



China 2016 Crime & Safety Report: Shanghai

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Surveillance; Stolen items; Theft; Financial Security; Cyber; Fraud; Assault; Rape/Sexual Violence; Religious Terrorism; Separatist violence; Riots/Civil Unrest; Faith-based Organization; Religious Violence; Earthquakes; Floods; Employee Health Safety; Counterfeiting; Drug Trafficking

East Asia & Pacific > China; East Asia & Pacific > China > Shanghai

2/17/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Low

Crime Threats

Shanghai is generally considered safe relative to other metropolitan cities of comparable size. China's high conviction rate, use of modern technology in policing, and extensive law enforcement presence throughout the city serve to deter most criminal activity. Violent crimes (homicides, burglaries, robberies) do occur, but the rate of these crimes is relatively low considering the city's large population (estimated to be roughly 24 million in 2015). Petty crimes (pickpocketing, credit card fraud, various financial scams) occur at rates consistent with previous years and occasionally target foreigners.

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Although a number of U.S. citizens visiting Shanghai reported being victims of crime in 2015, in most instances Americans do not appear to have been targeted specifically. A majority of crimes are financial in nature, and foreigners may occasionally be the victims of crime due to perceived affluence.

Violent crimes affecting the expatriate community most often occur at bars, clubs, and restaurants in Shanghai's vibrant nightlife districts. Bar fights have occurred due to misunderstandings, miscommunication, bravado, alcohol consumption, or a combination thereof. While the legal age for consuming alcohol is 18, most establishments do not require identification. Some bars are overcrowded, and safety standards are seldom enforced. Prostitutes and drug dealers are known to be present in some clubs, though illegal in China.

Pickpocketing is quite common on public transportation, at shopping areas, and at tourist sites. Small pickpocketing groups commonly work in concert. At tourist sites, thieves are generally more interested in cash and will immediately abandon credit cards; in shopping areas, both cash and credit cards may be sought.

Sexual assaults have occurred, although reported incidents remain relatively rare. Most instances involve the consumption of alcoholic beverages in bars, nightclubs, and massage parlors. Other factors potentially contributing to sexual assault include the use of unlicensed taxi cabs and overall poor judgment.

While there have been several reported instances of robbery by force, many cases appear to have involved a variation of the same scam. Typically, a victim is invited to a specific location for a massage, tea, drinks, or music, often by an attractive local national. While in the establishment, the victim is confronted and forced to turn over his/her credit card under the

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threat of violence. The credit cards are promptly charged thousands of dollars in undelivered services, and the victim is forced to sign the receipt. In most cases, victims are released unharmed, though distraught or embarrassed, with further threats of violence if the police are notified. Although this trend has occurred for several years, it appears to continue unabated. Local police are engaged, but little is done because the victims generally do not report the crime until after they have departed China. Police often seem unwilling to investigate the crimes if the complainant is not present in China. In instances where the victim has reported the crime to the police immediately, there has been limited success in recovering lost money or valuables, but evidence of perpetrators being prosecuted is scarce. For more information on common scams, see "Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim."

Cybersecurity Issues

There are active cyber threat actors targeting foreign governments and members of the private sector. Foreign individuals and organizations in Shanghai should remain vigilant against potential intrusions to their proprietary networks and information technology systems.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

The physical road conditions in metropolitan Shanghai are generally good. There is a significant volume of vehicular traffic, which results in frequent congestion and delays. Driving conditions in rural areas within the Shanghai consular district can be poor. Similarly, while

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modern and convenient conveyances (English-language drivers, directions, maps) may be found in developed areas, more remote locations may not offer the same services.

The greatest road hazard remains local drivers. Many have limited experience operating motor vehicles and can be either overly cautious or overly aggressive, frequently leading to traffic accidents. The presence of traffic police at heavily congested intersections increased in 2015; however, traffic laws are often ignored and enforcement is done remotely by video cameras, primarily through speed traps. Road signs and traffic signals are often blatantly disregarded, and drivers frequently fail to signal or yield to oncoming traffic and pedestrians, even in crosswalks. Pedestrians share the sidewalks not only with motor bikes and bicycles but also with cars and must remain alert at all times.

Commercial transportation accidents are not uncommon. Trucks are often overloaded, and drivers are poorly trained.

More often than not, traffic-related injuries involve motorbike and bicycle operators being struck by motor vehicles. In traffic accidents involving vehicles operated by foreigners, the foreigner is often ruled at fault, irrespective of the actual cause of the accident. The Regional Security Office encourages those involved in collisions not to argue with the other party involved in a traffic accident, regardless of who is responsible. Drivers are also encouraged not to react to aggressive driving by local nationals and to attempt defuse situations in a safe and level-headed manner.

Public Transportation Conditions

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Public transportation is generally considered safe, and, other than petty theft, crimes are relatively uncommon.

Shanghai has a 12-line subway system, which is generally reliable and punctual. Access to the subway system is monitored by closed-circuit television, and guards and police officers are deployed throughout. Guard-operated X-ray machines are used in most subway stations, and passengers are required to be inspected prior to entering the subway; levels of enforcement, however, may at times appear inconsistent. Most stations feature safety devices that prevent individuals from falling on the tracks.

Buses are generally modern and in good working order.

In a limited number of cases, foreigners have reported being sexually assaulted, have had their luggage stolen, or have been charged exorbitant fares when using unregistered taxis. Luggage theft typically involves a taxi transporting individuals to/from the airport and the driver intentionally leaving the scene before bags have been unloaded. Other examples of problems with taxis include rigged taxi meters that can charge up to double the going rate. Individuals are encouraged to use official taxis (two-tone sedans in Shanghai) that employ meters. If a driver refuses to use a meter, exit the vehicle and use another taxi. Since the majority of taxi drivers have limited proficiency in English, travelers are encouraged to obtain the address in Chinese characters prior to entering a taxi. RSO recommends travelers research the likeness of an official taxi in the city they plan to visit prior to visiting that city and use only official taxis.

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Aviation/Airport Conditions

Shanghai is a modern city with two international airports, Hongqiao (SHA) and Pudong (PVG). The Hongqiao transportation hub brings together the Hongqiao International Airport with interprovincial and local metro trains, local and interprovincial buses, and other for-hire vehicles.

Other Travel Conditions

Many locations in China lack equipment to support disabled persons on public transportation systems.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

China's domestic counterterrorism efforts remain primarily focused against the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM, the East Turkestan Islamic Party (ETIP)), a Pakistan-based group

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that seeks independence for the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in northwestern China. In public statements, government officials have singled out the “Three Evils” of extremism, separatism, and terrorism in Xinjiang as the main terrorist threat to the nation and have characterized Uighur discontent as terrorist activity.

In 2015, the government characterized numerous incidents in which police and other security officials were attacked with edged weapons and explosive devices as terrorist attacks. Some of these confrontations, a majority of which occurred in XUAR, resulted in the death of both police and civilians. In September, an attack at a coal mine in Aksu Prefecture’s Baicheng County (XUAR) left over 50 people dead and dozens more injured, though exact numbers are uncertain due to conflicting reports. In November, paramilitary forces conducted raids, reportedly killing 28 suspects accused of involvement in the September attack.

Shanghai did not experience any incidents related to terrorism in 2015, and the Regional Security Office is unaware of a significant transnational terrorist presence in China.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

Shanghai is an international city with a large expatriate population. Most Chinese citizens in the Shanghai area regard Americans and Westerners in a positive manner and are friendly to foreigners.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethic Violence

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Post Political Violence Rating: Low

Civil Unrest

The number of demonstrations associated with strikes and worker protests increased toward the end of 2015. One of the biggest demonstrations took place in June 2015 in the suburb of Jinshan, about 44 miles from downtown Shanghai. For nearly a week, thousands of demonstrators reportedly gathered near a municipal building to protest against rumored proposals to relocate a paraxylene (petrochemical) plant to the neighborhood (Shanghai authorities maintained that the claims were untrue). According to reports, protestors planned to conduct additional protests outside a government building in central Shanghai; however, police cordoned off the area and forced demonstrators to board buses and disperse from the area.

Protests outside official U.S. facilities in Shanghai were relatively uncommon in 2015, and those that occurred typically involved lone protesters. Demonstrations were mostly peaceful and were almost exclusively focused against the Chinese government. Protestors generally complained about corruption in the Chinese government, labor disputes, or other perceived injustices. In most instances, individuals were quickly removed by Chinese security officials.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

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Human rights organizations maintain that China uses counterterrorism as a pretext to suppress Uighurs, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group that comprises a large percentage of the XUAR population.

In Zhejiang province, there have been reports of a campaign to remove crosses from Christian churches, a policy that has affected a number of places of worship. These incidents have provoked complaints and demonstrations, leading to the arrest of several activists.

Post-specific Concerns

There has been a phenomenon throughout China in which private Chinese citizens, not associated with a political or terrorist organization, have used indiscriminate violence to express of their discontent with the Chinese authorities, resulting injuries and deaths. In November, several explosions rocked the Communist Party office in Taiyuan, China. It was later revealed that the suspect of that attack, which killed one person and injured eight, was an aggrieved Chinese citizen. Although motive for the attack was not publicized, it was reported that the suspect had had previous experience with the Chinese judicial system. In July 2013, a wheelchair-bound individual detonated a device at the Beijing international airport to show his dissatisfaction with the handling of his grievances by the Chinese government. No one was injured other than the perpetrator. A few weeks earlier, 47 people were killed when a bus was set on fire by an emotionally disturbed individual, an incident which authorities described as criminal in nature.

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Environmental Hazards

According to an official report from Beijing, within the first six months of 2015, at least 379 people were killed and 56 missing due to natural disasters, including rainstorms, floods, hail, drought, and earthquakes.

Due to its location along a number of fault lines, earthquakes are not uncommon.

Shanghai does not experience significant snowfall, but even small amounts of snow can bring parts of the city to a standstill.

China's eastern seaboard is subject to heavy rainfall during monsoon season; typhoons can bring floods and strong winds to parts of Shanghai.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Accidents and fatalities continue to plague China's heavy industries. Worker safety and quality assurance are lacking.

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Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

Counterfeit products are readily available, but it is illegal to import them into the U.S. U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials have the authority to seize suspect goods and impose fines on travelers caught attempting to enter the U.S. with counterfeit items.

Privacy Concerns

Visitors should be aware that they have no expectation of privacy in public or private locations. The Consulate regularly receives reports of human and technical monitoring of U.S. citizens. The areas around U.S. and other foreign diplomatic facilities and residences are under overt physical and video surveillance; security personnel are posted outside facilities and around residences; and CCTV cameras are visible throughout Shanghai. Overt microphones and video cameras are common in taxis.

Hotel rooms and offices are considered to be subject to on-site or remote technical monitoring at all times. Hotel rooms, residences, and offices may be accessed at any time without the occupants' consent or knowledge. Elevators and public areas of housing compounds are also under continuous surveillance. Consulate employees are warned not to discuss sensitive information in their homes, vehicles, or offices. Members of the private sector are encouraged to take similar precautions to safeguard sensitive, personal, and/or proprietary information, including information stored on personal laptops, cell phones, etc. All means of communication (telephones, mobile phones, faxes, e-mails, text messages) are likely monitored.

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The government has access to the infrastructure operated by the limited number of Internet service providers (ISPs) and wireless providers operating in China. Wireless access to the Internet in major metropolitan areas is becoming more common. As a result, the government may have greater access to official and personal computers. The government has publicly declared that it regularly monitors private e-mail and Internet browsing through cooperation with local ISPs. Some bloggers are subject to particular scrutiny, as such activity is often carefully monitored and in some cases blocked. Common Western social media websites are blocked in China.

Drug-related Crimes

Drug consumption exists, but drug-related crimes do not appear to be a significant issue affecting the U.S. private sector. The government is concerned about domestic drug use, and enforcement efforts are widespread with the punishment for violators being severe. However, illicit drugs are available in Shanghai to both Chinese citizens and foreigners.

Kidnapping Threat

Kidnappings are not common; however, the Regional Security Officer has received accounts of businesspeople being held against their will in a hotel room while being forced to pay a debt or settle a labor-related dispute. One distinction worth noting is that preventing a person from leaving a location due to a commercial or business dispute is not viewed as kidnapping by law enforcement. In some cases, labor disputes have resulted not only in protracted stoppages but in temporary detention of expatriate managers by workers demanding continued

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employment or enhanced severance packages. There have also been reports of taxi drivers transporting passengers to remote locations and forcing them to pay a fee under threat of injury. Such reports are relatively rare and are often secondhand, circular accounts.

Police Response

Although police officers, including in Shanghai, have begun carrying firearms, the majority of officers on the street remain unarmed. Patrol officers are sometimes augmented by armed specialized units (SWAT). These SWAT officers are occasionally deployed during special events, at air/railway stations, and in response to protests/demonstrations.

Police response for foreign victims of crime depends upon the type of infraction, where it transpired, and the social status of the victim. Urban police units are better trained and equipped to respond to calls, especially in Shanghai and other first-tier cities where authorities spend millions of dollars on security-related infrastructure. Investigative training techniques and forensic equipment continue to improve but are not at the same levels in comparison with those of developed countries. Local police are effective at deterring crime; most responses to alarms/emergency calls are sufficiently prompt if the police are informed that the victim is a Westerner or person of importance. In some cases, local police will serve as a mediator between the complainant and the other party to agree upon financial compensation (sometimes in lieu of jail time).

Police reports are not taken at the scene of a crime or vehicular accident; if a report is deemed necessary, all involved parties have to respond to the attending officer's police station.

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Policing in China is different than U.S. policing, and preserving social harmony is a large component of the Chinese policing doctrine. Arguments concerning an American citizen's legal rights in the U.S. judicial system, however, may be largely ineffective as the U.S. government and its laws do not have jurisdiction in China. Depending on the crime for which a foreigner may have been detained, s/he may be asked to negotiate for monetary damages with the alleged victim. This may be driven by the belief that if everyone is in agreement with a monetary arrangement, no further quarreling should take place.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

In the event of arrest, American citizens should contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulate for guidance.

Crime Victim Assistance

If private U.S. citizens become the victim of a crime, they should contact the police by dialing 110; however, English-language capabilities will vary significantly. Therefore, those reporting a crime should seek the assistance of a Mandarin speaker prior to engaging the police.

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Additionally, visitors must report any criminal victimization to the police while in China. The victim must be present in China if any judicial actions are to be taken. Any attempts to do so while outside of China will be ignored by the authorities.

Americans may also contact American Citizen Services (ACS) at the Embassy or Consulate for assistance. ACS officers can recommend appropriate medical facilities, provide contact information for local attorneys, notify family members, and explain how to transfer funds to China.

The police training system has not yet evolved into one that is sympathetic to victims. Regardless of the crime, the victim has to visit the nearest police station to report it. The victim must have the evidence to support his or her claims and could likely have the assailant present in the same room while s/he narrates the incident to the police. The role of the police is to assist in negotiating a financial solution to the problem. Expressions of sympathy or support to the victim should not be expected.

Police/Security Agencies

The Shanghai Police fall under control of the Ministry of Public Security (MPS). The Shanghai Police enforce laws enacted by the National People's Congress and any local municipal laws passed by the Shanghai municipal government. The Shanghai Police have uniformed officers and specialized investigative units. They also have a SWAT team.

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The People's Armed Police (PAP) do not perform traditional law enforcement responsibilities, but they do provide static protection of Chinese government buildings, ministries, foreign missions, and public transportation centers (airports, train stations).

Medical Emergencies

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Parkway Health Medical Centers

Tel: 64455999

Shanghai Center Clinic

203 West Retail Plaza

1376 Nanjing Xi Lu

Hong Qiao Clinic

2258 Hong Qiao Lu

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Parkway Health In-Patient Clinic

3rd Floor

170 Danshui Lu

Global Health Care

Eco City, Suite 303

1788 Nanjing Xi Lu

Tel: 5298 6339

Huashan Hospital (for acute medical problem)

12 Wulumuqi Zhong Lu

Foreigners Ward 15th floor (open 24 hours)

(access off Chang Le Lu before 2100)

Tel: 6248 3986

Afterhours: 177-0167-5759

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Shanghai United Family Hospital

1139 Xian Xia Lu (open 24 hrs)

Tel: (normal) 400 639 3900, (emergency) 2216 3999

Children's Fudan University Hospital

399 Wan Yuan Lu

Minhang

Tel: 6493 1507

Recommended Air Ambulance Services

International SOS

Medical Evacuation – Alarm Center open 24 hours

Tel: 6295 0099

CDC 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/traveler/none/china?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-double-001.

OSAC Country Council Information

Shanghai has an active OSAC Country Council that meets quarterly. To reach OSAC's EAP team, please email OSACEAP@state.gov.

U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information

Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Consulate General Shanghai: 1469 Huihai Zhonglu, Shanghai 2000031

Consular Section: 8th floor of the Westgate Mall, 1038 Nanjing Xi Lu, Shanghai 200041

Normal hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The Consulate is normally closed for U.S. federal and Chinese holidays.

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Consulate Contact Numbers

Switchboard: 86-21-6433-6880

Consular Section (24 hrs): 86-21-3217-4650; 86-10-6532-3431

Consular Section Fax: 86-21-6217-2071

Website: <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/>

Nearby Posts

Embassy Beijing: <http://beijing.usembassy.gov/>

Consulate General Chengdu: <http://chengdu.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate General Guangzhou: <http://guangzhou.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate General Shenyang: <http://shenyang.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate General Wuhan: <http://wuhan.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Guidance

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For the latest security and other information, Americans living and traveling abroad 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 residing or traveling in China are reminded to register in the Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) by entering their travel itinerary and contact information at: <https://step.state.gov/step/>. In case of difficulties registering online, please contact the closest U.S. embassy or consulate for assistance.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Scams

Individuals posing as plain-clothes police officers will threaten to levy fake criminal charges against a victim. A financial solution to the problem will be suggested; if accepted, the charges will disappear and the victim will be "released."

Foreigners are approached by two or more Chinese citizens (often attractive females). The two will ask the foreigners to take a picture of/with them. The conversation develops, at which point the foreigners are invited to practice English over a drink at either a tea shop or bar. The bill ends up being overpriced, and foreigners are threatened that the local police will arrest them if the bill is not settled.

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Foreigners are often approached by beggars with young/disabled children on the street. Sometimes, these beggars will kneel down and ask for money. They may also approach their victims while singing sad Chinese songs out of sound amplifiers strapped to their upper bodies, appealing to the victim's sympathy. It has been reported that some of these beggars are part of a larger network of criminals using children and handicapped persons in their criminal enterprise.

Counterfeit currency remains a concern, as evidenced by the scrutiny exercised by storeowners when receiving cash payments and the use of a money counting machine prior to acceptance to ensure validity. Travelers are advised to understand the signatures of authentic currency and not to change money with individuals in the streets. Money changers offering unrealistic exchange rates may often be using counterfeit currency.

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Despite China's reputation as a safe destination, travelers are strongly encouraged to remain aware of their surroundings. Continued vigilance is necessary to reduce the likelihood of becoming a victim. As a general rule, lesser-developed areas in major cities have a higher rate of crime. Statistically, more crimes of opportunity transpire during late night/early morning hours. Individuals who frequent bars, nightclubs, and similar establishments are more likely to be involved in physical altercations afterhours.

Visitors should disperse money in more than one location on their person, taking care to separate small and large denominations. Wallets should be placed in front pockets, while the

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straps of bags/purses should be draped across the body, keeping them in view and under positive control. If you use a backpack, do not place valuable items inside. Hotel safes should be used but are not a failsafe method to safeguard your belongings.

Travelers are encouraged to make copies of their passport photo and visa pages and credit card numbers (to include telephone contact information in the event the card is stolen); these copies should be stored in their hotel or residence in the event the actual items are stolen. Travelers should not flash large amounts of money, jewelry, or electronics, indicators of wealth.

Public payphones are becoming less common in urban areas. Long-term visitors should purchase cellular telephones, and short-term travelers should contact their cellular phone provider to determine if it provides coverage in both mainland China and Hong Kong. Chinese SIM cards with pay per minute plans are inexpensive.

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