



## Nepal 2016 Crime and Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Earthquakes; Riots/Civil Unrest; Oil & Energy; Burglary; Theft; Stolen items; Hotels; Murder; Kidnapping; Extortion; Threats; Cyber; Insurgencies; IEDs; Floods; Rape/Sexual Violence; Drug Trafficking

South Central Asia > Nepal; South Central Asia > Nepal > Kathmandu

3/30/2016

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

#### Crime Threats

Post Crime Rating: High

Overall reported crime throughout Nepal has increased over 2015, primarily due to the devastating earthquakes of April and May 2015 and political protests and obstruction of shipments of fuel and other supplies along the India/Nepal border. Cases of reported burglaries in the Kathmandu Valley have increased. Minor street crime (pickpocketing, bag snatching) continues against visitors in popular tourist and trekking areas (Chitwan, Pokhara, the Annapurna region, the Thamel area of Kathmandu). Expatriates are potential targets due to their perceived wealth. In reported incidents, tourists have had their valuables stolen from their hotel rooms. Overall, the latest crime statistics indicated a 21 percent increase over the past year.

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Solo trekking can be dangerous, and the lack of available immediate assistance has contributed to injuries and deaths and makes one more vulnerable to criminals.

In August 2015, an unaccompanied woman was murdered in Pokhara.

In 2014, an American woman on a popular trail was attacked and seriously injured while trekking alone.

Another female tourist who went trekking alone has been missing since 2010. Extensive search efforts have not been successful in tracing her whereabouts.

The safest option for trekkers is to join an organized group and/or use a reputable trekking company that provides an experienced guide and porters who can communicate in both Nepali and English.

Armed criminal groups are reported to occasionally engage in murder, kidnapping, extortion, abuse, and threats of violence, although reports of such activity have significantly decreased. The majority of these organizations operate in rural areas, particularly in the Terai border region with India. Though on the surface they may proclaim a political cause, most of these groups are comprised of opportunistic criminal elements. Competing factions in the Terai have clashed with the Maoists, hill-origin Nepalese, police, and each other. No Americans or U.S. Embassy facilities have been directly targeted.

## Cybersecurity Issues

A number of Nepal-based volunteer organizations maintain websites. The Embassy has received reports from a number of U.S. citizens complaining that some of these organizations have misrepresented themselves after the volunteers had arrived in Nepal to work. U.S.

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citizens are cautioned to be aware of this practice and encouraged to research the legitimacy of such organizations. The Social Service Council of the government of Nepal maintains a list of legitimate volunteer organizations.

## Transportation-Safety Situation

### Road Safety and Road Conditions

Driving remains one of the greatest risks to the safety of Americans. Many roads inside and outside the Kathmandu Valley are narrow, unpaved mountain lanes. Roads are often congested with heavy truck, bus, and pedestrian traffic. During monsoon season, sections of road are often washed away by rain and mudslides. Serious accidents happen frequently on city and rural roads due to hazardous conditions, poor mechanical conditions of vehicles, and a lack of adherence by drivers to traffic rules. When accidents occur, they are often deadly due to overcrowding of buses and minibuses. Nepal's fuel crisis limited the number of available public transportation vehicles that resulted in a significant increase in the number of passengers per vehicle. In 2015, there were 2,764 motor vehicle-related fatalities.

Driving in Kathmandu can be hazardous. Motor vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, and animals congest narrow roads. Traffic is poorly regulated, and the volume of vehicles on the roads has increased significantly in recent years. The few traffic lights (when they are functioning) and road signs are often ignored even in the most congested sections of downtown Kathmandu. Many drivers are not properly licensed or trained. Many vehicles are poorly maintained, and public transportation is often overloaded. Demolished walls and building materials litter many roadways, further impeding the flow of traffic.

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Sidewalks are not widespread and can have large cracks or holes. Sidewalks and pedestrian crossings are nonexistent in most areas, and drivers do not yield the right-of-way to pedestrians. Pedestrians often wear dark clothing at night. Pedestrians account for about 40 percent of all traffic fatalities in Nepal.

#### Public Transportation Conditions

Visitors are encouraged to avoid public buses and minibuses. Public transportation vehicles have questionable safety measures, are often over-crowded, and can be poorly operated. Taxis are generally safe to use, but the fare should be negotiated before entering the taxi.

#### Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Medium

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

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There are no reports of organized transnational terrorist organizations in Nepal. However, due to the open border policy with India, terrorists have been known to transit from Nepal into India.

Several former insurgent groups who conducted attacks against security forces during the Maoist insurgency of 1998-2008 remain organized today. These indigenous terrorist groups have greatly reduced the number of attacks since the end of the insurgency but consider themselves politically active.

There have been no reported incidents of terrorism directed toward U.S. interests or the Western community.

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

On September 20, 2015, Nepal promulgated a new Constitution. The promulgation process initiated sporadic violence by various groups and political parties in the Terai region along the southern border with India. Sporadic and localized bandhs have occurred to protest the newly-adopted Constitution. Protest groups sometimes have clashed with police services, resulting in casualties on both sides. The political unrest contributed to the blockage of goods and commodities passing from India into Nepal. This significantly affected the availability of fuel (diesel, petrol, aviation, cooking gas) and other supplies entering Nepal and had a negative effect on the tourism industry.

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## Civil Unrest

Protest, demonstrations, and disruptions can occur without notice throughout Nepal, including in the Kathmandu Valley. Demonstrations have blocked major roads or intersections, and demonstrators have been known to attack public transportation vehicles. Various political groups may also call bandhs, or general strikes, that force the closure of businesses and disrupt vehicular traffic. Some groups enforce observance of bandhs through violence and intimidation. The last significant multi-day nationwide bandh occurred in April 2015.

In December 2015, two petrol bombs were thrown at India-based companies in the Kathmandu Valley. The incidents resulted in no casualties and minor damage.

## Religious/Ethnic Violence

Indigenous groups have been responsible for a number of criminal acts, most of which have been minor in scale. In 2015, 38 Improvised Explosive Device (IED) incidents were reported, including 16 in September. While some of the incidents turned out to be hoaxes, at least 16 IEDs exploded. There were no fatalities from the relatively unsophisticated IEDs. Four that exploded in September were directed at Christian churches. The police have arrested several suspects, including individuals from Hindu nationalist and criminal groups in the Terai.

## Post-specific Concerns

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## Environmental Hazards

Nepal is located in a seismically-active area. On April 25, April 26, and May 12, major earthquakes struck the greater Kathmandu Valley and surrounding regions, resulting in over 8,000 people killed and 20,000 injured. Another large-scale earthquake could further destroy infrastructure and buildings in the Kathmandu Valley. Emergency services are inadequate to deal with another crisis of this magnitude.

During the monsoon season (May-September), heavy rains can cause flooding. In recent years, the Koshi River has been prone to flooding, resulting in a substantial loss of life and property. Travel by road during the monsoon season can be hazardous, as many roads are unpaved and frequently wash away.

## Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Because Nepal relies on run-of-the-river hydroelectric facilities, load shedding of electricity causes rolling power outages, especially during the dry season (November-April). Electricity outages can last 14-16 hours (or more) per day during the peak season. During the outages, streetlights and ambient lighting are non-existent in some places. It is highly recommended that travelers bring a small flashlight for personal safety/security during the hours of darkness.

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Nepal does not support large-scale industrial complexes that might trigger a catastrophic industrial accident. However, due to the lack of government environmental controls, many smaller industrial accidents may go unreported.

### Personnel-Background Concerns

Due to cultural differences, harassment against female travelers occasionally occurs. All travelers are advised to pay attention to local customs and dress appropriately in public.

### Drug-related Crimes

Despite strong legal provisions prohibiting their consumption, possession, and transport, drugs are sold on the streets in Kathmandu, especially in areas frequented by tourists. Although Nepal is neither a significant producer of nor a major transit route for narcotic drugs, domestically produced cannabis, hashish, and heroin are trafficked through Nepal every year. Do not carry or store any packages from a stranger. There have been instances in which packages concealed contraband material or drugs, and the foreigner who accepted the package was arrested for possessing the illegal substance.

### Police Response

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Nepal police agencies are hindered by a lack of adequate transportation, training, and equipment, all of which often prevents them from completing their mission effectively. Law and order remains a concern, and many crimes in rural areas occur without police intervention or follow-up.

Travelling or trekking alone is inadvisable for a number of reasons, including that law enforcement authorities in many localities lack the ability to respond to emergencies or provide the level of police support that would be expected in developed countries. Criminals in the Terai operate across the border into India, posing challenges for law enforcement.

#### How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

In the event an American is harassed or detained by local police, the individual should contact the U.S. Embassy's Consular Section/American Citizen Services at 977-1-423-7200 or 977-1-423-7201 (business hours). Assistance can be reached after hours at 977-1-423-7266 or 977-1-423-7269. Based on the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and customary international law, if an American is arrested in Nepal, s/he can request that the police, prison officials, or other authorities alert the U.S. Embassy and to have communications forwarded to the U.S. Embassy.

#### Crime Victim Assistance

In the event that an American is a victim of a crime and needs immediate police assistance, s/he can dial 100 from a local cell phone or land line. The Nepal Police, Tourist Division, can

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be reached at 977-1-424-7041, and the Nepal Tourism Board can be reached at 977-1-470-0750. The Nepal Police Operation Center 24-hour line is 977-1-441-1549/441-2780. It is also recommended the individual report the incident to the U.S. Embassy's Consular Section/American Citizen Services.

## **Medical Emergencies**

Medical care is limited and below American standards.

### Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Information on medical providers and other important information for American citizens can be found on the Embassy's website (<http://nepal.usembassy.gov>).

### Recommended Insurance Posture

Serious illnesses and injuries often require evacuation to medical facilities in Singapore or Bangkok. U.S. Embassy Kathmandu recommends contacting the Embassy's Consular Section/American Citizen Services (business hours) or the Embassy duty officer (after business hours) first for guidance before using local medical or evacuation services.

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## Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

For information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at:  
[http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/nepal?s\\_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-single-001](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/nepal?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-single-001).

## OSAC Country Council Information

The OSAC Country Council for Nepal was reestablished in 2013. The co-Chairman is Kiran Raj Gautam, +977-98510-24654 or [kiran@mercantile.com.np](mailto:kiran@mercantile.com.np). For more information, U.S. private sector organizations can contact the Regional Security Office at 977-1-423-7200, x 4330 or e-mail [DS\\_RSO\\_Kathmandu@state.gov](mailto:DS_RSO_Kathmandu@state.gov). To reach OSAC's South and Central Asia team, please email [OSACSCA@state.gov](mailto:OSACSCA@state.gov).

## U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

### Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

The U.S. Embassy, Kathmandu is located at: Maharajgunj, Chakrapath, Kathmandu, Nepal

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Normal Embassy hours are from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

## Embassy Contact Numbers

### During Normal Business Hours

Regional Security Office: +977-1-423-7200 ext. 4330

Embassy Operator: +977-1-423-7200

Consular Section: +977-1-423-7200 ext. 4068 or 4120

Political/Economic Section: +977-1-423 7200 ext. 4246

### 24/7

Marine Security Guard Post One: +977-1-423-7200 ext 4100

Website: <http://nepal.usembassy.gov/>

## Embassy Guidance

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Prior to departing, travelers should access the Department of State website at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) to view the latest travel warnings or advisories and to enroll their trip with the Embassy. American citizens are urged to consult media sources and to register with Embassy Kathmandu's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) for current security information. Embassy Kathmandu posts security notices at <http://nepal.usembassy.gov/mfe.html>.

## **Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim**

### Situational Awareness Best Practices

Given the nature, intensity, and unpredictability of disturbances, American citizens are urged to exercise special caution during bandhs, avoid areas where demonstrations are occurring or crowds are forming, avoid road travel, and maintain a low profile. Although there are no "off limits" areas in Kathmandu, appropriate personal security measures for any large metropolitan area apply. Be alert and observant at all times. In social settings, observe local customs and laws. Avoid demonstrations or protests. Stay informed regarding regional events that might elicit anti-American activities. When traveling, register with the U.S. Embassy's American Citizen Services and leave an itinerary with the hotel front desk or a friend. Try to avoid solitary exploration; travel with a friend – especially when trekking. Keep purses, shopping bags, and backpacks secured and in front where one can see them. Avoid walking alone after dark and carrying large sums of money or wearing expensive jewelry. Valuables should be stored in the hotel safety deposit box and should never be left unattended in hotel rooms. Try to seem purposeful when you move about. Even if you are lost, act as if you know where you are going. When possible, ask directions only from individuals in authority. If you are

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confronted by someone trying to rob you, give up your valuables. Your money and passport can be replaced.

The U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu strongly recommends that U.S. citizens do not hike alone or become separated from larger traveling parties while on a trail. U.S. citizens are strongly encouraged to contact the Embassy in Kathmandu for the latest security information, and to enroll with the Embassy and register their itinerary before undertaking trips outside the Kathmandu Valley. Trekkers are also advised to leave their itinerary with family or friends in the U.S. and to check in at police checkpoints where trekking permits are logged.

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