



## Ukraine 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Burglary; Fraud; Financial Security; Cyber; Winter weather; Threats; Political Violence; Separatist violence; Racial Violence/Xenophobia; Floods; Oil & Energy; Intellectual Property Rights Infringement; Employee Health Safety

Europe > Ukraine; Europe > Ukraine > Kyiv

3/28/2016

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: High

### Crime Threats

Although thousands of U.S. citizens visit Ukraine each year without incident, the country crime rating remains high. Criminal activity directed against foreigners is comparable with similar Eastern European countries. In the capital of Kyiv, authorities reported a 20 percent increase in crime in 2015 over 2014 statistics. Accordingly, the number of property crimes (theft, burglaries, armed assaults, fraud) constituted more than half of all criminal offenses reported.

The most common types of non-violent property crime affecting the expatriate community include: pickpocketing, theft from parked vehicles, and residential burglaries. Residential

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burglaries are typically committed by forced entry when the occupant is not at home or as crimes of opportunity when doors are found unlocked.

Due in part to the ongoing conflict in the east, illegal weapons-related crimes significantly increased in 2015.

Identity theft involving ATMs and credit cards is prevalent, continues to be a concern, and occurs on a regular basis.

#### Cybersecurity Issues

Cyber crime activity affecting services in Ukraine remains a major concern for U.S. government and Ukrainian authorities. In recent years, U.S. law enforcement pursued a number of joint cyber crime/identity theft investigations with Ukrainian law enforcement authorities. The Embassy strongly recommends utilizing a Virtual Privacy Network (VPN) for personal Internet usage.

#### Other Areas of Concern

The Department of State warns U.S. citizens to defer all travel to the eastern regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, and the Crimean Peninsula. Russian-backed separatists continue to control areas in the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts. These groups have established illegal

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checkpoints and have threatened, detained, and kidnapped individuals, including U.S. citizens, for hours or days. Furthermore, travelers to, in, near, or through these areas are subject to threats of mines and other unexploded ordnances, as well as sniper and other small-arms fire exchanges. As the situation is constantly changing, American citizens should read the most recent Travel Warning on the U.S. Embassy Kyiv's webpage: <http://ukraine.usembassy.gov/>.

Travel is restricted and controlled for a 30-kilometer radius surrounding the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant.

## **Transportation-Safety Situation**

### Road Safety and Road Conditions

Vehicles are left-side drive and drive on the right-hand side of the road. Traffic in Kyiv is heavy on weekdays during commuting hours, and routine travel within the city during workdays is often delayed due to heavy, unexpected (and often, inexplicable) traffic patterns. Main thoroughfares are usually well-illuminated and maintained, but side streets and less commonly used avenues in/outside of Kyiv are often poorly illuminated, narrow, and poorly maintained. Most highways and roads in smaller towns are not illuminated, and emergency services are not reliable or prompt. Therefore, it is recommended to drive outside of Kyiv only during daylight hours. Snow removal can be haphazard, especially along secondary roads, and the subsequent snowfall and ice build-up can cause considerable traffic delays and parking problems.

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Driving in Kyiv can be a challenge to foreigners. Local drivers routinely disregard traffic laws (excessive speeding, driving the wrong way on one-way streets, driving in oncoming lanes to maneuver around blocked traffic, driving on sidewalks). Using sidewalks for parking is an accepted practice, and pedestrians, especially those walking with small children, should exercise caution. Cars routinely drive on sidewalks, especially in central Kyiv, moving to/from sidewalk parking, much of it illegal. Drivers should also be alert for pedestrians, who often cross busy streets where they can and without hesitation. Drivers should be prepared to stop on short notice and drive defensively.

Due to heavy traffic and local driving habits, vehicle accidents are common. Motorists involved in vehicle accidents are not permitted to move the vehicles unless they present a clear safety concern. Fender benders routinely tie up traffic. Police must be notified and will go to the accident location to conduct the investigation. People should be prepared to wait until the police arrive and complete their report. Although the introduction of the heralded Patrol Police has reduced response time, traffic issues and still limited resources outside of major cities continue to delay the arrival of police and ambulances. When police arrive, they will ascertain responsibility, take the drivers' personal information, and file a report of the accident.

## Public Transportation Conditions

Ukraine has an extensive train, bus, subway, and airport transportation system. Some of the larger cities also have above-ground trolleys and small shuttle buses called "marshrutkas." Buses and trolleys in Kyiv break down on a regular basis, often causing delays in commuting but are generally considered safe to use. When riding public transportation, keep purses, shoulder bags, and backpacks closed, in front of you, or tucked under your arm to prevent

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theft.

## Aviation/Airport Conditions

In 2013, the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced that Ukraine complies with the international safety standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). A restricted air space zone exists over Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts as a result of the conflict there. On July 17, 2014, a Malaysia Airlines civilian aircraft was shot down in an area controlled by Russian-backed separatists, killing 297 people.

## Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Medium

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

Bomb threats to government buildings, metro stations, shopping malls, and train stations are received on an almost daily basis throughout the country. While Ukrainian authorities continue to respond appropriately to all threats, the vast majority are hoaxes.

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There continue to be acts of low-level terrorism targeting Ukrainian government infrastructure that have primarily resulted in property damage. Seizures of caches of weapons are common, and intermittent reports of individual use of grenades and similar ordnance to settle disputes underscores the availability of weapons.

The response by the Ukrainian security services have been deliberate, coordinated, and increasingly pro-active.

#### Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

Most Ukrainians regard Americans and Westerners in a positive manner and are friendly to foreigners.

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

Post Political Violence Rating: High

In March 2014, Russian forces illegally invaded the Crimean peninsula and continue to occupy Crimea in support of the Russian Federation's claim of annexation, which the U.S. and

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Ukraine do not recognize.

In early April 2014, pro-Russian separatists occupied government buildings in the eastern Oblasts of Donetsk, Luhansk, and Kharkiv. While the pro-Russian separatists were expelled from Kharkiv Oblast, the situation in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts deteriorated into a war between the Ukrainian military and Russian-backed separatists. Multiple ceasefires and diplomatic negotiations, most prominently the Minsk Agreement, have not brought peace to the region, and armed conflict still occurs on a daily basis.

#### Civil Unrest

From November 2013-February 2014, Ukraine witnessed civil unrest in almost every major city during the EuroMaidan protests, now known as the Revolution of Dignity. What began as peaceful pro-European Union demonstrations, culminated in the deaths of more than 100 unarmed protestors on February 20 and the flight of the former President on February 22. (For more detail, please see [Ukraine 2014 Crime and Safety Report](#) here.) Since the fall of the former government, demonstrations, marches, and commemorations continue to occur regularly throughout the center of Kyiv. These events are mostly peaceful, and most are aimed at persuading the current government to continue with reform efforts or pursuing charges of crimes against humanity against former government members. One demonstration held outside the Verkhovna Rada in August 2015 erupted when a participant threw a explosive device at National Guardsmen, killing four.

In general, it is advisable to avoid large demonstrations and crowds, even peaceful ones, as they may become violent without warning and may attract petty criminals and hooligans.

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However, if attending such events, it is always best to remain on the perimeter of crowds and identify easy exit routes should problems occur.

### Religious/Ethnic Violence

Although religious and ethnic violence is rare, there have been reports of both being carried out by individuals affiliated with hate groups. While most foreigners do not encounter problems with violent crime, there is potential for racially-motivated attacks. Crimes directed against non-Slavic and religious minorities do occur. Victims have reported oral harassment, discrimination, and physical assaults. Regardless of racial or ethnic background, all foreigners – even those who are not racial minorities – should be aware of this situation and exercise an appropriate level of caution. Slow response to hate crimes is a continuing concern, although senior government officials have publicly deplored them.

### Post-specific Concerns

#### Environmental Hazards

There are no major, routine natural disasters, except for flooding. Flooding has occurred in western Ukraine, particularly in the Carpathian Mountains during the spring thaw. The last major flood reported was in 2010.

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## Critical Infrastructure Concerns

In 1986, the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant unit no. 4 (90km northwest of Kyiv) experienced an explosion and fire, followed by an uncontrolled release of radiation. The accident resulted in the largest, short-term, accidental release of radioactive materials in the atmosphere ever recorded. The highest areas of radioactive ground contamination occurred within 30km of the station. A favorable wind direction kept most of the contamination away from Kyiv, although the capital city was not spared completely. The Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant's last operating reactor officially closed on December 15, 2000. The Embassy maintains a close cooperative relationship with authorities responsible for monitoring the radiological and operational conditions at Ukrainian nuclear facilities.

Shortage of fuel and insufficient electricity remain a concern into 2016. Gas is another area of concern due to increased tension with Russia. Ukraine has sufficient supplies of gas, between its storage system and purchases from Western Europe, for the rest of the 2015-2016 winter heating season. The government is working to increase long-term energy efficiency and diversify its gas purchases away from Russia.

## Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

There is a lack of intellectual property rights protection that is evident in the very weak enforcement efforts, the continued use of unlicensed (pirated) software within the government and private sectors, the widespread sale of counterfeit retail merchandise, the transshipment of counterfeit goods, the rampant Internet piracy, and the overabundance of rogue music royalty collection societies (collecting royalties without distributing any of the royalties to

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legitimate rights holders). In 2015, the U.S. government moved Ukraine from the Special 301 “Priority Foreign Country” designation to the “Priority Watch List” in response to the reform-minded government efforts after the Maidan revolution. However, since this change, the government has made no tangible progress in addressing IPR concerns.

## Privacy Concerns

Foreign business should take steps to secure systems and protect all corporate data for systems in the country or that interface with Ukraine-based systems, business operations, or business partners.

## Police Response

In general, law enforcement agencies do not meet U.S./Western European standards, and their ability to investigate criminal incidents adequately is still evolving. However, significant progress has been made in the form of the Patrol Police in Kyiv and several major cities. Their presence and response has been largely praised and is viewed as an example of promise for continuing police reforms.

Under the law, individuals are required to carry personal identification documents at all times, and local law enforcement may stop persons on the street to conduct identification checks. Unlike in the U.S., no "probable cause" is required. Therefore, the Embassy recommends that visitors carry passports at all times.

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## Crime Victim Assistance

The general fire emergency telephone number is 101. The police emergency number is 102. The ambulance/emergency medical services number is 103. These numbers can be used in Kyiv and in major cities; however, there may not be an English-speaking operator.

Corruption remains a persistent concern in Ukraine (Transparency International's 2015 corruption perceptions index lists Ukraine as 130 out of 168 surveyed countries). Ukrainian law enforcement agencies have been viewed as part of the problem rather than a part of the solution, but there has been progress in reforms and the establishment of the 'New Police,' and the new government has made fighting corruption a priority. Although 2016 has been dubbed 'the year of the English language' in Ukraine, police units rarely possess English-language capability, even among officials working in units designated to combat crimes against foreign nationals. As a result, reporting a crime is often a difficult, lengthy process. Subsequent follow-up to determine the status of a case often requires lengthy visits to police stations.

Despite this, the Embassy recommends that Americans report crimes to the police and Embassy. In the event that police will not accept a crime report, the Embassy's American Citizen Services can forward the complaint to the police. Reporting a crime is also advisable even if time has elapsed since the crime occurred, as criminals often repeat the same crime within the same general locale. Finally, a police report also is strongly recommended when an American passport has been lost or stolen.

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## Police/Security Agencies

The National Police under the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVS) is the civilian police agency.

The SBU (Security Service of Ukraine) is the main government security agency dealing with counter-intelligence issues and combating terrorism.

The State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (SBGS) controls borders and points of entry.

## Medical Emergencies

Medical facilities do not meet Western standards. Travelers with pre-existing conditions should carefully consider whether adequate care would be available during a trip to Ukraine. Travelers who have chronic medical conditions that require medication should bring enough medicine since medicine may not be readily available in-country. Furthermore, narcotic pain relievers may not be imported into Ukraine even in small quantities and with a prescription. For more information, please review OSAC's Report on traveling with medication.

## Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

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#### Minor Emergencies & Routine Care in Kyiv:

Boris (<http://www.boris.com.ua/>)

Address: Prospect Mykoly Bazhana 12a (12, ), Kyiv

<http://www.boris.kiev.ua/kontakti>

E-mail: [Med\\_Boris@ukr.net](mailto:Med_Boris@ukr.net)

24-HOUR PHONE: 238-0000

Medicom (<http://www.medikom.kiev.ua/>)

Address: 8, Kondratyka Street, Kyiv

<http://medikom.ua/>

24-HOUR PHONE: 503-7777

#### Major Trauma/Emergency

Main Military Clinical Hospital of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine

24 hours a day

Address: 18 Gospitalnaya Street, Kyiv

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24 hour phone: 269-7095

National Emergency and Trauma Hospital

24 hours a day

Address: 3 Bratislavskaya street

24 hour Information Service: 518-5111

24 hour Admittance department: 518-0629

24 hour Multi-Trauma department: 518-7259

24 hour Hospital Resuscitation/Intensive Care Department: 518-7020

For Cardiovascular events:

Kyiv Heart Institute

<http://www.heart.kiev.ua/?lang=en>

E-mail: [info@heart.kiev.ua](mailto:info@heart.kiev.ua)

5a Bratislavska St.,

Kyiv, 02660

Consultation-diagnostic department hours: Mon-Fri, 0800 – 1600

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To schedule a visit from 0800 to 1530 by phone numbers:

(for adults)

+380 (44) 291-61-31

+380 (44) 513-24-46

+380 (50) 746 74 47

+380 (97) 746 74 47

In order to be admitted to one of the private hospitals, a call to the hospital must be made in advance.

#### Available Air Ambulance Services

SOS: 007-495-937-6477 (24/7 phone) -Moscow

TRICARE/SOS (for U.S. military): 00 44-20-8762-8133 (24/7 phone) -London

EURO FLITE: 00 358-20-510-1900 (24/7 phone) -Finland

MEDEX Assistance Corporation: 00 410-453-6330 (24/7 phone) -US

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There are several European firms that provide private jet evacuations, and the AMC and Boris Clinic in Kyiv can organize and assist with evacuation for a fee. Aero medical evacuation companies that service Ukraine include: SOS, EURO FLITE, MEDEX Assistance Corporation, and TRICARE/SOS (for military personnel). Boris Clinic has a limited agreement with Tricare. Contact information for additional insurance and medevac companies can be found at: [http://kyiv.usembassy.gov/amcit\\_medical\\_eng.html](http://kyiv.usembassy.gov/amcit_medical_eng.html).

## Recommended Insurance Posture

We encourage Americans planning a trip to Ukraine to purchase traveler's insurance before arriving and to familiarize themselves with the conditions of their existing medical coverage and medical resources in Ukraine. The fastest way to secure Western medical care remains medical evacuation to Western Europe. This is a very expensive option, and assistance may not arrive until several hours after the need for care arises. Travelers should purchase medical evacuation insurance prior to travel or have access to substantial lines of credit to cover the cost of medical evacuation.

## Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

The government has an effective program of monitoring fresh foods and meats sold in local markets. Food that exceeds European norms for radiation is confiscated and destroyed. Street purchase of produce should be avoided. Wild berries, mushrooms, and wild fowl and game should be avoided, as these have been found to retain higher than average levels of

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radiation. Background levels of radiation are monitored regularly by the U.S. Embassy and other organizations and have not exceeded levels found on the Eastern seaboard of the U.S.

Tap water is not potable. It is safe for bathing and cooking in large cities.

For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/ukraine.htm>.

## **OSAC Country Council Information**

There is an OSAC Country Council in Kyiv. The Country Council private sector co-chair is the security officer of a major U.S. company operating in Ukraine. The OSAC Ukraine Country Council can be contacted through the U.S. Embassy's Regional Security Office or via the OSAC website at [www.osac.gov](http://www.osac.gov). 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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U.S. Embassy

4 Aircraft Designer Igor Sikorsky Street, Kyiv, Ukraine 04112

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Operational hours: Monday–Friday, 8:30-5:30 p.m.

Embassy Contact Numbers

Country Code: 380

Kyiv City Code: 44

Telephone: (38-044) 521-5000

Dialing instructions:

From another country: +38-044-521-5000

From within Ukraine: 044-521-5000

U.S. Consular Section: (38-044) 521-5460, fax (38-044) 521-5425

American Citizen Services: (38-044) 521-5566, fax (38-044) 521-5544

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Regional Security Office: (38-044) 521-5515

Embassy Kyiv Website: <http://kyiv.usembassy.gov>

## Embassy Guidance

The Embassy strongly recommends that all Americans visiting or residing in Ukraine register with the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv. Registration will permit the Embassy to contact American citizens quickly in the event of an in-country emergency. On-line registration is available at <https://step.state.gov/step>.

## Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

### Scams

"The Wallet Scam" remains a common confidence scam used by criminals to victimize foreigners. In many cases, these incidents occur at locations frequented by foreigners (high-end, Western hotels, Saint Sophia's Cathedral, Saint Michael's Cathedral, the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, Andriyivskiy Uzviz). In 2015, the Embassy received several reports of the wallet scam occurring outside shopping malls -- Gulliver, Ocean Plaza, the Bolshevik Mall -- and also at large event venues -- Palats Sportu, Olympiski Stadium. The increase of the scam at non-tourist locations is a new trend and may be related to the worsening economic situation. There are many variations to this scam, but all involve an attempt to get the victim to pick up a wallet or a plastic bag containing currency. The typical scam involves a suspect who

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“inadvertently” drops a wallet or a plastic bag in front of a potential victim. The suspect asks the victim if the wallet/bag belongs to him/her. More often, however, the victim picks the wallet/bag up and returns it to the person who “dropped” it. The suspect then tries to get the victim to handle the money in the wallet/bag or will handle/count the currency himself. After this, the suspect will state that money is “missing” and then loudly and aggressively (but non-violently) accuse the victim of stealing the money. The suspect will threaten to call the police to panic the victim. Then, a second person – another suspect -- interjects by introducing himself as a “police officer” and flashes “police identification.” The “police officer” will ask the victim to produce his/her wallet to ensure the victim did not take the money. The “police officer” will count the money in front of the victim. As the victim did not take any money as claimed by the first crook, many victims hand over their wallets without hesitation to the “police officer.” When the wallet is produced, the criminal(s) may grab it and flee, or more often, steal a large portion of the victim’s money by sleight of hand. If presented with this scenario or any other variant (sometimes more than two criminals are involved), do not pick up the wallet/bag, simply walk away and do not engage the perpetrators in conversation. Foreigners are more likely to be confronted with this confidence scam since they do not know local laws. American citizens are heavily targeted. There is no doubt that Ukrainian criminals will use the “Wallet Scam” in 2016 to continue to victimize unsuspecting foreigners.

Marriage and dating scams via the Internet are routinely reported. There have been numerous instances of U.S. citizens being extorted for thousands of dollars by Internet contacts who they thought were their friends, loved ones, or romantic interests. These Internet scams include lotteries, on-line dating/introduction services, and requests from a “friend” in trouble.

### Situational Awareness Best Practices

Visitors should maintain an increased level of security awareness and use common sense. To avoid becoming a victim of routine street crime, be alert and aware of your surroundings at all

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times. It is recommended to maintain a low profile and to not carry large sums of cash. If possible, leave wallets/purses secured at your residence and carry only necessary cash and identification in a front pocket. Refrain from carrying unnecessary items. Avoid routine travel patterns or habits by varying your departure/arrival times and routes as much as possible between frequented locations.

Men are advised to place wallets in a front pocket to deter pickpocketing. Increased awareness, common sense, and a regular review of your personal and residential security measures are strongly recommended.

There is particular need to pay close attention to one's surroundings and belongings while in crowded public places, walking on crowded streets and through underground malls/crossovers, and while traveling on public transportation.

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