



## United Arab Emirates 2016 Crime & Safety Report: Dubai

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Rape/Sexual Violence; Assault; Financial Security; Aviation

Near East > United Arab Emirates; Near East > United Arab Emirates > Dubai

3/8/2016

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Low

### Crime Threats

The crime rate in Dubai is considerably lower than in most cities throughout the world of similar size. Actual crime rates may be higher due to under-reporting. No official crime statistics have been released to the public for 2015. The low crime rate may lead Western expatriates to take fewer precautions than they would in their home countries. The government actively promotes the safety and security of Dubai, as it is a major tourist destination and economic center for the region.

The majority of reported crime is reported in areas populated primarily by lower income, temporary laborers originating from other countries. The majority of crimes attributed to this group consist of petty theft, public offenses (fighting, public intoxication), sexual harassment,

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and rare incidents of violent assault.

Complacency and poor security practices may increase vulnerability to theft-related crimes. Street crimes (pickpocketing, shoplifting, petty theft) occur occasionally; however, weapons are rarely used.

Violent criminal acts are very rare, and occur mostly within the third country national (TCN) communities.

ATM skimming devices, installed by criminals to capture data from cards, are a threat throughout the UAE.

## **Transportation-Safety Situation**

### Road Safety and Road Conditions

The road network in metro Dubai, though generally in good repair, is increasingly strained due to the growing number of vehicles and seemingly never-ending construction. Expressways, especially during peak periods, are unable to handle traffic volume smoothly.

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Vehicle accidents are relatively common. While most result in property damage and only minor injuries, serious collisions resulting in fatalities or serious injuries do occur. Excessive speed, different driving habits, and lack of speed/lane discipline by the diverse international community, and occasionally diminished visibility due to heavy fog are the most common causes of the more serious accidents.

Drivers display varying degrees of skill, aggressiveness, and attentiveness and often maneuver erratically and at high speed, demonstrating little care or courtesy. Defensive driving is strongly encouraged.

Do not use your mobile phone while driving. Keep your vehicle windows closed, doors locked, and valuables concealed. If you feel that you are being followed, do not drive home; go to a safe area (a police station, public area such as a shopping mall). Try to get a license plate number and description of the vehicle.

### Public Transportation Conditions

Public transport is generally safe and reliable. Dubai has extensive automated metro rail system that provides transportation throughout the metropolitan area. Information on disruptions to transportation services can be found on the Roads and Transport Authority Dubai website: [www.RTA.ae](http://www.RTA.ae).

Taxicabs are widely available throughout the metropolitan area. The color of the taxicab's roof indicates a specific company. Most cabs are tan except for the roofs, which can be red, blue,

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green, yellow, or pink (female drivers only, in respect of female passengers). Dubai law requires the taxicab to use the meter. Taxicabs should have the driver's name and number posted on the back of the driver/passenger seat. To aid in reporting criminal or fraudulent taxi incidents to the police, try to obtain the taxi number, company, and color of the vehicle.

### Aviation/Airport Conditions

The Dubai airports have extremely rigorous screening standards, and items that may be considered innocuous at other world airports are strictly forbidden here. Items such as small cutting blades, any weapons, or any inert or live ammunition or component (even expended), law enforcement tools, and specialized communications equipment have created delays for travelers. Even accidentally carrying these items through the airport can incur penalties or subject a person to arrest and criminal prosecution.

### Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Medium

### Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

The possibility of a terrorist attack against U.S. interests cannot be ruled out given the UAE's proximity to hostile and unstable countries, its importance as a major transit hub for regional

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travel and commerce, and the large expatriate population. Continued threats from terrorist groups directed against U.S. interests worldwide require that U.S. citizens residing in, or visiting, the region remain alert and incorporate good security practices into their daily activities.

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

Tensions within the greater Middle East and Central Asia regions remain and have the potential to affect security in the UAE. Authorities have demonstrated the ability and willingness to investigate criminal and terrorist related activities aggressively and effectively.

Post Political Violence Rating: Low

#### **Civil Unrest**

Political demonstrations are extremely rare and must be authorized by the host government.

#### **Post-specific Concerns**

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## Personnel-Background Concerns

While Dubai presents a Western image and is more tolerant than other countries in the Middle East, the local culture is conservative. U.S. citizens should be mindful not to offend local (Islamic) customs. Manner of dress, particularly for women, should be conservative and respectful. Teenage and adult females should keep dress standards in mind when in public. It is advisable for women to travel in groups or pairs, particularly during hours of darkness. Harassment of unaccompanied Western females occurs occasionally.

Public displays of affection are discouraged and may be considered a violation of local laws.

Recognition of religious sensitivities should be more enhanced during Ramadan or other holy periods.

## Drug-related Crimes

Authorities have a zero-tolerance policy on drugs. Several U.S. citizens have been arrested and convicted for carrying small quantities of banned substances. Trials usually result in a prison sentence of several years.

## Police Response

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Police responding to the report of a crime may not always provide the same level of service as in the U.S. Most police officers below the rank of Warrant Officer are from the expatriate community and are hesitant to make independent decisions. These officers wear green uniforms and may have limited education and English speaking abilities. Those above the rank of Warrant Officer are generally Emirati, many have studied in Europe or the U.S., and many are fluent in English. These officers wear tan/khaki uniforms. Decisions concerning anything other than routine matters will usually be made by an Emirati police supervisor. Dubai police HQ and emergency dispatch have a variety of language capabilities to serve the significant expatriate community.

Investigative resources and sophisticated equipment are available. The police use fingerprint and iris scan technology and have a national registry for expatriates living and working in the UAE.

The police publish safety tips on their official website at: [www.dubaipolice.gov.ae](http://www.dubaipolice.gov.ae). The most prominent crimes are highlighted, and the website provides basic tips on how to avoid becoming a victim.

Over the last years, there have been publicized arrests and deportations of expatriates who posted photos or comments on various social media in violation of UAE laws. For more information, please review OSAC's Report "Picture This: Dos and Don'ts for Photography."

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## How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

U.S. citizens detained or arrested are advised to notify the Consular section of the Consulate. Expatriates found by the police to be involved in criminal activity are usually deported following incarceration.

## Crime Victim Assistance

The emergency response system number is 999 for police, medical emergencies, and fire emergencies. English-speaking operators are always available. Many international emergency phone numbers have been captured and added to Dubai's emergency call-in network with the understanding that in an emergency people tend to revert to familiar numbers, so dialing 911 during an emergency will still be connected to Dubai police and emergency services.

When seeking emergency assistance, callers should provide the operator/dispatcher with a detailed description of the location and the type of emergency. Many streets are identified by a number and letter combination (Ex.: 13-D). Dubai has changed some street names from the number and letter format to a name format. This adds to confusion when trying to find a location or give directions. The problem is further aggravated by ever-changing construction zones, as Dubai builds and updates its infrastructure. Identifying landmarks or businesses near the location is essential in helping emergency personnel respond.

Makani is a GIS application developed by the Dubai Municipality, aimed at improving location finding in the emirate. It utilizes a 10 digit code to identify a specific location for fire or medical

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response. Transition to Makani has started and, at the time of this report, the application is available at [www.makani.ae](http://www.makani.ae) .

## Medical Emergencies

For ambulance service, call 999. Ambulances are modern and staffed by trained paramedics. Directions need to be given to your location based upon prominent landmarks (directions to your home should be prepared and kept by the telephone) or by Makani number. Do not end an emergency call until you are certain that the directions are clearly understood. If the residence is difficult to find, advise the operator that you will meet the ambulance at a nearby landmark, if possible. If you are calling from your mobile phone, the 999 operations call center has technology that helps responding units track your location. Heavy traffic may impede the ability of emergency medical services to respond in a timely manner. The use of a personally owned vehicle for transport to a hospital should be considered. It is important to familiarize yourself with the quickest routes to emergency facilities.

## Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

For treatment of major trauma: Rashid Hospital Emergency and Trauma Center (04-337-4000) on Oud Metha Road. Motor vehicle accident victims are generally taken to Rashid Hospital.

For life-threatening medical emergencies (heart attack, stroke): Mediclinic City Hospital

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(04-435-9999)

For pediatric and OB/GYN non-traumatic medical emergencies: Mediclinic City Hospital (04-435-9999) or the American Hospital (04-336-7777) located opposite Movenpick Hotel.

For non-life threatening emergencies or routine consultations, there are several private medical centers and medical providers available.

#### CDC 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/united-arab-emirates>.

#### **OSAC Country Council Information**

For more information about security overseas, log onto the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) website at [www.osac.gov](http://www.osac.gov). To reach the OSAC Near East team, please email [OSACNEA@state.gov](mailto:OSACNEA@state.gov).

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## **U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information**

### Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

The U.S. Consulate General in Dubai is located at Umm Hurair-1, First Street, Bur Dubai.

The Consulate General's business hours are Sun-Thurs from 0830 to 1700. The Consulate is closed on UAE and U.S. holidays.

### Consulate Contact Numbers

Main number: +971-4-309-4000.

Website: <https://dubai.usconsulate.gov>

### Nearby Posts

Embassy Abu Dhabi: <http://abudhabi.usembassy.gov/>

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## Consulate Guidance

For questions about U.S. visas, please contact the U.S. Consulate General's Consular section at: [dubaivisa@state.gov](mailto:dubaivisa@state.gov). For questions about American Citizen Services (ACS), please contact the U.S. Consulate General's Consular section at: [dubaiwarden@state.gov](mailto:dubaiwarden@state.gov).

As the U.S. Department of State continues to develop information on any potential security threats to U.S. citizens overseas, it shares credible threat information through travel warnings and public announcements, available at: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov). In addition to information on the Internet, travelers can hear recorded information by calling the Department of State in Washington, D.C. at (202) 647-5225.

The U.S. Consulate General also sends updated information regarding security threats to registered U.S. citizens within its consular district via the "Smart Traveler Enrollment Program" notification system. The RSO encourages all American visitors to enroll with the U.S. Consulate General's Consular Section at <https://step.state.gov/step/>.

## Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

### Situational Awareness Best Practices

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Visitors should exercise the same prudence in identifying unsafe areas and taking appropriate precautions when traveling in the U.S. Individual crime prevention throughout Dubai requires only that visitors and residents exercise the same level of common sense and caution that they would while living in any major U.S. urban area.

Vary your schedule and places of activities. Carry your mobile phone and keep it readily accessible. Have emergency numbers pre-programmed in your mobile phone. When out, take note where you could go if you are followed or which options you have available if cornered or confronted. Playing the "what if" game could save your life and will give you something to do while sitting in traffic.

In popular tourist areas, visitors are encouraged to safeguard their valuables and not to carry large amounts of cash or unneeded credit cards. Visitors should be particularly careful on crowded streets and other high-density areas (entertainment areas, department stores, restaurants, on crowded public transportation). Visitors are encouraged to keep their bags where they can be seen rather than slung over a shoulder. Pay particular attention to personal belongings in busy bars or restaurants. Visitors carrying backpacks should not place valuables in external pockets and should consider keeping wallets, cash, credit cards, and passports in a front pants' pocket.

When withdrawing money from an ATM, especially one on a public street, try to do so with a companion. Avoid using ATMs in poorly illuminated areas. Users should inspect the ATM's card reader for signs of tampering or other abnormalities before inserting their bank cards. In addition, all ATM users should be careful to protect their personal identification numbers (PIN) from "shoulder surfers" who may attempt to observe the PIN surreptitiously.

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Drink responsibly. Criminals are known to target vulnerable individuals whose judgment is impaired by intoxication. Beware of public intoxication, which is illegal, and consume alcohol only in areas licensed to do so.

If someone approaches you claiming to be a police officer, ask for identification and be vigilant.

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