



Pakistan 2016 Crime & Safety Report: Lahore

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Carjacking; Burglary; Murder; Rape/Sexual Violence; Kidnapping; Religious Terrorism; Religious Violence; Academia; Elections; Riots/Civil Unrest; Floods; Employee Health Safety

South Central Asia > Pakistan; South Central Asia > Pakistan > Lahore

3/30/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

This report describes significant crime, security, and safety issues that affect foreign visitors to the Punjab in general and the city of Lahore in particular. All statistics provided in this report were obtained from local law enforcement sources.

Post Crime Rating: High

Crime Threats

Crime and safety are ongoing concerns for foreigners throughout Pakistan, including in Lahore, a major city with a population of approximately 10 million people. Carjacking, armed robberies, home/shop invasions, and other violent crimes are prevalent in many major urban areas; petty crime (theft of personal property) is also widespread.

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In 2015, the overall reports of criminal activity in Lahore increased by 20.54 percent. In 2014, there were 71,928 crimes of all kinds reported to or cited by the police, as compared to 86,707 in 2015. According to the official statistics provided by the Capital City Police of Lahore, the following is a breakdown of the major crimes by category. Note: These are only major crimes. Added up, the totals do not equal the years' totals, which include traffic violations, white collar crimes, and crimes that would be considered to be misdemeanors in the U.S.

2014

2015

% Change

Violent Crimes Against Persons

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Murder

584

445

-23.80

Rape

105

144

+37.14

Gang Rape

34

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35

Hurt

1,029

1,112

+10.00

Attempted Murder

720

622

-13.61

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Kidnapping/Abduction

2,366

2,810

+18.76

Property Crimes

Total Property Crime

25, 246

26, 221

+3.86

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Burglary

4,601

4,619

+0.39

Robbery

5,029

4,445

-13.13

Dacoity

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108

101

-6.48

Vehicle Theft

6,875

6,320

-8.07

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

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The quality of the roads in the Punjab is not uniform. The toll road between Lahore and Islamabad is particularly well maintained and patrolled by the Motorway Police. The roads in Lahore and the motorways between major cities in the Punjab are generally paved and adequate; however, in outlying rural areas, the roads may be narrow and unpaved and more dangerous to navigate. Traffic is a significant issue in all the major cities of the Punjab, including Lahore, Multan, and Faisalabad. Efforts to improve infrastructure are plagued by funding and construction setbacks.

There are a number of factors that complicate the driving situation in Lahore. Traffic moves on the left side. Roads are usually very congested; cars, motorcycles, bicycles, pedestrians, and animal-drawn carts vie for space, often with complete disregard for traffic laws. While people generally drive defensively, patience and consideration are not traits commonly experienced while driving in Lahore. As a result of the congestion and driver impatience, there are frequent vehicle collisions. Complicating the issue is the fact that most drivers throughout the Punjab are uninsured. Defensive driving is a must.

Traffic signals are frequently inoperative due to widespread power outages, and roads tend to be poorly illuminated at night. Pedestrians, animal-drawn carts, and cattle that travel along these roads add additional challenges to safe navigation.

When in a vehicle, visitors should keep their doors locked and windows up. Expect other drivers to ignore road signs and traffic lights and to cross over and/or drift into other lanes without warning. Proceed through intersections with caution.

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Public Transportation Conditions

U.S. citizens are strongly advised to avoid using non-dispatched taxis and other forms of public transportation and are encouraged to have members of their host organizations or families meet them at the airport. Hotels are often able to arrange airport transfers.

Public transportation—and driving in general—in Pakistan can be extremely hazardous. The combination of a lack of proper vehicle maintenance, poor driver training, and the general absence of safety awareness by vehicle operators leads to a large number of vehicle accidents. In 2015 approximately 300 people died in road accidents in Lahore.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Critical

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

In 2015, there was an overall decrease in the number of terrorist attacks in Pakistan; however, terrorist groups have focused their efforts on minority religious groups and Pakistani government targets, with an emphasis on security and law enforcement facilities and

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personnel. Government officials who were outspoken critics of the terrorist groups also became targets of the groups.

Notable incidents in Punjab province in 2015 include:

On February 17, 2015, a suicide attack took place on Police Lines, Qala Gujjar Singh, less than 1km northeast of the Consulate General. Nine people were killed, and 25 were injured. TTP (Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan) claimed responsibility.

On March 15, 2015, in the predominantly Christian neighborhood of Youhanabad, two churches located close to each other were attacked during Sunday service. 15 people were killed, and 75 others were injured. TTP claimed responsibility.

On May 29, 2015, a suicide attack took place close to Qaddafi Cricket Stadium when a cricket match was in progress. Three people -- two policemen and a passerby -- were killed while three others were injured.

On August 16, 2015, a suicide attack was carried out on the residence (in Attock) of the Home Minister of Punjab. 16 people including the Minister were killed, and 25 others were injured. LeJ (Lashkar-e-Jhangvi) claimed responsibility.

On March 4, 2015, the University of Engineering & Technology received a threat letter via mail. In the letter, university administration was warned by ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) that university hostels and the campus would be attacked. Police increased the security after the threat letter. A girls' school in Shera Kot also received a threat letter in which school administrators were warned of an attack.

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On December 16, 2015, the anniversary of the Army Public School attack, schools remained closed across the country to avoid incident. There were attack threats that day and an actual at Bacha Khan University in Charsada, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on January 20, 2016. Since then, there have been a number of threats, of varying degrees of credibility, to educational institutions across Pakistan, including Punjab.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

Protests may assume an anti-western or anti-American form.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Political violence is common in Lahore and more so in rural Punjab. In local body elections, six people were killed across Punjab. On October 26, 2015, three political workers of a party were killed in Lahore. Conflicts with police on Election Day, potentially violent demonstrations by party activists, and fake vote casting are common.

Lahore faces political protests by right-wing and fundamentalist groups that can turn violent.

Post Political Violence Rating: Critical

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Civil Unrest

Protests are a frequent occurrence in Lahore. Lahore also has post-incident violence. On March 15, 2015, after the church attacks, individuals burned two people, labeling them accomplices of the suicide attackers. They also took three policemen hostage who were guarding the church. On the arrival of additional police forces, small skirmishes took place with protestors. Angry protestors burned Metro bus stations in the neighborhood. Police arrested the people who had burned the two persons. At the same time, dozens of protests took place in Youhanabad.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

Sectarian violence continues to occur.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Pakistan experienced severe flooding in the Punjab region from July-September 2015; 300,000 people were affected by the floods that killed over 100 people, injured over 500, and

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destroyed 397 villages and 550 houses. The power and road infrastructure also took a massive blow from flooding.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Industrial safety does not meet U.S. standards.

Kidnapping Threat

The overall reports of kidnappings in Lahore increased to 2,810 in 2015. 2,366 incidents of kidnapping were reported in 2014. There were nine reported incidents of kidnapping-for-ransom in 2015, as compared with 24 incidents in 2014, representing a drop of 62.5 percent.

Police Response

The Punjab police is the largest police force in Pakistan, numbering over 180,000 active members; however, funding, resources, and training for them, as with the rest of the Pakistani police services, remains low. Police services remain well below modern standards. Police response times are generally between 15 and 25 minutes.

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Crime Victim Assistance

Travelers can contact the police by dialing 15, the country-wide police emergency number.

U.S. citizen services at Consulate General Lahore are suspended. U.S. citizens should contact U.S. Embassy Islamabad if they are arrested, detained, or have any interaction with the police for which they require assistance. U.S. citizens can contact an American Citizen Services (ACS) representative at Embassy Islamabad by dialing the Embassy's main line (+92-51-208-0000).

Medical Emergencies

Emergency medical care considered equivalent to Western standards is only available in major cities. Most hospitals possess limited advanced life support equipment and may not be up to U.S. standards.

The Punjab Emergency Service (Rescue 1122) is the premier emergency response unit. If travelers encounter a medical emergency or a fire, they can dial 1122 locally to report it. Ambulance and fire response from Rescue 1122 are acceptable in Lahore; response times range from 5 to 10 minutes, depending on the location and traffic conditions.

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Recommended Insurance Posture

Travelers should arrange for medical evacuation insurance personally or through their sponsoring agency prior to arriving in Pakistan.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

Pollution from raw sewage and industrial waste is common. Air pollution generally increases during the winter months due to burning wood and debris for heat. The resulting smoke can cause respiratory irritation and discomfort to individuals suffering from asthma or other respiratory issues. Lahore's air pollution has worsened in recent years, as dust from construction projects around the city contributes to poor air quality. In addition, poorly maintained two-stroke Rickshaws, motor bikes, and other smoke-emitting transport vehicles produce significant air pollution; children and persons with respiratory issues may be especially affected. For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at:
http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/pakistan?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-doble-001.

OSAC Country Council Information

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As of January 2015, after the suspension of Consulate operations for over a year, RSO Lahore is beginning to re-establish operations and contact OSAC constituents in the Punjab province. RSO Lahore can also assist U.S. companies with police liaison when there are threats against their facilities, personnel, or both. To reach OSAC's South and Central Asia team, please email OSACSCA@state.gov.

U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information

Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Consulate General Lahore is located at: 50 Empress Road, Lahore, Pakistan 54000

Consulate Contact Numbers

Consulate General Lahore Switchboard: +92-42-3603-4000

Consulate General Lahore Marine Security Guard Post One: +92-42-3603-4104

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

Nearby Posts

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Embassy Islamabad: <http://islamabad.usembassy.gov/>

Consulate Karachi: <http://karachi.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Peshawar: <http://peshawar.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Guidance

Information describing how to contact the Embassy or the Consulates General directly is available on the Internet on the Bureau of Consular Affairs home page at: <http://www.travel.state.gov>.

Representatives of the Overseas Citizen Services call center (1-888-407-4747) can answer general inquiries regarding safety and security overseas. The number is manned from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Callers unable to use toll-free numbers may obtain information and assistance during the same hours by calling 1-317-472-2328.

On many occasions, the U.S. Department of State has issued travel warnings and emergency messages to U.S. citizens, advising them of the inherent dangers associated with travel to Pakistan. For additional security information, please refer to U.S. government-issued consular information sheets, travel warnings, and public announcements relating to Pakistan. Among

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those are:

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program: <https://step.state.gov/step/>

Pakistan Travel Warning:

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings/pakistan-travel-warning.html>

Worldwide Caution Message:

<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings/worldwide-caution.html>

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Situational awareness and common sense are imperative for personal safety. Regional Security Office Lahore recommends visitors to maintain a low profile and avoid drawing attention to themselves. Travelers are strongly encouraged to wear conservative attire that lends itself to blending in and does not easily identify them as being a Westerner. Clothing that is military in nature, displays Western sports teams, or immediately associates you with the U.S. is discouraged. Women are advised to keep their arms and legs covered, and headscarves should be worn when visiting any religious site.

When in public, avoid carrying or displaying large sums of money/valuables. Avoid crowded areas, markets, and civil disturbances, including protests and demonstrations. Visitors are encouraged to keep meeting times/places unpredictable and to vary their routes. If travelers

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feel that they are being followed or threatened, they should immediately go to a safe public place (a government building, police station).

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