



Finland 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Rape/Sexual Violence; Fraud; Human Trafficking; Drug Trafficking; Cyber; Winter weather; Riots/Civil Unrest

Europe > Finland; Europe > Finland > Helsinki

2/11/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

With an excellent police force and a stable political and economic environment, Finland continues to be a safe and secure environment for business, tourism, and living.

Post Crime Rating: Low

Crime Threats

The peak tourist season is the summer, when large crowds are common and the potential for petty theft increases dramatically.

U.S. citizens are seldom the victims of violent criminal acts, and most violent crimes go almost unnoticed by Finnish citizens, who more typically fall victim to crimes such as burglaries and

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thefts. Personal robberies also occur but are most often during late hours. Non-violent crimes (petty theft, pickpocketing) increase twofold during the warmer months.

It is not uncommon to see individuals who are visibly intoxicated, and these individuals are often encountered on public transportation and in the same areas frequented by visitors and tourists. Public drunkenness is more pronounced after dark, on weekends, and during holidays. While the majority of these individuals are non-violent, visitors who observe visibly intoxicated individuals are advised to avoid direct contact so as to minimize the possibility of an incident. Alcohol contributes to criminal activity.

Sexual assaults do occur, but their numbers are generally lower than are reported elsewhere in Europe.

Violent crime is relatively rare but assaults do occur, particularly in clubs frequented by young people.

Overall offenses fell 1.1 percent in 2015 from 2014. However, crimes against life and health (violent crime) increased 3.1 percent. Property crimes decreased 2.1 percent from 2014's spike in incidents. However, as in previous years, cases of fraud continue to rise, up 10.3 percent from 2014.

Organized crime primarily consists of activities associated with smuggling, human trafficking, prostitution, and drugs. In the past few years, Finland has been tightening its borders and increasing its investigations into human trafficking. Criminal organizations, such as motorcycle

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clubs, continue to be of great interest to police who have dedicated resources that have proven effective toward combating their activities. Police believe that the three most active criminal organizations are: Hell's Angels, Bandidos, and Cannonball motorcycle clubs. Drug trafficking and providing security services are the primary sources of income for these organizations. Motorcycle gangs are not known to bother average citizens, and violence typically occurs within the gangs.

Cybersecurity Issues

Cybersecurity continues to be an area of concern. In 2013, Finland started the National Cyber Security Centre, which automatically notifies operators if a contaminated computer is detected in a Finnish network. Statistics are difficult to obtain, as only a small fraction of cybercrimes are brought to the attention of police, and many users are unaware that they are victims of cybercrime.

Other Areas of Concern

During the evening hours, travelers are advised to remain vigilant when in proximity of the downtown train station area and the Kaisaniemi Park. Assaults occasionally occur in these areas.

Transportation-Safety Situation

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Road Safety and Road Conditions

Roadways are paved, well maintained, and generally well illuminated. All drivers must yield to traffic entering the roadway on the right. Drivers operating a motor vehicle are required to have a valid driver's license, and all drivers must adhere to strict traffic laws. Traffic fatalities have steadily declined since a peak in 1990.

Authorities rigorously enforce intoxicated driving laws and may administer field sobriety inspections at their discretion. Cases of drunken driving increased 0.2 percent compared to 2014.

Accident rates are higher in winter months due to icy road conditions. Road conditions during the winter can become very dangerous, and numerous fatalities are reported from accidents every winter. Drivers are required to use snow tires from December to March.

Public Transportation Conditions

Finland has one of the safest public transportation systems in the world. It is rare for an accident to occur with any rail transportation. Ferry transportation is abundant, well maintained, and regulated.

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Aviation/Airport Conditions

Finnair continues to be considered among the safest airlines in the world.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

Although the Nordic and Baltic regions have seen an increase in terrorist activity and threat reporting in recent years, Finland has not experienced any significant terrorist incidents/threats. Terrorist events in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark have elevated local police awareness. Additionally, the Finnish Security Intelligence Service (SUPO) estimates that approximately 70 Finnish citizens have joined the fight with ISIL in Iraq and Syria. The Finns reported the threat level in 2014 as “very low,” but it was elevated to “low” at the height of the 2015 migrant crisis. Authorities are cognizant of the regional terrorism threat and are proactive in combating potential attacks.

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SUPO has instituted reforms based on lessons learned in other Nordic countries to combat terrorism, including increased intelligence sharing and outreach to local minority communities.

In 2015, Finland processed approximately 30,000 refugees from conflict areas. This number compares to approximately 3,600 refugees in 2014 and represents a significant increase. SUPO has reported that they are tracking a small number of refugees with potential terrorist ties, and there have been three reported arrests of individuals that are thought to be associated with ISIL.

Anti-American Sentiment

Finns have a very positive outlook regarding the U.S. Visitors and businesses should not expect anti-American sentiment. The U.S. Embassy is rarely targeted by demonstrators, and those protests against the U.S. have been peaceful.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: Low

Civil Unrest

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Overall, demonstrations are routinely held for a variety of causes. Visitors are advised to avoid large gatherings of people protesting. If a demonstration is encountered, visitors should immediately leave the area.

Protests and counter protests occasionally occur in downtown Helsinki, but few are violent. A recent exception was when left-wing anarchists attempted to disrupt a right-wing nationalist march on Finnish Independence Day in December 2015 and ended up clashing with police who were attempting to maintain order. Police arrested over 100 protestors and employed the use of less-than-lethal devices to restore order. This is the third year in a row that protests on Independence Day have turned violent and ended in arrests.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

Religious and ethnic violence remains low; however, with dramatic increases in the refugee population in 2015 some anti-immigrant elements are starting to cause problems. There have been a few instances of protests outside of refugee centers and possible arson attacks on refugee centers that have, so far, only resulted in property damage.

Post-specific Concerns

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Environmental Hazards

Visitors should expect long, cold winters with prolonged periods of darkness. Proper clothes and layering are essential, as are other precautions like snow tires on vehicles. Some visitors may be negatively affected by the lack of sunlight. Products such as UV lights or “happy lights” may provide some relief of symptoms caused by lack of daylight.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Thanks to strict workplace safety rules, industrial accidents are rare, and there have been no recent significant industrial accidents affecting U.S. citizens in Finland.

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

Finland is a high-tech economy with highly technological corporate operations and research facilities. As a result, according to SUPO, it is an ideal target for corporate espionage. Interested stakeholders -- from police and government authorities, to media, private corporations and data protection firms, and private citizens -- increasingly recognize the risks associated with leaks of corporate or personally identifiable information (PII). Finland is party to a number of international Intellectual Property (IP) protection treaties, particularly within the EU. Finnish media regularly report on data security in order to raise awareness on what is a topic of interest to Finnish citizens. Finland is also home to a number of leading data protection companies that routinely offer seminars and talks on data protection and security.

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Privacy Concerns

Finland has a modern information technology infrastructure, which creates opportunities for criminals to access and exploit personal data. Visitors should employ the same online privacy protections as they would anywhere else in the world.

Drug-related Crimes

Arrests and seizures of drugs continue to increase. In 2015, authorities reported that narcotics-related offences increased 3.2 percent from 2014. Hard drug use remains relatively rare, and Finland is primarily a transit point for drugs.

Police Response

Police response to emergency situations is excellent within Helsinki. Most police officers speak English, but some may have a limited capacity to communicate in English. Police assets, although capable, are very limited in rural areas, tending to be more reactive than preventative.

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How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Police harassment is practically unheard of, as Finnish police are routinely ranked among the least corruptible law enforcement in the world. Anyone attempting to bribe a police officer should expect to be arrested. If you feel you have been the victim of police harassment, file a report with the Finnish Ministry of Interior or police ombudsman on police harassment, or consult with an attorney. U.S. citizens should report all incidents of police detention to the U.S. Embassy Helsinki, American Citizen Services (ACS), at +358-40-140-5957, 2 pm – 4 pm, Mon-Thur. Outside these hours, dial +358-9-616-250 or email ACS at HelsinkiACS@state.gov.

Crime Victim Assistance

If you are a victim of a crime, contact the police by dialing 112. Most dispatchers speak English.

Police/Security Agencies

There are approximately 7,500 police officers in Finland. There are 11 local precincts each with their own central police station and three national units. The Helsinki precinct is the largest, consisting of about 1,300 officers.

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SUPO is responsible for combating crime and other activity pertaining to internal and external security.

The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) is responsible for investigating organized and professional crime.

The Police College of Finland is responsible for recruitment, training, and research & development of police tactics and standards.

The Finnish traffic police, an institution since 1930, was disbanded in 2013 as part of a nationwide restructuring. The responsibility for traffic surveillance now falls to local precincts.

Medical Emergencies

Dialing 112 is the fastest way to have medical emergencies addressed and to request an ambulance.

Medical facilities and their staff are, as a rule, excellent and are widely available for emergency services. English is commonly spoken. The public hospital system and many

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private hospitals honor foreign credit cards.

If you are temporarily visiting Finland and require immediate emergency medical assistance (trauma, life or death cases), you may visit a local medical center or clinic (“ensiapu”). Usually, the first-aid station is located at the district hospital, where it is possible to provide a full range of services. Patients should be prepared to present their passports. If your injury or medical need is minor, most private clinics are able to provide assistance. Major cities have 24-hour clinics. In smaller towns, clinics are usually open from 0700 to 2200 hours.

If you are a resident and require primary health care service, you may contact your local health center, or if your needs are more pressing, you may use private services. Residents of the municipalities can book appointments in a health center by themselves. Access to specialized medical care requires a referral from a health center physician or private practitioner for non-emergency cases.

Travelers with special medical needs should consult with their personal physician and take appropriate precautions, including bringing adequate supplies of necessary medication. Medicines may be brought into the country as long as they are intended for the traveler's personal use. Travelers should bring a written prescription in case they are required to justify traveling with a potentially controlled substance. Medications categorized as narcotics may only be brought into the country to cover the traveler's personal use for a maximum of 14 days and must be accompanied by a medical certificate stating why the traveler needs them. There are special requirements referring to quantity of dose that can be brought into the country. For more detailed information, please contact the Finnish Embassy in Washington D.C. at sanomat.was@formin.fi. In addition, stringent Finnish customs regulations prohibit travelers from receiving drugs from abroad after having arrived in the country. Travelers may also find local physicians reluctant to prescribe equivalent quantities or dosages because of different

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medical protocols.

Prescriptions are dispensed at pharmacies ("apteekki"). Most pharmacies are open during normal shopping hours, but major cities have a 24-hour pharmacy.

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

The Embassy assumes no responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of these facilities:

Terveystalo Kamppi

Jaakonkatu 3

Tel: 030-6000

24-hr emergency services. A full range of specialties are available by appointment, as well as laboratory services and a radiology department.

Mehiläinen Sairaala (hospital)* Lääkärikeskus (clinic)

Pohjoinen Hesperiankatu 17 - Runeberginkatu 47 (corner)

Tel: 010-41400

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Will refer to larger public facility if necessary for treatment. Clinic is attached to private hospital. Complete radiology department including MRI capability, laboratory services, foot clinic available. Private facility. Private children's clinic, open Mon.-Sat. 8:00 am - 9:00 pm, Sun. 9 am - 9:00 pm. Full range of expert child care.

Eira Lääkäriasema

Laivurinkatu 29

Tel: 09-162-0570

Clinic is attached to private hospital. Additional services include laboratory, radiology and physical therapy departments. Will refer if necessary to treatment. Private facility.

Meilahti Hospital

Haartmaninkatu 4

Tel:09-4711

24-hr. emergency services. Cardiology, respiratory medicine, infectious diseases, general internal medicine soft tissue emergency surgery. This is a public hospital, you will be charged as a private patient.

Töölö Hospital

Topeliuksenkatu 5

Tel:09- 4711

24-hr. emergency services. Multiple traumas, broken bones, burns, intensive care, neurosurgery. This is a public facility; you will be charged as a private patient.

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Women's Hospital

Haartmaninkatu 2

Tel: 09-4711

24-hr. emergency services for OBGYN only. Newborn ICU. This is a public facility; you will be charged as a private patient.

Dextra

Munkkivuori Medical Center

Raumantie 1 A

Tel: 09-560-160

Private facility. Clinic, radiology, laboratory.

Available Air Ambulance Services

Jet Flight: Tel: +358-020-510-1911

Recommended Insurance Posture

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Helsinki is a frequent medical evacuation point for emergency cases from the countries of the former Soviet Union.

Health care services are provided to all residents and visitors by the state. However, the system is over-burdened, and wait times of several months or more are not uncommon for appointments. Many residents purchase additional health insurance, enabling them to utilize private hospitals and clinics. These plans are often offered through companies or can be purchased on the local economy.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

For information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/finland>. Further medical information can be found at http://finland.usembassy.gov/medical_information.html.

OSAC Country Council Information

Helsinki has an active OSAC Country Council that meets on a regular basis. For more information, please contact the U.S. Embassy Regional Security Office at HelsinkiRSO@state.gov; tel: +358-9-616-250. To reach OSAC's Europe team, please email OSACEUR@state.gov.

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U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

Embassy of the United States of America

Itäinen Puistotie 14

00140 Helsinki

Finland

Operating hours: Mon-Fri, 8:30 am to 5 pm. Some sections of the Embassy may have different hours. All offices are closed on Saturday, Sunday, and on American and Finnish holidays.

Embassy Contact Numbers

Main Embassy Switchboard/Operator: +358-9-616-250

For an American citizen emergency, 24/7, please call the main Embassy number and follow instructions.

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Regional Security Office, American Citizen Services and Marine Post One are available 24/7 by contacting the Embassy switchboard.

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

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

While Finland is generally a safe country, visitors should still exercise the same precautions as they would when traveling anywhere else. Tourists should always pay attention to their surroundings and protect their valuables and travel documents. Proper caution should always be exercised, especially in crowded public places, to include transportation areas and markets, are areas of increased risk for petty crime.

While the majority of inebriated individuals are non-violent, visitors who observe visibly intoxicated individuals are advised to avoid direct contact so as to minimize the possibility of an incident.

The Embassy strongly recommends that U.S. citizens avoid large public gatherings, especially political rallies and demonstrations, due to the inherent potential for violence.

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