



Sweden 2012 Crime and Safety Report

Fraud; Financial Security; Burglary; Theft; Stolen items; Drug Trafficking

Europe > Sweden > Stockholm

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Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Crime Threats

Sweden enjoys a reputation as a country with a low crime rate. The notion that foreign travelers are immune to crime is a common misconception, and in fact, the prevalent rate of crime in major urban areas makes travelers more susceptible to certain kinds of crime, such as mugging, vehicle theft, and credit card fraud than national criminal statistics would otherwise indicate. Sweden's geographic locale and climate both affect crime rates, as crime tends to increase acutely in summer months when police vacations, tourism, and empty residences contribute to a spike in theft during the extended daylight hours.

According to Swedish statistics, incidents of vehicle theft have declined over the past three years. Police estimate that 20,096 cars were stolen in the country in 2011. According to U.S. Embassy sources, vehicles are rarely recovered and are usually shipped out of the country to the Baltic States for resale or disassembly. Vehicle break-ins are a more frequent phenomenon; windows are smashed, and radios or other valuables are stolen.

Robberies, according to Swedish statistics, occur infrequently – or are at least rarely reported. After a slight decline in 2010, the number of reported robberies has increased from 8,468 in 2010 to 9,192 in 2011 – an increase of about 8.5 percent.

There were a total of 94,034 burglaries in 2011. After last year's slight decline in house burglaries, the numbers reported are now up to 22,209 – an increase of about 12 percent. During summer months, residential break-ins occur with increased frequency and mainly target single-family dwellings that have open windows, unlocked doors, or visible signs of vacancy (stacks of uncollected mail and newspapers, uncut grass, etc.)

In 2011, pick pocketing rose 12 percent to 45,165 – an increase largely attributed to foreign gangs operating in crowded areas, specifically in the summer time when they primarily target



tourists.

Reported homicides in 2011 decreased from 2010. In 2011, there were 232 homicides. The 35 percent increase in homicides in 2010 was due to an overestimate caused by the statistical system used by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention. The typical homicide is between acquainted males under severe influence of alcohol.

Road Safety

Sweden has excellent transportation infrastructure, and the major roadways in and around urban areas are no exception. Travelers driving outside of cities in the winter time should make sure they have sufficient winter tires and emergency provisions for winter conditions.

Political Violence

Historical Perspective

Sweden generally practices peace-time non-alignment in international military affairs but serves an active supporting role in a number of multilateral initiatives, such as the recent military action in Libya and troop deployments in Afghanistan. Sweden's political engagement abroad has not yet cultivated homegrown domestic terrorist groups with a clear mandate or agenda to target Swedish infrastructure or government. However, the U.S. Embassy recognizes the possibility that unaffiliated or autonomous groups may decide to conduct terrorist attacks at any time. The Schengen enlargement, which in December 2008 opened E.U. borders to the Baltic States, essentially expanded Sweden's borders with Belarus and Russia by 1,800 kilometers. Criminal networks from these countries are now impacting the nature of criminal activity in Sweden, but it is unknown exactly how much influence these networks have in Sweden.

Regional Terrorism and Organized Crime

Over the past year, there have been many indicators that regional or indigenous terrorist groups operate in Sweden. Additionally, extreme right and left-wing groups have targeted one another in low-level violence on major dates, commemorating certain anniversaries noteworthy to their respective causes. Organized criminal activity is primarily driven by low-level organized criminal groups, many associated with larger motorcycle gangs, such as the Hell's Angels, Banditos, Outlaws, and recently the Mongols. Small businesses have reported instances of extortion, and gang harassment is not uncommon; however, larger international companies and franchises have been largely immune from such activity. Some



crime, such as vehicle theft and more complicated financial fraud schemes are associated with Balkan organized crime groups operating in western Sweden (Gothenburg) and Baltic and Russian organized crime groups operating in southern and central Sweden (Malmo and Stockholm).

International Terrorism or Transnational Terrorism

In November 2010, Sweden raised its national terrorism threat level to medium for the first time ever, and it has remained elevated throughout 2011. In December 2010, Sweden experienced its first suicide bombing when a terrorist targeted a busy commercial district of Stockholm. The suicide bomber activated the devices prematurely and only succeeded in killing himself. The number of deaths and injuries would have been significant had the operation been successful. In September 2011, four men were arrested by the Swedish Security Service for plotting to murder the Swedish artist Lars Vilks. In addition, supporters of various terrorist groups use Sweden as a base to fundraise for international militant causes around the world, such as Lebanon, Somalia, and Iraq.

Civil Unrest

Demonstrations take place throughout the year. Most demonstrations are planned and receive police approval, but on occasion, unscheduled demonstrations occur. These demonstrations are usually small and do not last long. Swedish authorities monitor planned demonstration and keep the Regional Security Office advised of any demonstrations that could potentially impact the U.S. Embassy.

Post-Specific Concerns

Industrial and Transportation Accidents

Sweden's Airports and Aviation Authorities are reputedly amongst the best and safest in the world.

Kidnappings

Kidnappings are rare, apart from international custody disputes.

Drug and Narco-terrorism



Drug trafficking is limited to low levels of domestic consumption and transit, consisting primarily of cocaine inflow from South America via Spain, heroin from Central Asia via Poland, and the Baltic States, methamphetamines from Poland, marijuana from continental Europe, and Qat (illegal in Sweden) from the Horn of Africa (consumed by Sweden's sizable Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Somali populations).

Travelers can expect to see heavy drug users in and around major urban centers, such as near the central train station, and cocaine is prevalent in some night clubs; however, narcotics do not seem to be a major precursor for violent crime.

Police Response

There are roughly 20,000 police employees, and most of them are assigned to the three largest Swedish counties of Stockholm (Stockholm), Vastra Gotland (Gothenburg), and Skane (Malmo). Police are divided into three major components: National Criminal Police, National Security Service, and 21 independent county authorities. The government is exploring ways to better leverage National Police capacity with the needs of smaller police administrations to address the proliferation of criminal elements to smaller, less populous counties.

Victims of crime should expect a police response commensurate with the criticality of the incident. A victim of a violent crime can expect rapid, expert support and investigation, and a quick resolution. However, victims of purse snatching should expect formal and polite assistance but lengthy delays in investigation or resolution. The number of police officers is a limiting factor.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Police harassment is exceptionally rare; however, American citizens should immediately call the U.S. Embassy Duty Officer or the U.S. Embassy Consular Services if they are detained or harassed by police.

The local police non-emergency number in Sweden is: 114-14

For all emergencies, call: 112

Medical Emergencies



Travelers in Stockholm requiring emergency medical attention can use a number of 24-hour hospitals located throughout Stockholm; however, the two largest and most likely to be used are:

Karolinska Hospital (www.ks.se), Karolinska Vagen 171 76, 46-8-517-7000
Danderyd Hospital (www.ds.se), 46-8-655-5000

A large number of other medical and consultation services are available throughout Stockholm and information is readily available in English on the Internet.

Travelers outside of Stockholm should consult local directories for contact information for the appropriate local hospital in their area.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Travelers should use common sense when traveling and attempt to reduce the impact of crime by not carrying large sums of cash and valuables on their person.

Travelers should be especially wary in train and subway stations for petty thieves and pickpockets and should be aware of distractions and other techniques used to divert attention for the purposes of purse and briefcase snatching.

Travelers should exercise caution when using cash dispensing machines and should look carefully at card insertion areas for modifications and "skimming" hardware.

Travelers should only use reputable cash exchange outlets when attempting to withdraw cash on credit or debit cards.

Travelers should register with the U.S. Embassy and carry a copy of the biographical page from their passport at all times, along with emergency contact information for the U.S. Embassy and local police.

Travelers should store valuables in hotel safes or safety deposit boxes when available.

Travelers should avoid parking their cars in poorly lit areas of the city overnight and should use parking garages when possible. Travelers should also avoid leaving valuables in plain sight in their car. When possible, travelers should consider using anti-theft devices to lock the steering wheel and brakes mechanism.



Travelers should avoid demonstrations.

Areas to Avoid

There are no areas of Stockholm that are off-limits to U.S. Embassy personnel; however, the areas of Rinkeby and Sodertalje have higher rates of crime than other suburbs. Travelers should be conscious of time and place predictable incidents, such as low-level violence in Stockholm's bar districts (e.g. Gotgatan in Sodermalm) during the early morning hours of the weekend when fights tend to occur with relative frequency. Some violence can also occur near sports arenas when local rivals confront one another during soccer and ice hockey games. Travelers should stay current with local and international events when traveling, and should monitor local news for the most current information relevant to security issues in the country.

Further Information

Embassy contact numbers:

Regional Security Officer +46-8-783-5412

Embassy Operator +46-8-783-5300

Medical Unit +46-8-783-5464/5564

Consular Affairs +46-8-783-5375

Political/Economic Section +46-8-783-5321/4515

Marine Post One +46-8-783-5310

OSAC Country Council

Stockholm has an OSAC Country Council, which is operated under the auspices of the American Chamber of Commerce in Sweden. Please contact RSO Hank Jones for additional information on the Council: +46-8-783-5412, jonesw2@state.gov.