



Russia 2016 Crime & Safety Report: Yekaterinburg

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Bribery; Financial Security; Information Security; Cyber; Hotels; Winter weather; Aviation; Bombing; Religious Terrorism; Anti-American sentiment; Riots/Civil Unrest; Employee Health Safety; Economic Espionage; Intellectual Property Rights Infringement; Surveillance; Hate Crimes; Drug Trafficking; Other

Europe > Russia; Europe > Russia > Yekaterinburg

2/9/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Medium

Crime Threats

Yekaterinburg, with an estimated population of 1.4 million people, experiences moderate levels of crime compared to other major Russian metropolitan areas. The police are able to deter many serious crimes, but petty crimes still occur with some frequency and remain a common problem. Pickpockets are active, although to a lesser degree than in Moscow or St. Petersburg. Pickpocketing on public transportation, at shopping areas, and at tourist sites does occur. Thieves commonly target wallets, cell phones, computers, tablets, cameras, and high-value items.

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More crimes of opportunity occur during early morning hours; individuals who frequent bars, nightclubs, and similar establishments are more likely to be involved in physical altercations after midnight. Traveling alone and in unfamiliar areas can leave one vulnerable and make one a more appealing target to criminals.

Corruption continues to be an issue and is not limited to the law enforcement sector. The solicitation and payment of bribes occurs with some frequency and is widely accepted as a practical business transaction.

Organized crime groups and related violence have not targeted Americans or other foreigners. Though, Americans or other foreigners could become victims of mistaken identity or simply be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Since the 1980s, northern Yekaterinburg has been the home to several criminal gangs, including the notorious Uralmash organized crime syndicate. These crime syndicates allegedly still exist today and may still have some influence in local society. Most of the street crimes associated with this organization are geographically isolated to the neighborhoods within their turf. Some local criminals or small gangs not affiliated with the Uralmash syndicate may still use the Uralmash name as a “trade mark” to threaten their enemies and victims or to develop street credibility.

Reports of financial transaction fraud and identity theft are rare and not directly attributable to particular banking institutions. There are instances of Americans having become victims of identity theft.

Yekaterinburg’s crime rate is likely to increase if the Russian Ruble continues to lose its value against the U.S. Dollar and Euro, the unemployment rate increases, and local economic

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conditions worsen.

Cybersecurity Issues

The cybercrime threat is acute and ever-present. The risk of computer infection, compromise, and theft via malware, spam e-mail, sophisticated spearphishing, and social engineering attacks is significant. A January 2016 news release from a Western hotel headquarters, specifically mentioned their Yekaterinburg hotel as the recent victim of a data breach that may have impacted guests who had stayed there during the past six months.

Other Areas of Concern

The most vulnerable areas include underground entrances to and within the subway system, overnight trains, train stations, airports, open markets, and crowded tourist events. As a general rule, lesser developed areas in major cities have higher crime rates.

There are several closed cities and regions in Russia. One of the larger areas is north of Yekaterinburg's Ural region, nearest to Servov. If you attempt to enter these areas without prior authorization, you may be subject to arrest, fines, and/or deportation. You must list on the visa application all areas to be visited and subsequently register with authorities upon arrival at each destination. There is no centralized list or database of the restricted areas, so travelers should check with their sponsor, hotel, or the nearest office of the Russian Federal Migration Service before traveling to unfamiliar cities and towns.

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Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Rapid weather changes and associated road hazards are quite common in the Ural region. Many city streets have areas in need of repair. Motorcyclists should be extremely careful of road hazards. Asphalt quality varies, and roads outside of the city may be in worse condition. The major inter-city road network is often in need of repair, so defensive driving, increased following distances, and alertness to changing conditions will greatly reduce the likelihood of motor vehicle accidents. Between October-April, quick accumulations of snow/ice may develop before road surfaces can be cleaned. As a result, visibility is diminished, and roads become narrower from snow removal challenges.

Impatient drivers may use paths reserved for trolleys or streetcars with an expectation to merge back into traffic. Though driving along sidewalks is not common, drivers will often park on areas of the sidewalk that may restrict pedestrian movement. Exercise great care near traffic while walking and especially when crossing streets, as vehicles almost never yield to pedestrians.

Have your vehicle serviced and in optimum condition before you travel. Although all-wheel or four-wheel drive is not absolutely necessary, it has great advantages during the winter. It is wise to carry an extra fan belt, fuses, and other spare parts. Many vehicles operate with

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right-side drive and are driven on the right side of the road; this can limit visibility on two-lane roads.

When self-driving, adhere to all local driving regulations. These are strictly enforced, and violators are subject to severe legal penalties, as well as to extortion of bribes by corrupt traffic police. Adhere to the posted speed limit and avoid excessive speed in general. Photo enforcement of traffic laws is common. Increased caution should be used when driving at night and in poorly illuminated areas outside of larger cities of the consular district.

Russia has a zero-tolerance policy with regard to alcohol and driving. The maximum punishment is a two-year suspension of a driver's license. An intoxicated driver may also be detained until s/he is deemed sober.

Russian law requires that vehicles involved in an accident not be moved (even to the side of the road) until police arrive. If a driver moves his vehicle at all, he can be found at fault for the collision, regardless of any contributing factors. In the event of an accident and to avoid potential liability, vehicles should not be moved until traffic police have assessed the scene.

To mitigate highway crime, avoid driving at night or alone. Also do not sleep in your vehicle on the side of the road. Do not pick up hitchhikers, as they may pose a threat to your physical safety and put you in danger of being arrested for unwittingly transporting narcotics.

Staged vehicle accidents are a problem in Russia. Perpetrators usually attempt to extort money through intimidation. There have been cases in which accomplices have arrived at the

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scene posing as officials. In order to discern a true State Inspection for Traffic Safety (GIBDD) inspector from an impostor, one should look for black uniforms (never camouflage) and silver-red badges. Traffic police assigned to foot duty carry a black and white baton. Legitimate police should always provide their name and rank. A real traffic inspector should never show up alone or without a police car.

Public Transportation Conditions

Yekaterinburg's public transportation system consists of a subway (Metro), bus, trolley, tram, and streetcar lines. Taxis are commonly used, although best practice is to arrange services in advance by calling a dispatch service or using a smart phone application. Taxi services from reputable hotels have also proven to be safe and reliable. The Consulate discourages the use of unmarked taxis (sometimes referred to as "gypsy cabs"), as passengers can become victims of robbery, kidnapping, extortion, or theft. Criminals using these taxis to rob passengers often wait outside bars or restaurants to find passengers who have been drinking and are more susceptible to robbery or fare dispute scams. Robberies may also occur in taxis shared with strangers.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the government's Civil Aviation Authority as being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Russia's air carrier operations. Several Russian carriers have participated in the International Air Transport Association's (IATA) Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) program, an industry-sponsored safety audit program.

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Airport security procedures in Yekaterinburg involve pre-inspection/screening of passengers and luggage near the main entrance and a secondary detailed inspection after passport control. In December 2015, Yekaterinburg's International Airport was evacuated and shut down for approximately two hours due to a telephonic bomb threat – subsequently deemed to be a hoax.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Medium

Within the last decade, areas in Russia have been impacted by terrorist attacks. Bombings and acts of violence have occurred at government buildings, airports, hotels, tourist sites, markets, entertainment venues, schools, residential complexes, and on public transportation (including subways, buses, trains, and commercial flights). Extremist groups occasionally threaten to set off bombs in market areas in major cities that are operated largely by migrant workers.

On October 31, 2015, a Russian-operated international chartered passenger plane disintegrated above northern Sinai while traveling from Sharm el-Sheikh International Airport (Egypt) to St. Petersburg, Russia's Pulkovo Airport. ISIL claimed responsibility for the aviation attack, and investigators later found traces of TNT explosives. All 224 passengers and crewmembers were killed.

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As ISIL and other prominent terrorist organizations continue to expand their global footprint, increased concerns will ensue.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

The social/political unrest in Ukraine and the economic sanctions have led to increasing political tensions between the Russian Federation and the U.S./West. As a result, anti-American and anti-Western sentiment is evident throughout Russia, especially in certain media outlets.

Small demonstrations in front of the Consulate occurred sporadically throughout 2015 with various anti-Western themes. All protests were non-violent, monitored by police, and concluded peacefully.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: High

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Civil Unrest

In Yekaterinburg, several demonstrations and protests occurred in 2015. The most common venue for such gatherings is the corner of Lenina Street and Pushkina Street. Some of these protests caused temporary street closures and a few resulted in arrests.

Most rallies are sanctioned by the government and are closely monitored by local law enforcement. Nevertheless, U.S. citizens should avoid public demonstrations, whether authorized or not, and avoid any large crowds and public gatherings that lack enhanced security measures.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

Religious and ethnic tensions exist but have not resulted in violence. Given current bilateral relations and varying propaganda from various mediums, U.S. citizens should be mindful of nationalist extremists who may act on their own accord to inflict harm. Though, the Consulate has not received recent reports of such activity, the threat remains.

Post-specific Concerns

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

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Local nuclear facilities pose unique and grave concerns. The Mayak nuclear weapons production plant is 150km southeast of Yekaterinburg. In 1957, Mayak's Kyshtum site suffered a nuclear mishap and was considered one of the worst nuclear accidents in history. During the catastrophe, a poorly maintained storage tank exploded and released nearly 100 tons of high-level radioactive waste that contaminated more than 750km² (290 sq mi). The subsequent radioactive cloud resulted in large-scale sickness and death from radiation poisoning, despite evacuation efforts. Severity of Kyshtym's disaster was ranked third, behind Ukraine's Chernobyl and Japan's Fukushima.

Additionally, the Beloyarsk Nuclear Power Station is located less than 60km east of Yekaterinburg.

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

American businesses are susceptible to economic and industrial espionage. Information theft, especially from insufficiently protected computer networks, is common. It is recommended that businesses employ a wide array of techniques to counter corporate espionage, such as video monitoring devices, alarm systems, and computer network protection programs. Rules governing the treatment of information remain poorly defined.

Privacy Concerns

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U.S. citizens should have no expectation of privacy. Telephone and electronic communications are subject to surveillance, which can potentially compromise sensitive information. The Russian System for Operational-Investigative Activities (SORM) permits authorities to lawfully monitor and record all data that traverses Russia's networks. A "SORM Factsheet" is available at www.OSAC.gov. Travelers should assume all communications are monitored.

When utilizing local services for banking, security, and medical treatment, U.S. citizens should ensure that the providers are reputable organizations. Be cautious in the amount of information that you make available to these institutions. It is not uncommon for employees of some organizations to pass sensitive personal medical, financial, and banking information to criminal elements.

Personnel Background Concern

Neo-Nazi and fascist groups are present in Yekaterinburg and have been violent. Racial and ethnic minorities should use greater caution, or entirely avoid areas, where these groups are loud, boisterous, and/or intoxicated. To date, their activity has not appeared to target the American expatriate community. However, their anti-immigrant position has been clearly articulated and is often focused against Central Asian immigrant workers.

Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is widespread, as harassment, threats, and acts of violence have targeted LGBT individuals. Yekaterinburg is no exception to this

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position.

Drug-Related Crime

Drug related crimes are rapidly increasing in the Yekaterinburg area. Russia is both a transit and consumer country for various drugs. The most popular drugs used in this area are marijuana, heroin, and “spice” (a type of synthetic cannabis, also known as “bath salts”).

Kidnapping Threat

As ISIL continues to expand its global presence, Americans should remain cognizant of the threats and vulnerabilities associated with kidnappings and abductions.

Police Response

The quality of assistance from local law enforcement varies. The Consulate has received reports from American citizens that some police officers were polite and professional, while others were unprofessional or unwilling to deal with incidents of crime. In some cases, local law enforcement officers failed to take action even when they witnessed crimes in progress. Over the last several years, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) has enacted reforms and has focused on a professionalized law enforcement service. Police do not need to show

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probable cause in order to stop, question, or detain individuals.

Rigorous searches of baggage and strict enforcement of customs regulations against the exportation of items of “cultural value” can occur. U.S. visitors have been arrested for attempting to leave with antique items they believed were legally purchased from licensed vendors. Any article that could appear old or as having cultural value (artwork, icons, samovars, rugs, military medals, antiques) must have a certificate indicating that it has no historical or cultural value. Certificates may not be granted for certain articles, either due to their cultural value or antiquity.

Americans are urged to abide by local laws and monitor the local news. Certain activities that would be considered normal business practices in the U.S. either violate the Russian legal code or are considered suspect by Russian Federal Security Service (FSB). There are particular risks involved in any commercial activity with the Russian military-industrial complex, including research institutes, design bureaus, production facilities, or other high technology, government-related institutions. Any misunderstanding or dispute in such transactions can attract the involvement of the security services and lead to investigation or prosecution for espionage.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

There have been public campaigns initiated to punish endemic bribery and corruption among the police services. However, random document checks and other official actions still provide opportunity for “on-the-spot” payment of fines. It is not uncommon for foreigners to become victims of harassment, mistreatment, and extortion by law enforcement and other officials. If stopped, politely obtain the officer’s name, badge number, patrol car number, and note where

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the stop happened, as this information assists local officials in identifying the perpetrators. Authorities are concerned about these incidents and have cooperated in investigating such cases. The Consulate recommends against the payment of bribes in any circumstance. If you find yourself in this situation, immediately inform the police that you wish to contact your Consulate. Report all incidents of police detention or harassment to the U.S. Consulate's American Citizen Services office at +7 (343) 379-3001 Mon-Fri during normal working hours (08:30-17:30) or after-hours/weekends at +7 (917) 569-3549.

Crime Victim Assistance

American citizens should report all crimes immediately to the police and to the American Citizen Services section of the Consulate. The emergency number is "112." Although the emergency call system (especially outside of large cities) may not have English language capabilities, the unified emergency call system is expanding the use of the European standard and will have greater foreign language capacity. As of the end of 2015, "112" has not been activated in all regions of Russia, though it is in effect in Yekaterinburg. Police and medical services can also be called directly.

Police (Emergency): 112 (112 from cell phone)

Police (Non-Emergency): 02 Varies by location (002 for traffic police)

Fire: 01 (101 from cell phone)

Ambulance: 03 (103 from cell phone)

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Police/Security Agencies

The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) is the central law enforcement body. State Inspection for Traffic Security (GIBDD) is the MVD entity responsible for the regulation of traffic and investigating traffic accidents.

The Federal Security Service (FSB) is the main domestic security agency. The FSB combines functions and powers similar to those exercised by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Medical Emergencies

Medical care in most Yekaterinburg facilities suffers from shortages of medical supplies, differing practice standards, and the lack of comprehensive primary care. Most facilities require cash or credit card payment, at Western rates, at the time of service. Elderly travelers and those with existing health problems may be at particular risk. Those traveling to more remote areas might consider bringing more extensive medical supplies, to include a supply of sterile, disposable syringes and corresponding IV supplies.

An ambulance “Skoraya Pomosh” can be called by dialing 103.

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Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

DOCTOR PLUS MEDICAL CENTER/Ambulance +7 (343) 222-03-03

Address: 7 Lenina Ave., Yekaterinburg

Tel: +7 (343) 212-06-06

Web: www.doc-plus.ru/ambulance

SVERDLOVSK REGIONAL HOSPITAL NO. 1

Address: 185 Volgogradskaya St., Yekaterinburg.

Tel.: +7 (343) 351-1697 (registry), (343) 351-1640, (343) 351-0251 (admissions office).

Web: www.okb1.ru

E-mail: office@okb1.ru

SVERDLOVSK REGIONAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL NO. 1

Address: 32 Serafimiy Deryabinoy St., Yekaterinburg.

Tel.: +7 (343) 240-5980 (general inquiries), (343) 232-0126 (registry).

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Web: www.odkb.ru

E-mail: mail@odkb.ru

ALFA HEALTH CENTER / CLINIC

(Areas of expertise: pediatrics, dentistry, physiotherapy, gynecology and urology, functional and laboratory diagnostics, ultrasound and x-ray, computerized tomography, masseur, vaccination, trauma unit. Out-patient services.)

Address: 17 Gorkogo st., Yekaterinburg.

Tel.: +7 (343) 311-09-99, (343) 311-0912, (343) 311-0913

Web: www.alfazdrav.ru

E-mail: mail@odkb.ru

DIAGNOSTIKA-2000 / MEDICAL CENTER

(Areas of expertise: ultrasound, functional and laboratory diagnostics, consultations of cardiologists, therapists, rheumatologists, gynecologists, neurologists, immunologists, ophthalmologists, and endocrinologists. Out-patient services.)

Address: 61 Belinskogo St., Yekaterinburg.

Tel.: +7 (343) 351-0880, (343) 351-0888

Web: www.diagnostika-2000.ru

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E-mail: diagnostika@r66.ru

DOCTOR-PLUS MEDICAL CENTER

(Areas of expertise: diagnostics, gynecology, gastroenterology, dermatology and cosmetology, dietetics, cardiology, neurology, ophthalmology, pediatrics, proctology, plastic surgery, psychotherapy, physical therapy, rehabilitation programs, trauma and orthopedics, urology, surgery, endocrinology, audiology. Emergency assistance 24 hours a day. In-patient and out-patient services.)

Address: 90 Sheynkmana St., Yekaterinburg

Address: 7 Lenina Ave., Yekaterinburg (Trauma)

Tel.: +7 (343) 212-0606

Web: www.doc-plus.ru

E-mail: doctorplus@inbox.ru

ZDOROVYE 365 PRIVATE HOSPITAL

Address: 83 Kuznechnaya St., Yekaterinburg

Tel.: +7 (343) 270-1717 / Fax: + 7 (343) 270-1717, ext. 2

Web: www.zdorovo365.ru

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E-mail: info@zdorovo365.ru

Available Air Ambulance Services

International SOS Russian 24/7 Hotline: +7 (495) 937 5760 (Moscow)

Recommended Insurance Posture

Visitors are strongly encouraged to purchase medical evacuation insurance prior to traveling to Russia.

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/russia>.

OSAC Country Council Information

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While there is no Country Council in Yekaterinburg, Embassy Moscow has an active OSAC Country Council that meets periodically to discuss issues of mutual concern. To reach OSAC's Europe team, please email OSACEUR@state.gov.

U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information

Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Consulate General Yekaterinburg

Ulitsa Gogolya 15A

Yekaterinburg 620151

Hours of Operation: U.S. Consulate Yekaterinburg is open Mon-Fri from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., except on American and Russian holidays.

Consulate Contact Numbers

Tel: +7 (343) 379-3001 (after-hours: +7 (917) 569-3549)

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

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Nearby Posts

Embassy Moscow: <http://moscow.usembassy.gov/>

Consulate St. Petersburg: <http://stpetersburg.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Vladivostok: <http://vladivostok.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Guidance

For the latest security and other information, Americans should regularly monitor the Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs at <http://travel.state.gov>, where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Alerts, and Travel Warnings can be found, as well as important information for Americans who face emergencies abroad. U.S. citizens are reminded to register with the U.S. Embassy or closest U.S. Consulate by entering their travel itinerary and contact information at: <https://step.state.gov/step/>. STEP is a secure online travel registration that allows American citizens to record foreign trip and residence information that the Department of State can use to communicate and assist enrollees in case of an emergency. STEP also allows American citizens to update their contact information on the Internet at any time to ensure pertinent travel information remains current. The site provides up-to-date travel information customized to the enrollee's unique travel agenda and itinerary. The data that is entered is secured behind Department of State firewalls, accessed only by cleared personnel in Embassies, Consulates, and the Department of State, and releasable only under the provisions of the Privacy Act. In case of difficulties registering online, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance.

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Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Travel in pairs or groups. Always remain alert to your surroundings. Keep wallets in inner front pockets, carry purses tucked securely under arms with compartments zipped/closed, wear the shoulder strap of cameras/bags across the chest, walk away from the curb, and carry purses/bags out of reach from passing cars.

Foreigners who consume alcohol to excess are especially vulnerable to assault and robbery in/around nightclubs/bars or on their way home from those establishments. Some travelers report having been drugged at bars, while others have taken strangers back to their lodgings, where they were drugged, robbed, and/or assaulted.

RSO encourages the use of ATMs inside banks, when possible. Preference should be given to illuminated areas where attaching skimming devices is more difficult. Anyone who may have been victimized should report incidents to the credit card company or issuing bank immediately.

Travelers should obtain receipts for all high-value items (including caviar) purchased in

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Russia. Certificates must be obtained from the Russian Ministry of Culture.

Travelers are encouraged to make copies of their passport photo page and visa, as well as credit card numbers (to include telephone contact information). These copies should be stored in the hotel or residence in the event that the original items are stolen. Travelers should not flash large amounts of money, jewelry, or electronics, all of which can be an indicator of wealth.

U.S. citizens should be aware of their personal surroundings and follow good security practices. They are urged to remain vigilant and exercise good judgment and discretion when using any form of public transportation or visiting large public venues.

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