



## Hungary 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Assault; Burglary; Human Trafficking; Riots/Civil Unrest; Floods; Employee Health Safety; Drug Trafficking

Europe > Hungary; Europe > Hungary > Budapest

2/15/2016

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Medium

### Crime Threats

Hungary's overall crime rate for 2015 significantly decreased compared to 2014 in all major categories in general. Violent crime rates are still relatively low, and non-confrontational crime against property showed a decrease. Property crimes (theft, robbery) decreased, as did violent criminal acts against persons (aggravated assault). There was also a significant decrease of homicides from 253 in 2014 to 205 in 2015. Per Hungarian law, property crimes where damages are less than HUF 50000 (approximately U.S.\$186) are not reported in the crime statistics, as those cases are considered minor offenses only. Crimes committed against Americans are generally crimes of opportunity and not specifically targeted.

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Street crimes (pickpocketing, petty thefts, thefts from unattended vehicles, vandalism) are the most frequently reported crimes. Budapest's major train stations and public transportation (tram, subway, bus) systems are popular venues for such thefts.

Residential crimes are still a significant issue and remain a prime public concern, even though their numbers decreased in 2015. In 2015, more people installed alarm systems and other security measures as a deterrent, which may have affected the statistical figures for the year.

Elderly people are often prime targets because they live either alone or with a similar-aged spouse. Most attacks against the elderly occur in the countryside or in villages and small towns but also happen in larger cities.

Organized crime groups control most prostitution operations, stolen car rings, trafficking/smuggling in human beings, and narcotics/tobacco trafficking. The organized crime division of the Hungarian National Police, in partnership with a U.S. Embassy-supported task force of U.S. law enforcement officers, continues to combat the problem of organized crime.

## **Transportation-Safety Situation**

### Road Safety and Road Conditions

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In 2015, there were more vehicle accidents causing personal injuries and more people died on the roads compared to 2014. When the first 11 months' figures of 2014 are compared to that of 2015, the growth in the number of accidents (14443 > 14975) and fatalities (497 → 525) are clearly visible. The number of accidents caused by drunk drivers decreased by 3.48 percent, but speeding and reckless driving still remains a concern.

## Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

In summer 2015, a large movement of migrants/refugees from the Middle East and North Africa entered southern and Eastern European countries, including Hungary. The large migration overwhelmed the border controls of southernmost countries, and many migrants/refugees were allowed to enter the region. Most migrants/refugees intended to transit Hungary en route to Germany and other countries in Western Europe. Initially, Hungary allowed them to pass through. However, as the migration flow increased and as other countries began to publicly reconsider their acceptance of migrants, Hungary passed legislation permitting the use of military personnel to protect the borders and erected fences on the southern borders, forcing the flow of immigrants/refugees to change direction and transit via Slovenia and Croatia. With many undocumented migrants entering the region, concerns grew about the possibility of terrorists infiltrating Europe. These concerns were validated in the wake of the Paris terrorist attacks in November 2015 after police investigations revealed that several of the terrorists had arrived in the wave of migrants/refugees only a few months prior. The variance in border policies with respect to the

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migration crisis and the lack of a unified EU policy have caused some tension between Hungary and its neighbors, particularly Serbia, Croatia, and Austria.

### **Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence**

Hungary enjoys a relatively stable security environment.

Post Political Violence Rating: Medium

Civil Unrest

As a result of the economic recession and legislative acts to cut budget expenses, 2012 saw many demonstrations by citizens, such as students who protested against the broader introduction of tuition fees and against a significant cutback in state-financed university education.

In September 2014, demonstrations of 100,000 people or more were observed in Budapest to protest the government's proposal for an Internet tax. Some destruction of property was reported during protests, but the protest was mostly non-violent.

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In 2015, mass demonstrations lost steam and large crowds could no longer be called to the streets for political or economic reasons, especially after the first migrant wave hit the country in the fall. The government launched a massive populist anti-migrant campaign. The campaign also successfully diverted public attention from economic and social problems. The year ended without any major anti-government rallies.

### Religious/Ethnic Violence

The Magyar Garda (Hungarian Guard), established in August 2007 by Jobbik, an extreme ethnic nationalist political group, continues to intimidate and conduct anti-Roma activity throughout Hungary. In December 2008, the Budapest Municipal Court dissolved the Magyar Garda Society because of its anti-Roma activity. Jobbik appealed the ruling, which was sustained by the Metropolitan Court of Appeal. In November 2009, a law was passed fining anyone 50,000 HUF for wearing a Magyar Garda Uniform. In the April 2014 elections, Jobbik won 23 seats in Parliament, amounting to 11 percent.

In 2015, Jobbik Party's positions weakened as the governing parties' strengthened, and also because the government implemented policies and rhetoric that strongly coincide with Jobbik ideology, especially during the migrant crises. Although the Magyar Garda movement still exists, it has lost much of its influence and ability to recruit new members in recent years.

### Post-specific Concerns

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## Environmental Hazards

In recent years, spring flooding has closed roadways and affected low lying towns and areas along the Danube and Tisza Rivers. However, no flooding occurred in 2014.

A January 29, 2011, earthquake near Oroszlány damaged buildings in Komárom-Esztergom County and was felt in Budapest. The earthquake, epicentered 44km west of Budapest, measured 4.8 on the Richter scale. Minor cracks reportedly appeared in buildings, and chimneys were tilted in Komárom, Pest, and Fejér counties. No injuries were reported, and no one was evacuated.

## Critical Infrastructure Concerns

On October 4, 2010, the reservoir at the Ajkai Timfoldgyar alumina factory released a wave of toxic sludge up to three meters (nine feet) high that inundated Kolontar, Devecser, Somlovasarhely, Somlojeno, Apacatorma, Tuskevar, and Kisberzsenyc. Some 600,000-700,000 million cubic meters (158-185 million gallons) of sludge were released, affecting 40 square km (15 square miles) along the path of the sludge flow. At least eight people were killed, and more than 123 others were injured, many with severe chemical burns. According to officials, the released amount represented only about 2-4 percent of the total amount in the reservoir. Prompt action neutralized the alkalinity of the sludge before it reached the Danube River.

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## Personnel-Background Concerns

Although there is a significant presence of extreme ethnic nationalist groups, they rarely adversely impact foreigners. Their activities, particularly rallies and demonstrations, are strictly limited and monitored by police.

## Drug-related Crimes

Hungary has been identified as a transit country for drugs from Turkey and Asia to Europe. Police report that Hungary is increasingly becoming a consumer of drugs, particularly among teens, who primarily prefer to use synthetic drugs rather than common narcotics.

## Police Response

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

Report all incidents of police detention or harassment to U.S. Embassy Budapest, American Citizen Services at: (36)-1-475-4164, Mon-Fri during normal working hours or after hours at (36)-1-475-4444.

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## Crime Victim Assistance

If you are the victim of crime, call the local police at: 107 or 112. It is also recommended that American citizens notify the U.S. Embassy's American Citizen Services Unit. U.S. citizens are encouraged to report any situations where they are the victims of personal crime to the U.S. Embassy in Budapest.

Additionally, the Hungarian Ministry of National Economy and the Hungarian National Police have a hotline for tourists who are scammed at restaurants and clubs. The hotline number is +36-1/438-8080, and operates 24-hours a day with English and German capability. There is also a tourism information line, operating 24-hours a day, that is toll free (+36-80-660-044) from Hungary and (+36-1/550-044) from abroad.

(107) Police Response

(104) Ambulance Response

(112) Police and fire emergency assistance consolidated telephone number.

## Police/Security Agencies

During the peak tourist season, police patrolling major tourist areas are often accompanied by multi-lingual students who assist with problems or complaints. Police also have a tourist

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information office that operates every day from 8:00 AM-8:00 PM. It is located downtown at Suto Street 2, District 5; it is able to receive complaints and render assistance in both English and German.

A major reorganization of Hungarian National Police was started in 2012, affecting all local, regional, and central levels of the police. The independence of the largest central investigative entity, the Hungarian National Bureau of Investigation (HNBI), was terminated, and the bureau was attached to the Stand-by Police (Riot Police) as a directorate. At the same time, the units that investigated organized crime cases at HNBI and the Organized Crime Department of Budapest Metropolitan Police were dismissed. All organized crime cases were assigned for investigation to local police departments.

In 2015, the power and influence of the Stand-by Police (Riot Police) grew even stronger. Their officers take part in patrolling to support local uniformed police, and a large Stand-by Police force was deployed at the borders to strengthen border police forces and to combat hostile migrant groups.

The Counter-Terrorism Centre, founded in 2010 with the personal trustee of the Prime Minister in charge, still remained independent from the Hungarian National Police, having to answer directly to the government through the Minister of Interior. The Centre also took part in securing the borders during the migrant crises and carried out police SWAT operations, for which it has countrywide jurisdiction.

## **Medical Emergencies**

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For emergency/non-emergency patient transportation: +36-1-311-1666 can be used. SOS Hungary Medical & Assistance Service (a private medical service company) can be used for transportation service: +36-1-240-0475.

(104) Emergency Ambulance Service

(105) Fire Emergency

(107) Police Response

(112) Police, ambulance, and fire emergency assistance

#### Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Hospitals and clinics in Budapest include the AEK/National Health Center, former Military Hospital: +36-1-465-1800 and National Traumatological Institute (Peterfy Sandor utcai Hospital Fiumei Street facility): +36-1-299-77-00. Additional, information is available from the Embassy web page at [http://hungary.usembassy.gov/medical\\_information.html](http://hungary.usembassy.gov/medical_information.html).

#### Available Air Ambulance Services

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Operated by the Hungarian National Ambulance Service. The need to transport via air ambulance will be determined by medical professionals at the scene.

## 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/hungary?s\\_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-single-001](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/hungary?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-single-001).

## OSAC Country Council Information

The Embassy started an OSAC Country Council in January 2014 that meets quarterly. The Regional Security Office (RSO) is readily available whenever a U.S. company wants to discuss security/crime issues. The RSO also works with the Embassy's Foreign Commercial Service section on matters affecting the U.S. business community. To reach OSAC's Europe team, please email [OSACEUR@state.gov](mailto:OSACEUR@state.gov).

## U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

### Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

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Embassy of the United States of America

Szabadság tér 12

H-1054 Budapest

Hungary

Embassy operating hours are Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. but some sections within the Embassy may have different hours. All offices are closed on Saturday, Sunday, and on American and Hungarian holidays.

#### Embassy Contact Numbers

During office hours: (36-1) 475-4400 (Local time: GMT +1)

After-hours emergency calls -- for American citizens only: (36-1) 475-4703/4924

+36-1-475-4164 (Ask for American Citizen Services during regular business hours.)

+36-1-475-4444 (After-hours and on weekends.)

Fax: (36-1) 475-4764

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

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## Embassy Guidance

Public announcements and worldwide cautions alerting U.S. citizens traveling and residing abroad to potential safety concerns are regularly issued. Travelers are encouraged to visit the Embassy website at [www.usembassy.hu](http://www.usembassy.hu) for the most current information.

## Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

### Scams

Reports of overcharging at some restaurants, clubs, and nightspots, especially in those areas of the city frequented by tourists, are not uncommon.

The "consumption" scam is a popular practice in which "recruiters" seek out men to meet women in clubs (or the women themselves approach their victims). Those who choose to buy drinks or spend time with the women are usually charged exorbitant fees. U.S. citizens have reported that club bouncers are intimidating and have escorted club patrons to ATMs or to their hotels to obtain money to pay the bills. In 2009, the owner and the bouncer at a club were charged with assault after they battered two Dutch tourists for not paying their bill. Police have shut down clubs for this type of activity. If someone becomes a victim of this activity, the

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police should be called immediately; however, that will not necessarily absolve the customer of paying the bill. Before entering these clubs, customers should always ask about prices.

### Situational Awareness Best Practices

In Budapest, a little common sense goes a long way. As a general rule, people should be alert to their surroundings and keep control of all personal belongings, especially when in crowded public places (public transportation areas, open markets). The Embassy strongly recommends that American citizens avoid large public gatherings, especially political rallies and demonstrations, due to the potential for violence.

Additional information regarding the above scams, as well as other useful security and safety information can be obtained from the following link on the U.S. Embassy Budapest website: [http://hungary.usembassy.gov/tourist\\_advisory.html#clubs](http://hungary.usembassy.gov/tourist_advisory.html#clubs)

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