudulent. The cleanliness of medical facilities and quality of treatment is dismal. Misdiagnosis, unavailable treatment, and improper use of drugs are commonly reported. All travelers to Mozambique are advised to purchase insurance to cover medical evacuation in case of a serious accident, injury, or illness. Medical evacuation can cost tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars, depending on the severity of the situation, so all travelers should ensure their policies provide sufficient coverage. Travelers are advised to see a physician prior to travelling to ensure that appropriate immunizations and precautions are taken, including medications for malaria prophylaxis and yellow fever vaccination (which is required for entry into the country). Please refer to the Center for Disease Control's website (www.cdc.gov) for recommendations specific to Mozambique.

Medical Facilities:

Clinica da Sommerschild

Rua Pereira do Lago,52
21 49 3924/5, Lab 2149 4278

Clinica Especial

Av. Eduardo Mondlane
21 32 1349, 21 32 4633, 21 32 9522

Swedish Clinic

Av. Julius Nyerere 1128
21 49 2922 cell: 82 30026100

Hospital Central

Av. Eduardo Mondlane/Av. Agostino Neto



21 32 0011/8

SOS

Av. 25 de Setembro, JAT Building 2nd floor

21 31 3103/4

Cell: 82 3232600

Dr. Soares UN Dispensary

Rua Sommerschild 90

21 41 6289

Cell: 82 3070680

Phoenix Centro Medico

Av. Francisco magumbwe, 671

21 49 1639

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

All American citizen visitors and those planning to reside in Mozambique are advised to follow common-sense guidelines to avoid becoming victims of crime. Visitors are also encouraged to register with the United States Embassy Consular Section. See section VII.

Do not leave valuable items unsecured in your residence/quarters. Do not carry valuables in excess of immediate needs, and keep what you need in a secure place on your person.

Pick-pocketing is common in Mozambique. Do not walk on the beach at night. Do not invite strangers into your residences. Always keep the doors and windows to your residence or hotel room secured. Do not keep excessive currency or other valuable items at your residence. It may attract the attention of criminals. Credit cards are sporadically accepted, but to random effectiveness. When your card is swiped, do not let it out of your line of sight. Credit card machines operate over the cell phone system, so the machine should be brought to you. Credit cards are generally accepted at most stores, restaurants, and hotels. Use of public transportation, including buses, taxis, and mopeds, is highly discouraged. Hiring a dedicated car and driver from a trusted and reliable source is recommended. Carefully protect all financial and personal information as incidents of financial fraud and identity theft crimes are increasing in Mozambique. Practice good operational security if you are transporting valuable items into and around Mozambique. Avoid wearing flashy jewelry, clothing or carrying expensive cameras in public. Ladies should avoid carrying purses or bags, as they are enticing targets for criminals. Be alert and aware of your surroundings at all times. Do not discuss travel plans or other business in a venue where others can hear you. Always ask permission before taking a photograph. Do not photograph government buildings, embassies, military installations, airports, harbors or other locations or items of a possible security or intelligence interest. Cameras and film can be confiscated. Do not respond to any unsolicited opportunities to make money, including business opportunities that seem too good to be true. In the event an armed criminal confronts you, do not hesitate to hand over the desired property. Be alert to any unusual surveillance or activity near the places you frequently visit.



Vary your routes and times so that others cannot predict your schedule. When on foot, walk with a companion. Appear to walk with a purpose; do not give the impression that you are lost or wandering. There is evidence that criminals observe these vulnerabilities and target the individuals that display them. When traveling in a vehicle, keep your doors locked and windows secured. Keep valuable items out of sight. Always keep adequate space between yourself and the vehicle in front of you to ensure you can maneuver in the event of a situation requiring escape from the area. Be aware of what is taking place outside of the vehicle. Always park in secure, well-lit locations. Do not hitchhike or pick up hitchhikers. If you are involved in a vehicular accident, it is important to be aware that a large crowd may gather and could become hostile and aggressive. If you feel threatened or fear for your safety, leave the scene and go to the nearest police station.

Maintain control of your personal items when in public areas and move away from anyone who you believe is acting suspiciously. Thieves often attempt to distract a victim by asking questions, begging for money, bumping or jostling the individual, or offering to sell items. While the victim is distracted, an accomplice may take a piece of luggage or pick the victim's pocket or purse. Violent crime and the use of weapons in the commission of crime is commonplace. Never carry anything that you are not willing to relinquish in a confrontation with a thief.

All American Citizens traveling to Mozambique are advised to refer to the U.S. Department of State Country Specific Information http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_976.html for additional useful information. This resource provides information on a variety of issues intended to ensure your trip to Mozambique is safe and trouble-free.

Further Information

All Americans should register with the Consular Section's American Citizen Services when traveling to Mozambique. They should do so on-line at <https://travelregistration.state.gov> prior to travelling, but can also register online or at the Consular Section upon arrival. The U.S. Embassy maintains a liaison with local law enforcement officials and is available to assist American citizens during their stay in Mozambique. The Consular section can be reached through the Embassy switchboard at: (258) 21 492 797 from overseas or (84) 312-8290 if dialing locally. However, you may reach the Consular Section in non-emergency situations via e-mail at MaputoConsular@state.gov.

Embassy Operator: (258) 21 49 2797

Post One: (258) 515-160 or (84) 310 7190

Regional Security Officer: (258) 21 49 2797

OSAC Country Council

Mozambique has a formal OSAC Country Council. The RSO in Maputo will provide country briefings for representatives of American businesses and organizations as requested.