



Canada 2015 Crime and Safety Report: Vancouver

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Drug Trafficking; Terrorism; Riots/Civil Unrest

Western Hemisphere > Canada; Western Hemisphere > Canada > Vancouver

1/6/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Crime Rating: Medium

Crime Threats

Although the violent crime rate in Canada is much lower than in the U.S., it is higher than in some European countries. Compared to most major U.S. cities the overall crime rate for Vancouver is average. Property crime is by far the biggest crime threat and is closely related to the habitual drug scene within the greater Vancouver area, particularly within the east-side corridor of downtown Vancouver, where many crimes involve the illicit activities of habitual drug users and homeless persons seeking to fund their addictions. Most drug addicts use less confrontational means to gain income to support their addictions.

The pervasiveness of drug dependence continues to drive property crimes and other tourist-related incidents upward. Pickpocketing and theft from parked cars in popular tourist

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destinations are of particular concern.

Although extremely targeted, there is an ongoing gang infrastructure operating in Vancouver. Gang on gang violence and targeted homicides continue to drive the criminal elements within British Columbia.

Street crime targeting individuals for robberies is uncommon. The majority of crimes that occur in Vancouver are non-violent in nature and include theft from auto, shoplifting, and tourist-related incidents. However, if doors are locked and items are not visible, criminals usually look for more accessible targets. The downtown east-side corridor typically sees more break-ins involving both vehicle and residential thefts. The Regional Security Office noted four vehicle break-ins and one residential break-in involving Consulate staff in 2013. All these incidents occurred in either Surrey or Richmond, located to the south of Vancouver.

Areas to Avoid

The east-side corridor of downtown Vancouver should be avoided. While areas in the vicinity of East Hastings Street and Main Street are filled with attractive boutiques and restaurants, individuals fueling drug addictions are also out hunting for anything they can steal and sell to support their habit.

Transportation-Safety Situation

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Road Safety and Road Conditions

Vancouver's highways and road conditions are similar to the U.S. and pose no unusual hazards. However, pedestrians and bicyclists downtown should use extreme caution, as there have been a number of fatalities involving aggressive drivers or pedestrians who are not aware of oncoming traffic or who do not observe marked road crossings.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Political Violence Rating: Low

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

There are no known specific terrorist threats directed against officials or private U.S. citizens in Vancouver. However, the Canadian Intelligence Service (CSIS) has openly stated that there are more international terrorist organizations active in Canada than anywhere in the world, with the exception of the U.S. This is in part due to the porous Canadian and American border (longest international border in the world) and Canada's liberal political asylum policies.

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Terrorism Rating: Low

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

The RCMP and VPD provide on-site protection for the Consulate and cover all demonstrations against U.S. government interest and/or near the Consulate. There were no significant security risks and/or issues involving protestors or American personnel during the 2010 Winter Olympics and Paralympics.

Civil Unrest

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) are extremely proactive with policing and controlling civil unrest. In 2014, there were no reported incidents of civil unrest in British Columbia. Throughout the past year, the U.S. Consulate has been the focus of a number of demonstrations, however no more than in the past. The demonstrations covered a wide range of issues including, but not limited to, opposition to certain U.S. policies and foreign engagements. They all were peaceful and closely monitored by the RCMP and VPD.

The last major event occurred in 2010 as Vancouver was the host site for the 2010 Winter Olympics and Paralympics. There were a number of protests that targeted the Olympics and/or Olympic related activities. The RCMP Joint Operations and the Diplomatic Security

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Joint Operations Center covered the athletes and Olympic venues during the Games.

Post-Specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Natural disasters are rare; however, seismic experts indicate that the deep sediment-filled basin around Seattle to Vancouver's North Shore could precipitate a major destructive earthquake in the near future.

Drug-related Crimes

Canada has over 950 gangs, and Vancouver is considered a major center for their U.S.\$7 billion annual drug trade. The United Nations, Red Scorpions, Buttar and Sanghera gangs operate throughout British Columbia as a part of Asian organized crime and outlaw motorcycle units who export their illicit goods to the U.S., Australia, and Japan. The gangs are heavily into "marijuana grows," cross border trafficking, kidnapping, extortions, and homicides. Although 2014 was comparatively calm, gang-related murders, and indiscriminate shootings in Vancouver and surrounding suburbs have kept gang tensions consistent. This violence largely revolves around international drug distribution networks, including Sikh, Asian, Punjabi, and Mexican organizations. The U.S. private sector interests have not been significantly impacted by these recent activities; however, there is a prevailing concern that this ongoing gang violence could harm the general public.

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Police Response

Police are responsive in addressing criminal activity in Vancouver, and officers generally respond to the scene of crimes in a timely manner. Police agencies and emergency medical services in the Vancouver area have standard 911 capabilities, which have proven effective in those rare instances when police or emergency services are needed. Routine and emergency requests for police assistance from the Regional Security Officer in Vancouver have been met with a good response by both the VPD and RCMP. The working relationship between the Regional Security Office, the other seven resident U.S. law enforcement agencies, and the Canadian law enforcement community continues to be robust.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Police detention of an American citizen can be directed toward ACS in Consular Affairs during normal business hours. All issues involving U.S. diplomats or American citizens detained after hours should be directed to the Consulate Duty officer. The Regional Security Office will address issues of police harassment.

Crime Victim Assistance

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The Vancouver Police Department is the central repository for reporting crime within the city. Victims are advised to call 911 when involved with any criminally related matters.

Police/Security Agencies

VPD handles local law enforcement related issues, and RCMP is responsible for the federal policing. Both policing services are professional and proactive with enforcing law and order.

Medical Emergencies

Contact 911 for medical and all other emergency assistance.

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Vancouver General Hospital is a full service trauma certified hospital with an air-lift unit. The hospital is located in central Vancouver at 950 W. 10th Avenue. The contact number is (604) 875-4111

Recommended Air Ambulance Services

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British Columbia Ambulance Service (604) 660-6006

CDC Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at:
http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/canada?s_cid=ncezid-dgmgq-travel-double-001.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Visitors are advised to take the same security precautions they would take while traveling to any major city in the U.S. The U.S. passport remains a highly sought after document, and U.S. travelers to British Columbia should practice sound security procedures and immediately report any unusual incidents to the local authorities.

Visitors should keep a photocopy of their passport's first page in a separate location, as pickpocketing and theft from parked cars in popular tourist destinations (Stanley Park, the

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area around the cruise ship terminal) is common. Wallets, cash, and valuables should be kept in a secured location, and visitors should avoid displaying large sums of cash or jewelry in public. When staying in a hotel, visitors should always keep their room door locked and valuables secure in a safety deposit box or room safe.

U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information

Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

Consulate General Vancouver

1075 West Pender Street

Vancouver, British Columbia V6E 2M6

Public hours: 9-12:30 Monday-Friday, excluding Canadian and U.S. holidays.

Consulate Contact Numbers

Regional Security Office (604) 642-6672

Consulate Operator (604) 685.4311

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Consular Affairs Duty Office Answering Service (604) 681-3022

Marine Ottawa - Post One (613) 688.5249.

Website: <http://vancouver.usconsulate.gov/>

Nearby Posts

Embassy Ottawa: <http://canada.usembassy.gov/>

Consulate Calgary: <http://calgary.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Halifax: <http://halifax.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Montreal: <http://montreal.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Quebec: <http://quebec.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Toronto: <http://toronto.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Winnipeg: <http://winnipeg.usconsulate.gov/>

OSAC Country Council Information

Since the 2010 Winter Olympic OSAC Country Council was established, the Consulate has not garnered enough support to re-start and maintain a Council. In 2014, RSO Vancouver,

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along with the Pol/Econ Section, engaged the American Chamber of Commerce Pacific Chapter (AMCHAM) in an attempt to reestablish the OSAC Country Council. Point of contact: Anthony J. McGinley – (604) 642-6670 mcginleyaj@state.gov. To reach OSAC’s Western Hemisphere team, please email OSACWHA@state.gov.

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