



Mexico 2016 Crime & Safety Report: Guadalajara

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Murder; Assault; Kidnapping; Extortion; Carjacking; Burglary; Rape/Sexual Violence; Floods; Riots/Civil Unrest; Hurricanes; Drug Trafficking; Narcoterrorism

Western Hemisphere > Mexico; Western Hemisphere > Mexico > Guadalajara

3/3/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: High

The Department of State divides its roles and responsibilities in Mexico among 10 consular districts across Mexico. This Crime and Safety Report focuses on the U.S. Consulate General in Guadalajara's consular district. Guadalajara is the capital of Jalisco state. Guadalajara is the capital of Jalisco and is home to over 200 successful American companies. The U.S. Consulate General in Guadalajara covers the states of Jalisco (population 7,873,608), Aguascalientes (population 1,276,863), Nayarit (population 1,209,777), and Colima population (672,995). The U.S. private sector boasts a significant presence in Guadalajara, Aguascalientes, Puerto Vallarta, and Manzanillo (Mexico's largest containerized cargo port). The cities of Tepic, Colima City, Tequila, and Lagos de Moreno follow closely with sizeable U.S. businesses. For information regarding the security environment in other areas of Mexico, please reference the OSAC Crime and Safety Reports from the following Consular Districts: Tijuana, Nogales, Hermosillo, Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, Matamoros, Mexico City, Monterrey, and Merida.

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Crime Threats

Wrong-place/wrong-time violence is the greatest threat to personal safety, and the risk is as likely in upscale as well as lower-income areas.

There are multiple reports of homicides, assaults, robberies, and car theft. Official Guadalajara police 2015 statistics report a decrease in most of the major crime categories, but homicides increased by 50 percent. Guadalajara is the second largest city in Mexico with a burgeoning middle class; however, the city also has a reputation for illicit money transactions; therefore, legitimate business and drug trafficking organization (DTO) activity can intermingle.

Robbery, auto-part theft, and telephonic extortion are the most frequently reported non-violent crimes throughout the consular district. Thieves often operate in heavily-congested areas to steal bags, technology, and jewelry, typically using motorcycles to escape quickly. During the Christmas season, the Guadalajara Metropolitan Zone saw an increase in crimes committed by thieves on motorcycles.

Official crime statistics' under-reporting remains a consistent problem; the most prominent category is kidnapping.

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Auto-theft throughout the consular district most often involves the threat of force (carjacking); thieves target late-model trucks and SUVs. In cases where the victim does not resist, the thieves rarely do any harm to the victim beyond taking the vehicle.

Residential break-ins usually occur at moderately wealthy homes where thieves have conducted surveillance. Some investigations reveal domestic staff is often complicit in these crimes.

Reports of sexual assaults against U.S. citizens mostly occur in popular tourist destinations along the Mexican Riviera. Often, the perpetrators target clearly-intoxicated tourists in bars and nightclubs.

Auto-part theft is very prevalent in the Guadalajara Metropolitan Zone. Thieves usually target easy-to-remove parts (spare tires, side mirrors, side molding, grilles). These thefts usually occur after dark from cars parked along the street.

During 2015, Aguascalientes continued to be one of the safest Mexican states. The most dangerous area of the state continues to be the northern border with Zacatecas due to the constant cartel fighting in southern region of Zacatecas.

The assassination attempt on the former Colima governor while dining at a café and media reporting of multiple Drug Trafficking Organization (DTO) murders were significant to Colima's increase in violence during 2015. Their reported homicide rate grew 67 percent from last

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year.

Nayarit officially reports an overall decrease in crime from last year.

The Executive Secretariat of the National System of Public Security reports yearly data on homicides, kidnappings, and various other crimes in every state. The charts below compare reported homicide and kidnapping statistics in Jalisco, Nayarit, Colima, and Aguascalientes:

Other Areas of Concern

The U.S. Consulate advises caution to U.S. citizens when traveling to areas that border Zacatecas.

Overall Road Safety Situation

A variety of road conditions exist throughout the region. Toll highways (known as “cuota” highways) are comparable to U.S. interstate highway standards with multiple traffic lanes and broad paved shoulders. The toll highways generally have better lighting, frequent police patrols, fewer access points (on- and off-ramps), and are considered to be a safer way for overland transit. Drivers can reduce the risk of carjacking by limiting intercity travel to daylight hours.

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Non-toll highways (known as “libre” highways) are usually in poorer condition. They are usually two lane roads with no shoulders. There are more reported incidents of carjacking and shootouts between rival criminal groups, particularly after dark, on the libres.

Road conditions in urban areas can also vary considerably. In upscale or tourist neighborhoods of major cities, the roads are well maintained, whereas in marginalized areas roads are often poorly maintained. There are large speed bumps installed around major cities and even on some highways that are often poorly marked. Drivers need to be alert for changing road conditions. Drivers routinely disobey even the most fundamental traffic laws and commonly treat red traffic lights like stop signs, crossing as soon as they have checked for opposing traffic.

During the rainy season (July-August), major thoroughfares in Guadalajara, including tunnels and underpasses, will often become flooded and seriously disrupt traffic. Heavy rain also frequently causes traffic lights to stop working. Puerto Vallarta and other cities in the district experience similar problems.

As you approach your vehicle on the street or in a parking lot, look around for anything or anyone suspicious; make it clear to anyone who is watching that you are paying attention. In traffic, drive defensively and always attempt to leave space to maneuver. Always leave yourself an exit. Be prepared to take evasive action. If you are being followed or harassed by another driver, try to find the nearest police station, hotel, or other public facility to call the police. Do not stop until you reach a safe location and never lead them back to your home. Keep the car doors locked when you are in the car. Keep windows rolled up while in traffic. Reducing travel in marginalized or rural areas and non-toll highway roads, especially after

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dark, significantly reduce carjacking incidents. Utilizing pay lots is the easiest way to reduce the risk of auto-part theft.

Public Transportation Conditions

Generally, taking a charter bus is safe except in those areas where the U.S. Travel Warning advises against non-essential travel. U.S. government personnel often use charter buses to move between Guadalajara and Puerto Vallarta.

In Guadalajara, mass transit is generally considered unsafe for travelers. Pickpocketing, bag snatching, and armed robberies are common on buses. However, the most dangerous aspect of using the bus is the operator's reckless driving, which often kills passengers and pedestrians.

Taxi service in the major cities is generally reliable and safe. Most taxi drivers operate from a marked and registered taxi stand called a "sitio." Restaurant and hotel staff can also be relied upon to summon an affiliated taxi. Taxi service from the airports is also considered safe. Arriving passengers should look for a taxi kiosk in the arrival terminal of the airport and pay the fare at the kiosk before exiting the airport and boarding a taxi. Uber is also very popular in the Consular District, and taxi use has been approved for U.S. government personnel.

Terrorism Threat

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Post Terrorism Rating: Low

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: High

Civil Unrest

Non-violent demonstrations routinely occur in cities in the region. They are primarily organized by political parties, students, labor rights, or indigenous rights groups and are mostly non-violent. Demonstrations have also been known to block roads or completely obstruct access to businesses.

Demonstrations against U.S. private sector interests are only likely in response to business practices that are perceived to be unfair or corrupt. There were no such incidents reported to the Consulate in 2015. However, there were numerous anti-Uber demonstrations that were primarily led by registered taxi drivers but these have long subsided.

Post-specific Concerns

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Environmental Hazards

Pacific hurricanes are a threat to the coastal areas of Puerto Vallarta and Manzanillo, but last season's category 5 Hurricane Patricia caused limited damage along the coastline.

Drug-related Crimes

Guadalajara's Consular district continues to grow as an important drug trafficking region. Nayarit, Western Jalisco, and Colima are major marijuana cultivation zones. The region is also known as the primary methamphetamine production area in Mexico. The port in Manzanillo, Colima is a major gateway for precursor chemicals. The Manzanillo port has also been the site of many large scale drug seizures by enforcement authorities.

Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG) is the most powerful DTO in the region. In 2015, the Consulate saw multiple displays of CJNG's dominance. They declared war on the police and killed 25 law enforcement officers in a two-month period. On May 1, CJNG shut the state of Jalisco down with 40 narco-blockades (road blocks using burnt out vehicles). That day, the first ever Mexican military helicopter was also shot down by CJNG, killing eight personnel. Since then, the federal police have arrested a number of high-level DTO leaders throughout the Guadalajara Consular district without DTO retaliation. During the later part of 2015, there were many target assassinations within CJNG as a result of these arrests. Despite this violence, U.S citizens were neither targeted or victims.

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Since mid-2013, the CJNG and Los Caballeros Templarios (LCT), who are based in Michoacán, have engaged in conflict, primarily along the Jalisco/Michoacán border. Law enforcement authorities state that the violence has decreased over the year, but the current levels still warrant extreme caution when travelling along the border of Jalisco and Michoacán.

However, there are still active elements of DTOs conducting operations within Nayarit.

Kidnapping Threat

During the latter part of 2015, the media reported the high-profile kidnappings of a former Teacher's Union leader, a Fiscalia employee, and a news reporter who were all safely returned.

The Consulate continues to see the evolution and variation of virtual kidnapping scams – a telephonic extortion scam in which no one is physically detained. Telephonic extortion is an umbrella term for a variety of scams in which a caller uses a ruse to convince a victim to transfer money. In many cases, a caller claiming to be a member of a well-known DTO will contact a family member of an alleged victim to demand ransom for the release of the alleged victim.

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Other types of 'virtual' kidnappings include communicating via text message from stolen or lost cell phones or convincing individuals to isolate themselves in an effort to extort money from their families. Information that can be used against victims may also be obtained from social networking websites. Do not reveal any personal information, and any kidnapping, real or virtual, should be reported to the police and the U.S. Consulate.

Police Response

Even in cases when a criminal report is filed and ratified properly, police rarely investigate non-violent or minor property crimes. Police are more responsive in cases of active threats or violent crime. These crimes are investigated and often resolved. Crimes against foreigners are likely to get more attention from the authorities than crimes against Mexican citizens.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

In some instances, U.S. citizens have become victims of harassment, mistreatment, and extortion by alleged and certified Mexican law enforcement. Authorities have cooperated in investigating these cases, but one must have the officer's name, badge number, and patrol car number to pursue a complaint effectively. Please note this information if you ever have a problem with officials. When in doubt, ask for identification.

Crime Victim Assistance

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Reporting crimes can be a long, frustrating experience. Uniformed police officers cannot take reports of crime; all reports (called a denuncia) must be made to the local branch of the State Prosecutor's Office (called the Ministerio Publico). When making the report, the burden of proof is on the individual to substantiate that a crime occurred. Even when the report is properly filed, it must be ratified by the complainant several days later. This becomes impossible for visitors on short stays. Despite the substantial obstacles to reporting a crime, the U.S. Consulate encourages all U.S. citizen victims of crime to report the crime to the Ministerio Publico and the American Citizen Services office of the Consulate.

Ministerio Publico

Jalisco: <http://fge.jalisco.gob.mx>, Tel.: (33) 3837-6000

Aguascalientes: Tel: (449) 910-2800

Colima: <http://serviciospgj.col.gob.mx/denuncia/servicios.php>, Tel: (312) 314-2356

Nayarit:

[http://tramites.nayarit.gob.mx/tram/modoUsuario/areas.php?id=5&n=PROCURADURÍA%20GENERAL%20DE%20JUSTICIA%20\(PGJ\)](http://tramites.nayarit.gob.mx/tram/modoUsuario/areas.php?id=5&n=PROCURADURÍA%20GENERAL%20DE%20JUSTICIA%20(PGJ)), Tel: (311) 129-6000

Police/Security Agencies

Uniformed police are known as preventativos, and their purpose is to patrol and prevent crimes from occurring. In cases where businesses report specific concerns or threats, these

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uniformed forces are often deployed to protect the threatened interests. Due to Mexican law, these uniformed officers do not perform any investigative functions.

The state police in all states of the Consular district maintain a uniformed police, who serve protective and crime prevention functions. Each state also maintains a force of investigative police, overseen by the Attorney General. State transit police are generally professional and adequately equipped for road safety and enforcing traffic laws. Municipal governments may also have transit police.

The Aguascalientes state police are extremely effective in curbing criminal activity and benefit from the latest technology and training. The state police are a national example that other jurisdictions seek to duplicate.

In Puerto Vallarta, there are also tourism police who are specifically assigned to work in tourist areas. These are the only group of police who typically speak English. Their main purpose is to enhance the safety of tourist areas by deterring general crime and being available to respond to any type of accident. Tourist police are not able to take reports of crime but can assist travelers in contacting authorities who can take the report.

In many rural municipalities in Nayarit, Jalisco, and Colima, the municipal police are understaffed and under-resourced. Throughout the region, many enforcement officers on the municipal, state, and federal levels have been removed from their job for failing the vetting process known as the "control de confianza."

Medical Emergencies

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There are two medical systems: public and private. Mexican citizens receive free emergency and non-emergency medical care through the public system. Public emergency medical service can be contacted by dialing 911. In major cities, an ambulance response time is typically 10-15 minutes, depending on the location of the incident. In rural areas, public health facilities are often the only option, and the level of care they provide is often substantially lower than the level of care in major cities. Most visitors and relatively wealthy Mexicans choose to use private health care services. All major cities have private hospitals and private ambulance services. Most private hospitals and emergency services require payment or adequate guarantee of payment before services will be provided. One private ambulance service in Guadalajara is Medical Mobil Ambulance (Tel: 3827-2087).

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Guadalajara

Hospital San Javier

Avenida Pablo Casals 640

Guadalajara, Jalisco

Telephone: 3669-0222

Emergency: 3641-4832

<http://www.sanjavier.com.mx/>

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Hospital Angeles del Carmen

Tarascos 3435

Guadalajara, Jalisco

Telephone: 3813-0042

Emergency: 3813-1224

<http://www.hospitalangelesdelcarmen.com>

Hospital Puerta de Hierro

Puerta de Hierro 150, Puerta de Hierro

45116 Zapopan, Jalisco

Telephone: 3848-4000

<http://www.cmpdh.com>

Available Air Ambulance Services

Airlink Ambulance

3629-8700 (located in Puerta de Hierro)

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01 800 024-8600

<http://www.airlinkambulance.com>

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has a dedicated page containing health information for travelers to Mexico: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/mexico.htm>

OSAC Country Council Information

The Guadalajara Country Council was founded in 2008 and has an active membership of approximately 200 U.S. private sector entities, including businesses, faith-based organizations, and academia. The Council is led by an Executive Committee consisting of volunteers from the private sector membership. There are two co-chairpersons, one of whom is always the Regional Security Officer of the U.S. Consulate in Guadalajara. The Council shares information on security related topic and meets quarterly. For more information on the Guadalajara Country Council, contact the Consulate's Regional Security Office at +52-33-3268-2208. To reach OSAC's Western Hemisphere team, please email OSACWHA@state.gov.

U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information

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Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

The U.S. Consulate is located at Progreso 175, Colonia Americana, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. Consular officers are available for emergency assistance 24 hours/day, 7 days/week.

Consulate Contact Numbers

To contact the Department of State in the U.S. call 1-888-407-4747 during business hours, and 202-647-5225 after hours.

Consulate main numbers: (33) 3268-2100 or (33) 3268-2200

American Citizen Services: (33) 3268-2173 or (33) 3268-2273

Consulate after hours: (33) 3137-2833

Guadalajara Regional Security Office: 52-33-3268-2208

Regional Security Office Duty Agent: (33) 31895-7414

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

Nearby Posts

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Embassy Mexico City: <http://mexico.usembassy.gov/>

Consulate Ciudad Juarez: <http://ciudadjuarez.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Guadalajara: <http://guadalajara.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Hermosillo: <http://hermosillo.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Matamoros: <http://matamoros.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Merida: <http://merida.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Nogales: <http://nogales.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Nuevo Laredo: <http://nuevolaredo.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Tijuana: <http://tijuana.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Guidance

All visitors should read the latest Travel Warning and Country Specific Information, provided by the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs. www.travel.state.gov.

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All U.S. citizen travelers should also register with the nearest U.S. Consulate through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). Additional information on STEP can be found at www.travel.state.gov.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

The best ways to reduce the risk of wrong-place/wrong-time violence is to practice good personal security habits, especially maintaining high situational awareness and promptly departing from situations.

Any time you are in a public place, ensure you are cognizant of those around you. Trust your senses and your instincts. If a situation does not feel right, walk away. Find another café, ATM, or gas station. Going out in groups, avoiding excessive use of alcohol, and closely monitoring your drink are the most effective ways to reduce the chance of sexual assault.

If you think you hear gunshots, seek cover. You could move around the corner of a building, into a restroom, or just drop to the floor beneath a table. If you are unsure of what is happening, you should still react as you continue to assess the situation. Try not to panic, especially if you are driving. Try to identify the source of the threat and seek cover or create distance by driving the other direction. Also, lookout for other motorists or pedestrians who may also be reacting.

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Schedules that are predictable leave you vulnerable. Be unpredictable when possible in both your work and social schedules. Try to take different routes between work, school, and home. Make sure you always tell a friend or family member where you are going.

Keep your home or apartment doors locked when you are at home. Never give out your personal information (family member/household staff names, addresses, telephone numbers) in an open setting. Ensure all of your family members are briefed on security measures. Homes with extra security measures or personnel are less likely to be targeted. Homeowners are advised to vet domestic staff and never keep large quantities of cash at home.

In order to avoid victimization by thieves on motorcycles, maintain heightened situational awareness, blend in with the environment, and keep your belongings close.

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