



## **Brazil 2014 Crime and Safety Report: Rio de Janeiro**

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Assault; Burglary; Murder; Kidnapping; Carjacking; Hotels; Drug Trafficking; Riots/Civil Unrest; Floods; Landslides and mudslides; Cargo Security; Aviation; Fraud

Western Hemisphere > Brazil; Western Hemisphere > Brazil > Rio de Janeiro

5/6/2014

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

The State Department divides its roles and responsibilities in Brazil between four Consular Districts (one for the Embassy and each of the three Consulates). This Crime and Safety Report focuses on U.S. Consulate General Rio de Janeiro's district, which is comprised of the states of Rio de Janeiro, Espirito Santo, Minas Gerais, Bahia, and Sergipe. For more information regarding the security environment in other areas of Brazil, please reference the OSAC Crime and Safety Reports from: Brasilia, Sao Paulo, and Recife.

### **Crime Threats**

Crime is a major concern -- especially in the larger cities. The police and the press report that crime is becoming more widespread. In Rio de Janeiro, robbery, assault, burglary, and theft are concerns for foreigners and Brazilians alike. Violent crimes, such as murder, kidnapping, carjacking, armed assault, and burglary, occur regularly.

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Street crime is a problem especially in the evenings and late at night. Public transportation hubs, hotel sectors, and tourist areas are the locations with the highest crime rates. Caution is required when travelling at night through more rural areas and satellite cities due to the significant potential for roadside robberies.

Foreign visitors may be susceptible to targeting for certain crimes in part because visitors may be less likely to file a police report and/or return to testify at criminal proceedings should perpetrators be apprehended by police.

The consolidation of power among a few large criminal gangs has led to a decrease in gang-on-gang violence; however, this has resulted in an increased focus on civilian targets. Many criminals use weapons when carrying out illicit activities and often are accompanied by gratuitous violence.

Organized crime in Rio de Janeiro is controlled by major drug gangs, operating mainly in slum communities (favelas). The crime in Rio's favelas is a product of organized crime, mostly centered on narcotics trafficking. In Rio de Janeiro, a "favela pacification program" has begun to systematically bring favelas under government and police control. Recently, the security services secured the symbolically criminally-hardened Complexo do Alemão favela and have occupied over 30 smaller favelas. There have been instances of large-scale gun battles in and around the favelas during some of the police operations.

## **Overall Road Safety Situation**

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## Road Safety and Road Conditions

Road conditions outside of the main cities vary greatly. Brazil uses automatic photo-ticketing systems to discourage speeding, and tickets are mailed to the owner of the vehicle.

The surface conditions of the roads in Rio de Janeiro are generally acceptable. However, certain areas have major issues with numerous pot holes, some of which, during the rainy season, can cause significant damage to a vehicle's suspension system. Lighting, traffic signals, and road markings vary from good to poor.

## Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Political violence in the form of protests occurs -- especially in the capital and major cities. These protests are held for various reasons: work conditions, wages, the environment. While protests are generally non-violent, some have resulted in property damage and minor injuries. Protests tend to increase in numbers and intensity during the visits of high-profile foreigners and major events.

## Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

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There are no known indigenous terrorist groups operating in Brazil. Brazil is a non-aligned country with no significant enemies and is not targeted by any known radical groups.

The tri-border area where Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay come together is home to a large Arab community. To date, no incidents directed against official or non-official Americans have occurred in this area. It is recommended that American visitors to the area, to include Foz de Iguazu, remain especially vigilant and maintain a low profile.

#### Civil Unrest

Political violence is possible in any of the major cities of Brazil. In 2013, there were large protests in Rio de Janeiro and across the country. While the majority of these protests are peaceful, violence occasionally occurs. Visitors should avoid areas where large crowds are gathering or protests are on-going.

#### Post-specific Concerns

##### Environmental Hazards

Most natural disasters are not a major concern, although significant flooding does occur during the rainy season. Flooding, and associated mudslides, have recently become a serious

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problem in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

## Industrial and Transportation Accidents

Reports of cargo theft, from both overland shipments and from storage facilities, occur frequently. Airports countrywide inaugurated supplemental security measures, in part to thwart criminal activity targeting aviation facilities.

Road accidents are always a concern outside of major cities.

## Drug-related Crimes

The major cities of Brazil experience the effects of persons addicted to illicit drugs. This includes criminal activity - street assaults and robberies - the proceeds of which are used to support their addictions. Brazil is the number two consumer of cocaine in the world, behind the United States. As such, a large proportion of crimes have a nexus to narcotics.

## Kidnapping Threats

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“Quicknapping” or “express kidnapping” is an ongoing criminal activity in which ATM users are kidnapped at gun point and taken to several ATMs to withdraw cash. These are a common kidnapping tactic throughout Brazil. Criminals abduct a victim, usually a Brazilian citizen, for a short period in order to receive a quick payoff from the family, business, or the victim’s ATM card. However, all foreigners are vulnerable to this crime.

## **Police Response**

Police officials frequently cite lack of resources, staffing shortages, basic equipment, and morale as reasons for widely varying response times and unsolved crimes.

### How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Visitors should inform the nearest Embassy or Consulate in the event they encounter problems, including detainment or arrest by the police, while traveling in Brazil.

### Where to Turn for Assistance if You Become a Victim of a Crime

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Rio Emergency Services

Telephone

Police Militar Precinct Ipanema

(21) 2332-2074 (24HR)

Police Militar Precinct Lagoa

(21) (21) 2332-2912 (24HR)

Police Militar Precinct Copacabana

(21) 2332-7913/14 (24HR)

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Police Militar Precinct Flamenco

(21) 2334-3972 / 4126 (24HR)

Police Militar Precinct Leblon

(21) 2332-2877 / 2866 (24HR)

Police Militar Emergency Number

190 (24HR)

Civil Police

(21) 3399-7170

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Civil Police – Tourist

(21) 2332-2924

Fire Department

190 or 193

Ambulance

192

## **Medical Emergencies**

### Contact Information for Recommended Local Hospitals and Clinics

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The following local hospitals have been identified as suitable for use by visitors to Rio de Janeiro:

Hospital Samaritano

Rua Bambina, 98, Botafogo

Zona Sul

Telephone number: (21) 2537-9722

Clinica Sao Vincente

Rua Joao Borges, 204, Gavea

Zona Sul

Telephone number: (21) 2529-4422

Centro Pediatrico da Lagoa

Rua Jardim Botânico, 448, Jardim Botânico

Zona Sul

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Telephone number: (21) 2535-7932

#### 24-hour Pharmacies

Farmacia do Leme

Rua Prado Junior, 237, Copacabana

Zona Sul

Telephone number: (21) 2275-3847

Farmacia Cristal

Rua Marques de Abrantes, 27, Flamengo

Zona Sul

Telephone number: (21) 2265-3444

#### Recommended Air Ambulance Services

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For air medical evacuation services, the Consulate recommends visitors purchase private air medical evacuation insurance before traveling to Brazil. The Consulate can assist visitors with further information about obtaining services available.

### CDC Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

For vaccine and health guidance, please visit the CDC at:  
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/brazil>.

### Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

#### Crimes/Scams

There are a variety of scams used by criminals to rob victims, which include:

An unknown individual calls to say that a person you know, possibly a family member, has been kidnapped and unless you immediately pay the ransom the person will be harmed. The ransom is paid and it then becomes clear that the kidnapping never occurred.

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A similar scam is where an unknown individual calls and states an employee or family member has been in an accident and needs immediate medical attention. The individual states that payment must be provided in order for the injured individual to be treated. This scam is often targeted at household staffs who react without verifying with their employer.

Be careful of cash transactions on the street. A hurried transaction for merchandise often leaves the customer with shoddy/counterfeit goods or with counterfeit money.

### Best Situational Awareness Practices

Visitors to Brazil should practice common sense preventive security techniques. The following security tips should be adhered to in order to avoid becoming a victim of crime.

Do not accept drinks from strangers and always watch your drink. Scopolamine, or a similar drug, may be added to your drink. People have woken up robbed of their valuables or sexually assaulted after accepting such a drink.

Traveling in groups of two or more persons appears to have a positive effect on deterring criminals.

Do not carry or wear valuable items that will attract attention; if you need to wear expensive

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jewelry or carry a camera, conceal it until you arrive at your destination.

Be aware of the street environment and avoid contact with those who may be looking for potential victims. If you feel unsafe seek a safer location; go into a store, bank, or simply cross the street.

Do not physically resist any robbery attempt; while this is a personal decision, statistics show that resistance can lead to injury or death.

Be alert at open markets or crowded areas.

Do not answer your hotel room door until you positively confirm who is on the other side; look out the peephole or call the front desk to confirm the visitor.

Do not walk on beaches or in parks after dark; assaults are common in these areas.

Avoid city buses and other public transportation; many pass through high crime areas and are susceptible to robberies; only use legitimate, well-marked, taxis.

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Many residents and visitors find that renting or purchasing a cellular phone is very useful. Cellular phones are widely available, inexpensive, and generally highly reliable, especially in the major cities.

In regards to residential security, the Regional Security Officer (RSO) recommends that residences provide solid-core entry doors with quality deadbolts, security grills on all lower floor windows, 24-7 doorman for apartments, adequate front and rear security lighting, and a monitored alarm system. Most residential properties, especially single family homes, utilize security alarm systems. These systems are monitored by local security companies who respond along with local police. Some neighborhoods employ static guard posts to monitor activity on the streets adjacent to their homes. Larger properties and commercial sites generally employ 24/7 security guard services. Family members and household help should not allow anyone to enter the residential grounds without identification and prearranged appointments.

Criminals are determined and sophisticated, which requires visitors to be alert to their surroundings. Visitors can reduce their risk of becoming a victim of crime by varying routes and times of travel and ensuring residences are sufficiently protected. Suspicious persons or activities in the neighborhood should be reported to the police immediately.

## **U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information**

### Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

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American Consulate General Rio de Janeiro is located at Av. Presidente Wilson, 147 Bairro Castelo.

U.S. Embassy Brasilia is located at Av. Das Nacoes Sul, Quadra 801, Lote 3.

### Consulate Contact Numbers

Rio: The telephone number is +55 (21) 3823-2000. Emergencies and calls after normal business hours may be directed to Post One at +55 (21) 3823-2029. The RSO may be reached at extension 2908. The consulate's fax number is +55 (21) 3823-2003.

Brazilia: The telephone number +55 (61) 3312-7000. Emergencies and calls after normal business hours may be directed to Marine Security Guard at +55 (61) 3312-7400. The RSO may be reached through the general embassy phone number (extension 7390). The American Citizen Service Section may be reached through extension 7063 or 7471. The Foreign Commercial Officer POC may be reached through extension 7403. The Embassy's fax number is +55 (61) 3322-4224.

U.S. companies are encouraged to contact the RSO in Rio de Janeiro for specific inquiries concerning the local security situation. Information is also readily available from the American Chamber of Commerce, and from the active OSAC Country Councils operating in Rio de Janeiro.

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For updated information, please contact the Consular Section of the American Embassy in Brasilia, the Consular Section of the American Consulate in Rio de Janeiro, or consult the web sites of the Consular Bureau of the Department of State ([www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)) or of the United States Embassy in Brasilia ([www.embaixadaamericana.org.br](http://www.embaixadaamericana.org.br)).

### **OSAC Country Council Information**

Rio de Janeiro has an active OSAC Country Council. U.S. organizations are welcome to join the group and encouraged to contact RSO Rio de Janeiro for specific Country Council questions. Country Council information can be found at the OSAC website at: [www.osac.gov/countrycouncils](http://www.osac.gov/countrycouncils).

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