



## **Brazil 2016 Crime & Safety Report: Brasilia**

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Assault; Burglary; Hotels; Murder; Kidnapping; Carjacking; Summer Olympics; World Cup; Cyber; Financial Security; Cargo Security; Drug Trafficking; Other Threat / Incident; Riots/Civil Unrest; Floods; Landslides and mudslides; Intellectual Property Rights Infringement; Counterfeiting; Hate Crimes; Fraud

Western Hemisphere > Brazil; Western Hemisphere > Brazil > Brasilia

4/18/2016

### **Overall Crime and Safety Situation**

Post Crime Rating: Critical

### **Crime Threats**

Crime is a major concern in Brazil, especially in larger cities. Street crime is a problem, especially in the evenings and late at night. Foreigners are not immune to crime, and American citizens – both private and official – have been victimized. In Brasilia, robbery, assault, burglary, and theft are concerns for foreigners and Brazilians alike. Public transportation hubs, hotel sectors, and tourist areas are locations with the highest crime rates. Violent crimes (murder, kidnapping, carjacking, armed assault, burglary) occur with frequency. Law enforcement and press sources have reported an increase in crime after several consecutive years of decreasing crime trends. Recent increases in activity have been noted in major cities, and while crime is a problem throughout the year, there have been noticeable

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increases in reported incidents during December and January, likely attributable to a number of factors including:

Brazil's liberal system of prison furloughs that allows for leave during the holidays, a higher percentage of police officers on annual leave during the Christmas season, and the reality that citizens receive a "13th month" bonus in December and are in possession of more disposable income during these months.

Vacant homes and apartments are targeted for burglary during December-January with greater frequency.

Crime remains a concern for visitors any time of the year, the majority of it opportunistic, street crime that takes advantage of the influx of tourists. The majority of crimes are perpetrated by juveniles. The laws that protect minor criminals are very lax and porous, so gangs take advantage of this and employ juveniles to carry out their crimes. During the World Cup, thieves targeted people at Fan Fests, near stadiums, on buses, subways, and other areas where tourists congregated. Commonly stolen items included: wallets, purses, phones, cameras, luggage, jewelry, and match tickets.

Many criminals use weapons when carrying out illicit activities and often are accompanied by gratuitous violence. Thefts were usually non-violent, but the ones that did turn violent were often because the victim resisted.

Residential burglaries pose a constant threat and concern. According to the police, much of this crime is carried out by mobile street gangs that target residential areas of Brasilia. Other perpetrators are from surrounding satellite cities and travel by metro, bus, or car into the

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neighborhoods looking for targets of opportunity. Home invasions are becoming more common. In Brasilia, on January 6, 2015, a group of juvenile assailants broke into an occupied house, in the affluent area of "South Lake," and sequestered the home owner, gardener, and cook. They took numerous pieces of gold, other valuables, TVs, and a vehicle. Most residential properties, especially single family homes, utilize security alarm systems. These systems are monitored by local security companies who respond along with local police. Some neighborhoods employ static guard posts to monitor activity on the streets adjacent to their homes. Larger properties and commercial sites generally employ 24/7 security guard services.

Caution is required when travelling at night through more rural areas and satellite cities due to the significant potential for roadside robberies.

A phenomenon called "quicknapping" is an ongoing criminal activity in which ATM users are kidnapped at gun point and taken to several ATMs to withdraw cash. Credit card cloning has also been spiking lately when using ATMs, at various airports, and restaurants.

## Cybersecurity Issues

Cyber security and online fraud are major concerns, with annual losses reaching billions of dollars. Brazil continues to rank as one of the most pervasive cyber crime environments worldwide. Brazilian cyber criminals have grown brazen, stealing billions of dollars annually despite legislation and official efforts to stop malicious activity online. The banking sector has been the primary target of these operations; however, cyber crime affects daily Internet users, private-sector organizations, and short-term travelers. With the Olympic Summer Games in Brazil, public and private sector organizations are posturing themselves for a possible influx of

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malicious cyber activity. OSAC constituents should maintain awareness of popular schemes to avoid becoming cybercrime victims. Cyber security companies often note that, while still vulnerable, chip-and-PIN cards are more secure and harder to clone than magnetic swipe cards.

In addition to the high volume of online banking, the World Bank reports that Brazil has one of the highest concentrations of ATM terminals worldwide. Local cyber criminals are also known to target hardware (terminals) to obtain credit card and banking information. Trend Micro observed hackers compromising portable point-of-sale systems to obtain the information stored in the magnetic strip of a credit card as it is swiped for payment. Because this scheme often requires access to the payment hardware, researchers noted it requires insider access. In one case, waiters at exclusive restaurants were given a cut of the stolen money for using compromised point-of-sale machines with their customers.

#### Other Areas of Concern

The areas in/around the hotel sector can be dangerous, especially at night.

Visitors should be alert to their surroundings, especially at large markets.

The satellite cities around Brasilia are considered unsafe at night and should be avoided during those hours.

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## Transportation-Safety Situation

### Road Safety and Road Conditions

Road conditions outside of the main cities vary greatly. Road conditions range from extremely poor to good, and accidents are always a concern outside of major cities. Traveling in rural areas, as well as in satellite cities, drivers also must pay close attention to pot holes and speed humps.

#### Brasilia

The surface conditions of the roads are generally poor, with numerous pot holes, some of which, during the rainy season, can cause significant damage to a vehicle's suspension system. Lighting, traffic signals, and road markings vary from good to poor.

#### Manaus:

Manaus is isolated in the state of Amazonas with no major highway system linking it with the rest of Brazil. Within the city itself, roads are generally fair.

Brazil uses automatic photo-ticketing systems to discourage speeding, and tickets are mailed to the owner of the vehicle.

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Do not leave visible items inside your vehicle; place such items in the glove box or trunk.

### Public Transportation Conditions

Upon the heels of the World Cup 2014, Brasilia placed a number of new buses into its fleet to demonstrate their attempts to modernize their public transportation. This, however, is not the reality when traveling between cities; it is not advisable to take bus transportation while traveling in/around Brazil due to mechanical issues and high crime rates. For example, in Brasilia in 2015, two armed juveniles, during daylight hours, robbed a bus full of passengers. No one tried to intervene because Brazilians know there is a strong likelihood they could be harmed and the laws against juveniles are porous and lax. Avoid city buses and other public transportation. Many also pass through high crime areas and are susceptible to robberies.

Only use legitimate, well-marked taxis, which are white or silver with green and yellow stripes.

### Aviation/Airport Conditions

Reports of cargo theft, from both overland shipments and from storage facilities, occur frequently. Airports countrywide inaugurated supplemental security measures in part to thwart criminal activity targeting aviation facilities.

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## Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

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

The tri-border area (where Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay converge) is a known hub of organized crime and narcotics/weapon smuggling. To date, no incidents directed against official or non-official Americans have occurred in this area. But, it is recommended that American visitors to the area (to include Foz de Iguazu) remain especially vigilant and maintain a low profile.

There are no known indigenous terrorist groups operating in Brazil. Brazil is a non-aligned country with no significant enemies and is not targeted by any known radical groups.

Organized crime does exist in Brasilia but is on a smaller scale compared to other cities (Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo), both of which have major drug gangs that operate mainly in the favelas. In 2006, drug gangs launched two dedicated waves of violence, centered in Sao Paulo, that were likened by many to a terrorist event; the President has called these gangs, "terrorist organizations."

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## Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: Medium

### Civil Unrest

Political violence is possible in any of Brazil's major cities. There were numerous protests in 2015 in Brasilia related to a variety of grievances: salary disparity, poor health care, a substandard education system, corruption. While the majority of these protests were peaceful, violence did occur in a few instances. Economic conditions may contribute to civil unrest, protests, and strikes, as Brazil is experiencing its longest and deepest recession since the 1930s. After contracting 3.7 percent in 2015, the economy is projected to contract by another 3 percent in 2016, possibly driving official unemployment above 10 percent. Inflation has already risen above 10 percent. With additional tax increases proposed by the government to resolve a budget deficit, middle class and other economically vulnerable groups will experience greater economic stress in 2016.

### Religious/Ethnic Violence

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There is no known religious or ethnic violence disparity in Brazil. Brazil boasts a wide variety of ethnicities. The majority of the people are Christian/Catholics, followed by a distant second of Protestant.

## Post-specific Concerns

### Environmental Hazards

Most natural disasters are not a major concern, although significant flooding does occur during the rainy season. Flooding, and associated mudslides, have become a serious problem in the states of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo.

### Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Brazil is one of Latin America's leading digital nations. Over 50 percent of Brazilians are active Internet users, and Brazilian financial institutions were early adopters of online services. Government websites have been defaced and taken offline by hackers in recent years. The army is responsible for defending critical cyber infrastructure, including in the context of major events such as the Olympics, and Brazil's Computer Emergency Response Team monitors and addresses general cyber security incidents. Given Brazil's highly networked economy and the fact that authorities are still developing cyber doctrine and capabilities, analysts note critical infrastructure risks.

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## Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

The risk of economic espionage is not particularly high, but other intellectual property rights (IPR) issues continue to challenge U.S. companies. Brazil is on the U.S. Trade Representative's Special 301 "Watch List" due to high levels of counterfeiting and piracy, including online piracy. Illicit goods enter Brazil over its extensive land and sea borders, with the tri-border area a particular concern. Some local police forces make concerted efforts to combat sales of counterfeit and pirated goods at physical markets, but offenders frequently are let off with minimal penalties. Concerns also persist with respect to Brazil's inadequate protection against unfair commercial use of undisclosed test and other data generated to obtain marketing approval for pharmaceutical and agricultural chemical products.

## Privacy Concerns

A bill in Brazil's congress has aroused privacy concerns by proposing to force Internet users to divulge their identities when visiting websites. Meanwhile, Brazil is developing sweeping legislation addressing the use and protection of individuals' personal data; the draft bill appears to strike a middle ground between the EU's restrictive model and the more commercially permissive U.S. approach.

## Personnel-Background Concerns

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Brazil's federal law does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, but several states and municipalities have administrative regulations that prohibit such discrimination and provide for equal access to government services. Social discrimination remained a problem, especially against the transgender population. Violence against LGBT individuals was a serious concern in 2014.

The law prohibits racial discrimination, specifically the denial of public or private facilities, employment, or housing. The law also prohibits the incitement of racial discrimination or prejudice and the dissemination of racially-offensive symbols/epithets and stipulates prison terms for such acts. The 2010 census reported that for the first time approximately 52 percent of the population of 202.6 million identified themselves as belonging to categories other than white. Despite laws and a high representation within the general population, darker skinned citizens, particularly Afro-Brazilians, frequently encountered discrimination.

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical/mental disabilities in employment, air travel and other transportation, education, and access to health care. The federal government generally enforced these.

## Drug-related Crimes

The major cities experience the effects of people addicted to illicit drugs. This includes criminal activity (street assaults, robberies) the proceeds of which are used to support their addictions. Brazil is the number one consumer of crack cocaine in the world. As such, a large proportion of crimes have a nexus to narcotics.

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## Kidnapping Threat

“Quicknapping” is the current kidnapping trend in Brazil. While Brazilians are most often targeted, all foreigners are vulnerable. Criminals are determined and sophisticated, which requires visitors to be alert to their surroundings.

## Police Response

Police officials frequently cited lack of resources, staff, and basic equipment, as well as low morale as reasons for widely varying response times and unsolved crimes. Recently, however, many police units have displayed an increase in training, morale, and responsiveness, which is perhaps a side effect of the myriad security-focused programs introduced during the lead up to the World Cup.

## How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Visitors should inform the nearest embassy or consulate in the event they encounter problems while traveling in Brazil, including detainment or arrest by the police.

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## Crime Victim Assistance

### Brasilia Emergency Services Telephone

Rio Branco Battalion/Federal District (61) 3248-1335/1368 (24HR)

Police Precinct/Lago Sul (61) 3364-3626 (24HR)

Police Precinct/Asa Sul (61) 3245-1567 (24HR)

Police Precinct/Asa Norte (61) 3273-0101/0335 (24HR)

Civil Police 199 OR (61) 3363-1358

Fire Department 190 OR 193

Ambulance 192

### Manaus Emergency Services Telephone

Police 190

Fire Department 193

Ambulance 192

Civil Police 197 or (92) 3612-3122

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## Police/Security Agencies

The Military Police units, which have their own formations, rules, and uniforms depending on the state, are responsible for maintaining public order across the country including the Federal District and the capital, Brasilia. Deployed solely to act as a deterrent against the commission of crime, units do not conduct criminal investigations.

Detective work, forensics, and prosecutions are undertaken by a state's Civil Police. Each of the states has its own "Civil Police Department," which carries out investigative work, forensics, and criminal investigation, acting as a state bureau of investigation.

The Federal Police are responsible for crimes against federal institutions, international drug trafficking, terrorism, cyber crime, organized crime, public corruption, white collar crime, money laundering, immigration, border control, airport security, and maritime policing. It is subordinate to the federal Ministry of Justice.

## Medical Emergencies

### Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

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## Brasilia

Hospital Santa Lucia, W3 Sul 716, Conjunto C in the Asa Sul Section, Tel: (61) 3445-0000.

Hospital Brasilia, SHIS QI 15, TR. 5, Lote G. Tel (61) 3248-9000.

Hospital de Base (Trauma Care), SMHS 101, Bloco A, in the Asa Sul Section, Tel: (61) 3325-4080/5050.

For private, ground-ambulance service -- Vida Ambulance (61) 3248-3030.

## Manaus

Hospital Adventista De Manaus – Dist. Industrial located at Av. Governador Danilo Areosa, 139 – Distrito Industrial, Manaus - AM, 69075-351, Tel: (92) 2123-1311.

Hospital Joao Lucio – Barrio S. Jose, Alameda Cosme Ferreira, 3937 – Barrio S. Jose, Manaus - AM, 69083-000, Tel (92) 3249-9050/3249-9051.

Hospital Pronto Socorro Municipal 28 Agosto – Adrianopolis, Av. Mario Ypyranga, 1581 - Adrianopolis, Manaus - AM, 69057-002, Tel: (92) 3643-7143.

## Recommended Insurance Posture

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For air medical evacuation services, the Embassy recommends visitors purchase private air medical evacuation insurance before traveling. The Embassy can assist visitors with further information about obtaining services available.

### 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/brazil?s\\_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-double-001](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/brazil?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-double-001).

### OSAC Country Council Information

Brasilia does not have an active OSAC Country Council. However, there are active OSAC Country Councils in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. To reach OSAC's Western Hemisphere team, please email [OSACWHA@state.gov](mailto:OSACWHA@state.gov).

### U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

#### Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

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U.S. Embassy Brasilia

Av. Das Nações Sul, Quadra 801, Lote 3.

Hours of Operation are 0800 - 1700

Embassy Contact Numbers

Switchboard: +55 (61) 3312-7000

Marine Security Guard: +55 (61) 3312-7400 (emergencies and after-hours)

RSO: x 7390

American Citizen Service: x 7063 or 7471.

Foreign Commercial Officer: x 7403.

Fax: +55 (61) 3322-4224.

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

Nearby Posts

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Consulate General Rio de Janeiro: <http://riodejaneiro.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate General Sao: <http://saopaulo.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate General Recife: <http://recife.usconsulate.gov/>

## Embassy Guidance

U.S. companies are encouraged to contact the RSO in Brasilia for specific inquiries concerning the local security situation. Information is also readily available from the Regional Security Offices in Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Recife, the American Chamber of Commerce, and from the OSAC Country Councils in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo.

## Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

### Scams

An unknown individual calls to say that a person you know has been kidnapped, and unless you pay the ransom immediately the person will be harmed. The ransom is paid, and it becomes clear that the kidnapping never occurred.

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A similar scam is where an unknown individual calls and states an employee/family member has been in an accident and needs immediate medical attention. The individual states that payment must be provided in order for the injured individual to be treated. This scam is often targeted at household staff who react without verifying with their employer.

Scams involving credit cards are common. Travelers using debit/credit cards sometimes receive billing statements with unauthorized charges or discover that their cards were cloned/duplicated without their knowledge.

Be careful of cash transactions on the street. A hurried transaction for merchandise often leaves the customer with shoddy/counterfeit goods or with counterfeit money.

### Situational Awareness Best Practices

Visitors should practice common sense preventive security techniques, just as they would in any large city. Visitors can reduce their risk of becoming a victim of crime by varying routes/times of travel and ensuring residences are sufficiently protected. Foreign visitors may be susceptible to targeting for certain crimes in part because visitors may be less likely to file a police report and/or return to testify at criminal proceedings should perpetrators be apprehended by police.

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Traveling in groups of two or more appears to have a positive effect on deterring criminals.

Be aware of the street environment and avoid contact with those who may be looking for potential victims. Be alert at open markets or crowded areas. Do not walk on beaches or in parks after dark; assaults are common in these areas. If you feel unsafe, seek a safer location. Go into a store, bank or simply cross the street. Do not carry or wear valuable items that will attract attention. If you need to wear expensive jewelry or carry a camera, conceal it until you arrive at your destination. Do not physically resist any robbery. While this is a personal decision, statistics show that resistance can lead to injury/death.

Do not accept drinks from strangers and always watch your drink. Scopolamine, or a similar drug, may be added to your drink. People have woken up robbed of their valuables or sexually assaulted after accepting such a drink.

Do not answer your hotel room door until you positively confirm who is on the other side. Look out the peephole or call the front desk to confirm the visitor. Family members and household help should not allow anyone to enter the residential grounds without identification and prearranged appointments. Suspicious persons/activities in the neighborhood should be reported to the police immediately.

Many residents and visitors find that renting or purchasing a cellular phone is very useful. Cellular phones are widely available, inexpensive, and generally highly reliable, especially in the major cities.

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Be alert when at an ATM; check the ATM itself for anything unusual (card skimmer) and make sure no one is around or “shoulder surfing” for your PIN code. OSAC constituents should be aware of the heightened risk to their credit card information.

The Regional Security Office recommends that residences provide solid-core entry doors with quality deadbolts, peepholes, security grilles on all windows, adequate front/rear security lighting, and a monitored alarm system. If available or affordable, it is a good measure to have an electronic camera monitoring system for protection, detection, and deterrent.

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