



Cyprus 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Burglary; Human Trafficking; Fraud; Cyber; Riots/Civil Unrest; Earthquakes; Economic Espionage; Drug Trafficking

Europe > Cyprus; Europe > Cyprus > Nicosia

1/8/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Medium

Crime Threats

Cyprus is generally a safe country and experiences less violent crime than other European countries of similar size. However, crimes of opportunity and crime-related incidents do occur. Criminal activity in the northern part of Cyprus is reportedly low. The highest number of robberies in the Turkish-administrated Cypriot area of the island was reported in the cities of Kyrenia, Famagusta, and northern Nicosia. Nationwide, areas frequented by tourists can experience petty crime. Rates of street crimes, such as pickpocketing, purse snatchings, and other petty crimes, remain steady. Muggings, armed robbery, and harassment are uncommon but have been reported by local media. Thefts of valuables left in plain sight in unattended vehicles do occur. The number of opportunistic crimes (pickpocketing, purse snatching, car break-ins, robberies, home burglaries) are likely to rise during the holidays or during the summer when many homes are left vacant.

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Most street crimes are non-violent and non-confrontational and range from scams to petty theft. Most street criminals are unarmed and are not prone to gratuitous violence. Armed violence and assaults against the general public or targeting of foreigners remain uncommon.

Residential burglaries are an issue following the downturn in the economy a few years ago; although still an issue, the number of burglaries being reported has recently declined. Empty residences and homes without an alarm or other security precautions (shutters, additional locks on doors/windows) are more likely to be burglarized. Burglaries of commercial establishments (jewelry shops, convenience stores, sometimes banks) have also been reported.

Incidents linked to organized crime are a concern. Criminal incidents involving improvised explosive, incendiary devices and small arms, primarily attributed to organized crime activity, occur infrequently. Online gambling is the originating cause of many crimes, including loan sharking, threats, blackmail, and even kidnapping, which have occurred in previous years. Sporadic bombings, shootings, and arson have occurred since 2010. These incidents typically involve conflicts between rival organized crime groups and have not been associated with terrorism. The attacks are typically designed to send a message to the intended recipient but occasionally also cause injury or fatality. These incidents have normally taken place in the late evening or early morning hours but may occur at any time. Most of the reported instances of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) did not result in an explosion.

Cyprus is a trafficking destination for persons subjected to forced prostitution and labor. Sex trafficking occurs within venues used by Cyprus' commercial sex industry (bars, pubs, coffee shops, cabarets, massage parlors) and private apartments. Groups vulnerable to forced labor

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include domestic workers, asylum seekers, and foreign migrants working in the construction and agricultural sectors.

Cybersecurity Issues

Fraud-related crimes remain low in relation to population size, but cyber-crimes are increasing. Cyber security should be a priority for any company operating in Cyprus. The importance of using only legitimate software cannot be over-stressed.

Other Areas of Concern

Travel throughout Cyprus is considered safe, and there are no regions designated as off-limits.

It is strongly recommended that establishments advertising themselves as “cabarets” or “nightclubs” be avoided. “Cabaret girls,” also referred to as “artistes,” are generally associated with or are victims of the commercial sex industry and organized crime groups. Visitors to cabarets or those who engage “artistes” often find they are significantly overcharged for drinks, particularly when paying by credit card.

Transportation-Safety Situation

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Road Safety and Road Conditions

Driving is on the left. A combination of human factors, poor road designs, and a general disregard for safe driving practices result in hazardous conditions for both pedestrians and motorists.

Defensive driving is essential as many drivers in Cyprus do not adhere to traffic regulations and are extremely aggressive. Incidents of reckless driving and road rage, such as tailgating, honking and shouting, occasionally result in traffic accidents and physical altercations.

The rate of serious vehicular accidents is higher in Cyprus than in the U.S. and the rest of Europe. Motorcycles and scooters normally drive between lanes and weave in/out of traffic at high speeds. Cyprus is among the top countries in the European Union per-capita for traffic fatalities, primarily due to aggressive driving.

Pedestrians should take particular care, as sidewalks are either absent or narrow and are filled with pot holes and tripping hazards. Where sidewalks do not exist, people walk and bike on the road, causing serious safety issues on the roadways. Pedestrian crossings at intersections designated by zebra stripes are difficult to see, and a pedestrian's right of way is often ignored.

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The major roads in the larger cities are in relatively good condition, and any street signs are usually in both English and Greek. The secondary roads are, in most cases, narrow two-lane strips with little or no shoulder. Street signs (when present) are small and offer little navigational value. Most drivers learn locations by landmarks rather than street signs.

The opening and closing of businesses and schools also affect traffic in Nicosia. Many stores close for one to two hours at lunch, causing traffic at mid-day. Rush hour is from 7:00am-8:30am, during lunch, and again from 3:00pm-6:00pm. Rush hour begins even earlier on Wednesday afternoons, when many offices close at approximately 1:30 p.m. Due to the lack of public transportation, this is particularly problematic in Nicosia where there are too many cars for the road system to handle. Traffic accidents often coincide with rush hour, and parking is difficult in congested areas downtown.

In the event of a car accident, it is recommended to immediately contact the vehicle insurance company or the car rental agency and to file a police report. Although a police report may not be required in a minor fender bender where both parties' car insurance intervention may suffice, a police report is required if there is serious damage or bodily injury involved. It is common for the police to request that a driver accompany them to the nearest police station to complete an accident report.

Public Transportation Conditions

Public transportation consists of bus service that travels throughout the island. Buses are safe and inexpensive, but service is limited.

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Aviation/Airport Conditions

The Republic of Cyprus (ROC) has two major international airports located in Larnaca and Paphos. Both airports meet international standards for safety and security.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Medium

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

International terrorism continues to be a concern, as movement between member countries of the EU is only lightly scrutinized. Cyprus has vulnerabilities associated with the de facto political division of the island and the relative ease with which people can move across the buffer zone undetected.

There have been no recent terrorist attacks in Cyprus. In 2012 and 2015, ROC authorities disrupted two Lebanese Hezbollah operations. In both cases, suspected targets were never determined or made known, but these incidents highlighted the ability of the Cypriot National

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Police to detect and deter terrorist operations.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

Demonstrations against the U.S. have traditionally been non-violent, focused on the official U.S. presence in Cyprus, and have not hindered the conduct of U.S. business activities.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: Medium

Civil Unrest

Deteriorating economic conditions have resulted in a growing number of business closures and unemployment. The prospects of large-scale civil disorder (violent, large-scale demonstrations) are unlikely. However, in 2015, there were a number of demonstrations by various groups in protest of present and proposed austerity measures. These demonstrations took place mostly in front of Parliament and other government buildings. Although largely peaceful and focused at government buildings, demonstrators tended to occupy streets and block the flow of traffic. Economic conditions in the north have also led to demonstrations, primarily by public sector workers. Overall, in 2015 demonstrations were largely non-violent

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and resulted only in a few minor injuries and a small number of arrests.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

One isolated incident of ethnic violence in 2015 involved the far-right wing, Greek Cypriot party ELAM. During a demonstration near the buffer zone in Nicosia, ELAM supporters damaged a couple of Turkish Cypriot vehicles and assaulted three Turkish Cypriot males, who received medical treatment for minor injuries. In response, a joint group of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots initiated a peace walk; no incidents occurred during the peace walk.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

The possibility of earthquakes is a concern, as Cyprus is located in the world's second most earthquake-prone zone. Minor tremors occur regularly, but most are imperceptible. There are eight to ten moderate quakes a year with the risk of a major quake ever-present. Most houses are constructed accordingly. Information on earthquake preparedness can be found at: <http://www.earthquakecountry.info/roots/index.php>

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

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A major industrial accident took place at Mari (near Limassol) in July 2011, destroying more than half of Cyprus' electricity production and resulting in 13 casualties. Apart from this incident, Cyprus has a good track record in industrial and transportation safety and follows EU guidelines. The lead ROC agency overseeing industrial and transport safety is the Department of Labour Inspection, which works closely with the private sector to ensure that best practices are followed in all sectors. The point of contact is:

Department of Labour Inspection

Apelli 12, 2nd Floor

1480 Nicosia

Tel. +357-22-405700, +357-22-405630 Fax: +357-22-663788

E-mail: director@dli.mlsi.gov.cy

Website: www.mlsi.gov.cy/dli

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

Economic espionage concerns are on par with other EU countries. Companies should take care to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of their data by following normal best business practices, including use of authorized IT software.

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In December 2012, the ROC strengthened its already robust Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) legislation by passing an amendment to the Copyright Law, allowing the sampling of evidence and facilitating prosecution of violators. Merchandise piracy has decreased significantly in recent years, largely due to aggressive enforcement by the Department of Customs and the police.

The intellectual property rights (IPR) situation in the area administered by Turkish Cypriots is far worse than in the ROC. IPR legislation is antiquated, and the authorities have shown little initiative in combating piracy.

Privacy Concerns

Business and banking information tends to be processed professionally, and the Embassy is not aware of any particular privacy concerns arising from widespread misuse of such information. The following two professional associations can provide information in addressing privacy concerns for companies are:

Cyprus Bar Association

P.O. Box 21446

1508 Nicosia

Tel. +357-22-873300

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Fax: +357-22-873013

E-mail: Cybar2@cytanet.com.cy

Website: www.cyprusbarassociation.org

Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Cyprus

11 Vyronos Ave.

1096 Nicosia

Tel. +357-22-870030

Fax: +357-22-766360

E-mail: info@icpac.org.cy

Website: www.icpac.org.cy

Personnel-background Concerns

While most travelers do not encounter problems, a few issues were reported over the last few years of travelers facing discrimination due to race, sexual orientation, and nationality.

Drug-related Crimes

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The number of drug-related crimes has decreased slightly over the last few years. While illegal drug activity is considered low by most standards, immigration and customs officials continue to report increases in the amount of illegal drugs (hashish, marijuana, cocaine, crystal methamphetamine) being detected at ports of entry. With the opening of the crossing points through the UN-patrolled buffer zone in April 2003, it became easier to smuggle drugs from north Cyprus to the government-controlled areas. Penalties for the importation and/or sale of illegal drugs, even in small quantities, are severe. Incidents of drug-related violent crime are sporadic and occur on the island occasionally.

Police Response

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

If arrested or detained, American citizens are advised to contact U.S. Embassy Nicosia's American Citizen Services (ACS) unit in the Consular section. The Embassy's main number is 22-39-3939 and can be reached 24 hours a day. During business hours the Embassy's ACS unit can be reached at 22-39-3939 Ext 3353.

Crime Victim Assistance

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The nationwide emergency contact number for the police is 199. Additionally, 112 can also be dialed in an emergency. It is a pan-European number that can be dialed to reach emergency services – medical, fire or police -- from any landline, pay phone, or cellular phone in Europe.

Divisional Police Headquarters:

Nicosia: 22 80 20 20

Limassol: 25 80 50 50

Larnaka: 24 80 40 40

Pafos: 26 80 60 60

Ammochostos: 23 80 30 30

Police/Citizens Communication Line: 1460

Police/Security Agencies

The Cyprus National Police is a centralized, national organization under the Ministry of Justice and Public Order. It is headed by the Chief of Police and headquartered in the capital Nicosia. The organizational structure is divided into four main departments: Training, Administration, Support, and Operations. Under that structure the police department has seven regional divisions covering the ROC. All areas of policing and law enforcement (immigration, emergency response, airport security, seaport police, criminal investigations, drug enforcement) fall under the Cyprus National Police, which maintains a solid reputation and is

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very capable, highly trained, and professional.

Medical Emergencies

Contact Information for Recommended Local Hospitals/Clinics

Nicosia

Nicosia General Hospital: tel: 22-603-000

Nicosia General Ambulance Service: tel: 22-604-000

Makarios General Hospital: tel: 22-493-600

Appolonion Private Hospital: tel: 22-469-000

Evangelistia Medical Center: tel: 22-410-100

Larnaca:

Larnaca General Hospital: tel: 22-800-368

Limassol

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Limassol General Hospital: tel: 25-801-100

Paphos

Paphos General Hospital: tel: 26-803-100

Ayia Napa Area

Famagusta General Hospital: tel: 23-821-211

(located in Paralimni)

Recommended Air ambulance Services

Global Air Rescue: +866-299-6870 or +305-514-0942

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

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For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at:
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/cyprus.htm>.

OSAC Country Council Information

The Nicosia OSAC Country Council is in its initial phase and is seeking members from various sectors of private industry, academia, and NGOs with U.S. affiliations. Security-related information is disseminated to U.S. business interests through OSAC Council meetings, personal meetings with the RSO, emails, Consular Section Warden notices, or through the Cyprus-American Chamber of Commerce. For more information on the Country Council, please contact Tim Leeds, Regional Security Officer at +357-22-39-3548. To reach OSAC's EUR team, please email OSACEUR@state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

Metochiou & Ploutachou Streets

2407 Engomi, Nicosia, Cyprus

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The Embassy's business hours are Monday through Friday from 08:00am to 5:00pm.

Embassy Contact Numbers

Main: +357-22-39-3939

Regional Security Office: +357-22-39-3548

American Citizen Services (during business hours): +357-22-39-3353

Marine Post One: +357-22-39-3300

Website: <http://cyprus.usembassy.gov/>

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Travelers who take common sense personal security precautions can greatly reduce the likelihood of being victimized. It is advisable to exercise common sense while living, working, or visiting Cyprus. Traveling accompanied; exercising discretion with valuables, credit cards, and cash; maintaining control of bags and other personal belongings; locking car doors, and not leaving valuables exposed in the car and locking residence doors are all best security

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practices that can help avoid becoming the victim of crime.

Lower Your Personal Profile: Try to blend in with the local environment as much as possible. Avoid wearing clothing that identifies or that broadcast you as being an American. If singled out for verbal harassment, quietly leave the scene.

Awareness: Be alert and aware of what is happening around you, in your neighborhood, and on the road. Remain particularly aware of your surroundings in highly congested areas (old city of Nicosia or crowded shopping areas). Avoid demonstrations and other large groups of individuals.

Unpredictability: Remain unpredictable. Do not discuss your personal or business schedule with anyone who does not have a "need to know." To the extent possible, do not schedule personal events for the same day and time each week. Never depart/arrive at your residence/workplace habitually. Even a 20-minute variance can disrupt plans and lead those conducting surveillance to choose an easier target. Vary your routes and times.

Communications: Ensure someone always knows where you are. It is strongly recommended that you make arrangements to have a functioning phone while traveling in the north of Cyprus. Keep a list of emergency telephone numbers available at home.

Be Prepared: Regardless of the threat level, overseas residents should always maintain their travel documents in a valid state. Always have enough cash, credit cards, and other negotiables on-hand to see you through a crisis. Identify important documents and

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keepsakes. Keep them all together. Ensure you have an up-to-date inventory of your possessions and keep it with your important documents. Have enough supplies and food on-hand at home to see you through a few days to avoid trips to the local grocery store should there be reports of civil disturbance. Keep flashlights and/or candles available in case of power loss. Keep them in a standard location so that you can find them even in complete darkness.

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