



## **The Netherlands 2012 Crime and Safety Report**

Travel Health and Safety; Stolen items; Theft; Surveillance; Fraud; Financial Security; Drug Trafficking

Europe > Netherlands > The Hague

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### **Overall Crime and Safety Situation**

#### Crime Threats

The risk of violent crime toward Americans is low throughout most of The Netherlands, and the U.S. Embassy is unaware of tourist/visitors being targeted, other than for petty crime. Although it remains rare, some increase in violent crime has occurred throughout The Netherlands, mainly in Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Residential thefts occur on occasion, but the use of violence is rare.

Travelers are often targets of pickpockets and luggage thieves who typically operate in groups. The theft of laptop computers or other valuables occurs frequently at airports, on trams and trains, and in stations in and around Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague. Thieves often operate in pairs and particularly target the train station from Schiphol Airport to Amsterdam Central Station, Leiden, and The Hague. They also operate in the trams in the city centers. One typical operation occurs when a thief distracts the victim, often by asking for directions or by pretending to drop something, while an accomplice steals the victim's unguarded handbag, backpack, or briefcase. Pickpockets typically time their theft to coincide with train and tram stops so they can quickly exit the scene. Within Amsterdam, thieves are very active in and around Central Station, WTC/Zuid train, tram stops near the red light district, restaurants, and hotels. Also, visitors may experience theft on public transportation routes, especially trams 2, 5, 16, and 24 between Central Station and the Museum district. Amsterdam is also home to several networks conducting 419 email frauds that operate virtually unopposed by police. During the past year, criminals have increased credit card skimming fraud. Police are making arrests against skimmers; however, precautionary measures should be made when using credit cards, even when used for paying parking fees.

Travelers visiting Amsterdam should particularly pay attention to the use of so-called date-rape drugs (such as Rohypnol, which can be added or mixed to beverages or drinks), rendering the victim vulnerable to assault. During night hours, visitors to train stations and



entertainment areas throughout The Netherlands could become potential victims of crime and violence.

### Road Safety

There is an occasional theft of valuable cargo on trailers parked at designated parking lots along highways and in industrial areas. The road conditions in The Netherlands are superb and are comparable to the best roads in other western European countries. However, traffic jams can occur around peak hours and on major arteries, causing highway slowdowns throughout the country and unexpected delays.

### Political Violence

#### Historical Perspective

There have been no reported incidents of political violence directed at American citizens or private industry in recent years. The last violent demonstration directed toward U.S. government facilities took place in The Hague and Amsterdam in 1998.

#### Regional Terrorism and Organized Crime

Although subject to change, the Government of the Netherlands (GoN) assesses the threat of a terrorist incident for The Netherlands as "Limited." There are four possible threat levels: Minimal, Limited, Substantial, and Critical. Limited means that the chance for facing an attack in The Netherlands (or against Dutch interests) will be relatively minor, but it cannot be fully excluded. The GoN implements security measures for providing additional protection for infrastructure and creating public awareness. American citizens in The Netherlands are encouraged to monitor media reports and websites, to maintain a high level of vigilance, and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness.

#### Civil Unrest

Demonstrations, which range from small groups to thousands of participants, are primarily directed at the local government and are often focused on matters surrounding international relations. Major protests are mostly organized in the centers of Amsterdam and The Hague. Prior notification is required for public demonstrations. A police presence is provided for these events to communicate with protestors and the public, ensuring adequate security for participants and the public.



Nonetheless, situations may develop that could pose a threat to public safety. American citizens should be mindful that protests intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and possibly escalate into violence. American citizens are urged to avoid areas of demonstrations if possible and to exercise caution within the vicinity of any protest.

Although demonstrations can occur anywhere, most protests in The Hague begin at the Malieveld, a grass field adjacent to Central Train Station. Typical demonstrations points include embassies in the city center area, the Parliament, the Foreign Ministry, and the Peace Palace. Demonstrators usually return to the Malieveld from the last point on their route before concluding.

Protests in Amsterdam are common at the Museumplein and Dam Square. A few demonstrations have turned violent and involved rock-throwing by protestors and the use of water cannons by police to disperse the crowds. It is recommended to avoid these areas during large gatherings and known demonstrations.

### **Post-Specific Concerns**

#### **Drug and Narco-Terrorism**

The Netherlands tolerates the use, possession, and sale of some kinds of soft drugs under defined circumstances. Sales of five grams or less of cannabis in coffee shops are overlooked and not prosecuted. The policies toward hard drugs, such as heroin, ecstasy, and cocaine, are similar to those in the United States. Persons violating Dutch laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled or arrested and held for trial and possible imprisonment upon conviction and sentencing. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the U.S. for similar offenses.

#### **Police Response**

The emergency telephone throughout The Netherlands is 112, equivalent to 911 in the U.S., and can be used for all emergencies including fire, police, and ambulance. Operators answer in Dutch but do speak English. The telephone number for non-emergencies or police advice throughout The Netherlands is 0900-8844.

A police report can be filed at any police station, including those at airports, and will be written in Dutch. Small police stations are closed during evening hours. Various major police forces offer special assistance and support to victims of crime.



## How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

American citizens who need replacement passports, who are arrested or detained by the police, or who are victims of crime may seek assistance from the American Citizens Services Unit of the U.S. Consulate General Amsterdam, which provides all consular services in The Netherlands. Valuable information about these services is available on the Consulate General website or by calling the Consulate General in Amsterdam during normal working hours.

Additionally, a 24-hour duty officer can be reached at the American Embassy by calling 070 310 2407 during nights, weekends, and holidays.

## Medical Emergencies

Good medical facilities are widely available in The Netherlands. The national emergency number for medical, police, and fire services is 112. If the situation warrants, seek assistance from a hospital. These institutions are staffed and equipped to deal with emergency situations. The Netherlands Association of hospitals has compiled a list of all Dutch hospitals on the following website: [www.ziekenhuis.nl](http://www.ziekenhuis.nl).

Americans are strongly urged to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses. Americans who have purchased overseas medical insurance have found it to be critical when a medical emergency occurs. Emergency services (including transportation by ambulance) are not free, and patients will be billed for any services rendered.

For non-emergency medical assistance, visitors are obliged to consult a general practitioner (in Dutch: huisarts), before attempting to obtain non-emergency medical treatment from a specialist. The medical care sectors in The Netherlands are based on a referral system, which requires patients to see a huisarts first. Medical specialists will generally only see those patients who have been referred to them by a huisarts.

If staying in a hotel, contact the reception desk, and they will direct you to the doctor assigned to that hotel. If staying with a friend or family, contact their "family" doctor. Also, the American Consulate General maintains a "family" doctor. The American Consulate General also maintains a hyperlink to a list of medical professionals that can assist Americans in finding a doctor or hospital and can be accessed through the U.S. Consulate website.



The Hague area has its own after-hours medical service (SMASH) that is available for non-emergency medical services offered at various hospitals. SMASH medical appointment can be made at telephone 31 (0) 70 346 9669.

The Amsterdam Airport Schiphol has its own 24-hour medical services office (tel. 31 (0) 20 649 2566) on the upper floor near check-in counter 16 of Terminal 2 that can be accessed from either gate or check-in sides.

### **Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim**

The U.S. government remains deeply concerned about the heightened possibility of terrorist attacks against or affecting American citizens and interests abroad. As noted in the U.S. Department of State's Worldwide Caution issued on August 12, 2010, terrorists do not distinguish between official and civilian targets. Such targets may include facilities where American citizens and other foreigners congregate or visit, including residential areas, clubs and restaurants, places of worship, schools, hotels, and public areas. Terrorist actions may include, but are not limited to, suicide operations, assassinations, hijackings, bombings, and kidnappings. These may involve aviation and other transportation and maritime interests.

It is recommended that businesses check with the local police before entering into a contract for private security or with a guard company.

### **Further Information**

Contact information for the U.S. Embassy The Hague:  
Regional Security Office (31) (0)70 310 2240, 2241, or 2246  
Medical Unit (31) (0)70 310 2468  
Marine Security Guard (31) (0)70 310 2407  
U.S. Embassy The Hague website is <http://netherlands.usembassy.gov>

Contact information for the Consulate General Amsterdam:  
American Consulate General +31 (0)20 575 5309  
U.S. Consulate General is <http://amsterdam.usconsulate.gov>

### **OSAC Country Council**

U.S. Embassy The Hague has an active OSAC Country Council. For any information please contact Arie van Veelen at: +31 (0)70 310 2242 or RSO Ronnie Catipon, +31 (0)70 310 2240.