



## Kenya 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Burglary; Carjacking; Kidnapping; Cyber; Religious Terrorism; Riots/Civil Unrest; Extreme heat/drought; Floods; Employee Health Safety; Counterfeiting; Intellectual Property Rights Infringement; Drug Trafficking; Bribery; Hotels

Africa > Kenya; Africa > Kenya > Nairobi

5/2/2016

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Thousands of U.S. citizens visit Kenya safely each year.

Post Crime Rating: Critical

### Crime Threats

The greatest threats continue to be road safety and crime. Violent, and sometimes fatal, criminal attacks, including home invasions, burglaries, armed carjackings, and kidnappings can occur at any time and in any location. U.S. citizens, including U.S. Embassy employees, have been victims of such crimes in 2015. In virtually every instance, criminals use weapons during commission of their crime. Criminals will not hesitate to shoot a victim who is uncooperative or who may appear to hesitate before complying with their assailant. Victims of carjacking are sometimes tied up and put in the back seat or trunk of their own car. However,

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most victims, if they are completely cooperative, are robbed of their possessions and released unharmed.

Street crime is a serious problem and more acute in Nairobi and other large cities. Most street crime involves multiple, armed assailants. In some instances, large crowds of street criminals incite criminal activity, which has the potential to escalate into mob-like violence with little notice.

Along with other crimes of opportunity, pickpockets and thieves often carry out snatch-and-grab attacks in crowded areas and from idle vehicles in traffic.

### Cybersecurity Issues

In December 2014, police arrested 77 Chinese nationals on suspicion of running a cyber crime center from homes in an upmarket area of the capital.

### Areas of Concern

Following the September 2013 terrorist attack on the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, the Department of State updated the Travel Warning for Kenya advising U.S. citizens of the risks of travel to Kenya. Since that attack, the Department of State updated the Travel Warning five times (April 4, May 15, May 17, June 19, November 10, 2015) and issued a Travel Alert on

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December 11, 2015, as conditions changed. U.S. government employees, contractors, and their dependents are prohibited from traveling to the northeastern counties of Wajir, Garissa, Mandera, and parts of the coast north of Malindi to the Kenya-Somalia border. Although these restrictions do not apply to travelers not associated with the U.S. government, U.S. citizens should take these restrictions into account when planning travel. There have been recent gains in the pursuit of those responsible for terrorist activities. Travelers should consult the Worldwide Caution on [travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov).

## Transportation-Safety Situation

### Road Safety and Road Conditions

Cars drive on the right side of the road, which poses challenges for inexperienced drivers. Road conditions range from relatively well-maintained to very poor. Within Nairobi, the main roads are relatively well-maintained, but drivers compete with pedestrians, human-propelled carts, boda-bodas (motorcycle taxis), tuk-tuks, and “matatu” public transportation mini buses, any of which may swerve or stop at a moment’s notice. Defensive driving is a must for all drivers. Traffic laws are routinely ignored by local drivers, many of whom possess poor driving skills and/or limited training. Traffic lights are limited and often ignored. Many vehicles do not meet minimal safety standards and are in poor mechanical condition with worn tires, broken/missing tail lights, brake lights, and headlights.

Accidents, while frequent, are usually not fatal, unless pedestrians or matatus are involved. Transportation accidents are commonplace largely due to poor road and vehicle conditions.

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The roads in most other major cities show signs of wear, including potholes and other obstructions. Due to challenging road conditions, U.S. government employees are advised not to drive between major cities at night. Road conditions are considered poor in most outlying or rural areas especially after the rainy seasons when roads deteriorate rapidly, causing extensive potholes and other road hazards. There is minimal medical care available, especially outside city centers. Four-wheel-drive vehicles are strongly recommended, especially for travel outside major cities.

Ensure vehicle doors and windows are locked while traveling. The best way to avoid being a victim of a carjacking is to be aware of your surroundings, particularly at night or early morning hours, though carjackings do occur during daylight hours. If you see something or someone suspicious, be prepared to act quickly. Allow sufficient distance between you and the vehicle ahead of you while stopped in traffic. If you believe you are being followed, do not drive directly to your intended destination but rather detour to a public or well-illuminated, guarded area and seek help.

## **Terrorism Threat**

Post Terrorism Rating: Critical

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

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Terrorism remains a high priority concern for Americans in Kenya. The U.S. government continues to receive information regarding potential terrorist threats aimed at U.S., Western, and Kenyan interests including in the Nairobi area and in the coastal areas, including Mombasa. Terrorist acts could include suicide operations, bomb/grenade attacks, kidnappings, attacks on civil aviation, and attacks on maritime vessels in/near Kenyan ports.

The porous border with Somalia has been of particular concern. Kenya initiated military action against al-Shabaab by crossing into Somalia on October 16, 2011, and, on June 2, 2012, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) whereby it formally joined the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Kenyan troops within AMISOM are pursuing al-Shabaab in southeastern Somalia. In response to the Kenyan intervention, al-Shabaab and its sympathizers have conducted retaliatory attacks against civilian and government targets in Kenya.

On September 21, 2013, suspected members of al-Shabaab, an al-Qai'da affiliate, attacked the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi, killing 67 Kenyan and non-Kenyan nationals and wounding hundreds more. The siege at the mall continued for several days, and five U.S. citizens were confirmed injured in the attack.

In 2015, there were more than 50 attacks, mainly in the northeastern counties of Mandera, Wajir, and Garissa as well as the coastal county of Lamu, involving shootings, grenades, or other explosive devices. The most deadly attack occurred on April 2, when al-Shabaab stormed Garissa University, killing nearly 150 students.

Other attacks during 2015 included the following:

In February, 14 al-Shabaab operatives were arrested in Nairobi in a counterterrorism operation.

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In March, al-Shabaab attacked the convoy of the Mandera county governor, killing one person and wounding three others.

On May 13, police in Garissa county came under attack by al-Shabaab. Although there were no injuries to police, at least two attackers were killed. This incident occurred near the refugee camp Dadaab.

Later in May, police again came under attack by al-Shabaab in Garissa. During this incident, five police officers were wounded by gunfire and their vehicles were burned by the terrorist group.

On June 14, al-Shabaab attacked a Kenyan Defense Force (KDF) camp near the Somali border. KDF killed 11 al-Shabaab attackers.

In December, al-Shabaab hijacked a bus traveling in Mandera, killing two people and wounding three others. During this incident, al-Shabaab attempted to separate Muslims from Christians; however, Muslim passengers helped protect Christian colleagues.

Later in December, al-Shabaab attacked a police station in El Wak, killing two police officers and injuring several others.

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

Kenya is generally a peaceful and friendly country in terms of political activism, but during elections, referendums, and other political votes sporadic campaign violence has occurred around the country. Although Kenya's last national election in March 2013 was relatively peaceful, the previous election (December 2007) resulted in widespread unrest and violence.

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Post Political Violence Rating: High

### Civil Unrest

Isolated instances of suspected political violence have occurred in some regions of the country. Strikes are fairly routine. Violence, ranging from rock throwing to police using deadly force, associated with demonstrations has occurred around the country. U.S. citizens are advised to check conditions and monitor local media reports before traveling to these areas. U.S. citizens should avoid demonstrations and political rallies of all kinds.

Rioting occurred in Mombasa in November 2014 shortly after a local Muslim cleric was killed in a drive-by shooting, resulting in random retaliatory killings.

On December 16, 2015, unknown gunman attacked a truck near Mpeketoni (Lamu county), killing one person. A police vehicle that responded to the scene subsequently went missing.

Villagers in rural areas are sometimes suspicious of strangers. There have been several incidents of violence against Kenyan and foreign adults in rural areas who are suspected of stealing children. U.S. visitors to rural areas should be aware that close contact with children, including taking their pictures or giving them candy, can be viewed with deep alarm and may provoke panic and violence.

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## Religious/Ethnic Violence

Tribal violence is common. In December 2015, ethnic clashes in Narok county resulted in the displacement of several hundred families due to arson. While this violence is not directed at foreigners, ethnic clashes are unpredictable, U.S. citizens are advised to check conditions and monitor local media reports before traveling to these areas.

## Post-specific Concerns

### Environmental Hazards

Flooding and drought are the most common environmental hazards. During Kenya's rainy seasons, flooding can occur with little/no warning that could disturb transportation routes and communication. Embassy personnel are encouraged to keep a supply of water and food in their homes, as supplies can become scarce quickly during emergencies.

### Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Building construction accidents are common. Open source media credited over 300 deaths

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since 2009 to building collapses.

### Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

Counterfeiting and trademark infringement is widespread and represents a major concern for local and international business. One study put the value of Kenya's counterfeit trade at Kenyan Shilling (Ksh) 70 billion (about US\$805 million). Anecdotally, the counterfeit trade is thought to be linked to organized criminal elements in Kenya and Somalia. To address this issue, the government passed the Anti-Counterfeit Act in 2008, which criminalized trade in counterfeits and established the Anti-Counterfeit Agency (ACA), based in Mombasa, to enforce the new regulations. The ACA opened in 2010 but has not received funding to do its job effectively. The Embassy is actively engaged with ACA and has supported extensive outreach efforts to law enforcement, local government officials, community leaders, and youth around the country. The American Chamber of Commerce, Kenya Private Sector Alliance, and Kenya Association of Manufacturers are also engaged on this issue.

### Personnel-Background Concerns

Adoptive parents traveling with their adopted child should exercise particular caution and are urged to carry complete copies of their adoption paperwork with them.

### Drug-related Crimes

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Kenya is a transit country for illegal narcotics. Drug trafficking is often supported with other transnational organized crime (money laundering, weapons trafficking). In 2014-15, the DEA formal vetted unit has successfully initiated a U.S. -led and Kenyan government-supported investigations program. One of the most notable successes was the April 2015 seizure of 1,032 kilograms of heroin off the Kenyan coast.

## Kidnapping Threat

On April 23, 2014, gunmen ambushed a convoy vehicle and attempted to kidnap an international humanitarian staff member at the Dadaab refugee complex. While the kidnapping attempt was unsuccessful, one national staff member was injured in the attack.

In October 2015, a Kenyan NGO worker was kidnapped from Dadaab refugee camp. She was rescued several days later by a Kenyan-led operation in Somalia.

Although the majority of kidnappings occur near the Somalia border and are related to extremists or pirates, the threat of kidnapping for ransom from criminal gangs also remains a threat throughout the country.

## Police Response

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The Kenyan Police Service response has improved following the attacks in Garissa and Westgate. Kenya successfully hosted the Global Entrepreneurial Summit, the World Trade Organization and visits by President Barack Obama and Pope Francis in 2015.

Police often lack equipment, resources, training, and personnel to respond to calls for assistance or other emergencies. The likelihood of the police responding to an incident sometimes depends on availability of personnel and fuel for police vehicles. Police often have lack of resources and training in solving serious crimes. Weaknesses in the judicial system contribute to slow prosecutions and large numbers of acquittals. Corruption at all levels erodes the effectiveness of the legal and justice system.

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

The Embassy has received reports of police harassment, primarily in the form of solicitation for bribes related to traffic stops. RSO recommends not paying any bribes and reporting incidents to the Consulate's American Citizen Services immediately. Harassment is not uncommon but is typically related to bribe requests. In the event of police detention, contact the Embassy or Consular Section immediately.

Embassy Nairobi Switchboard: +254-20-363-6000

Consular Section/American Citizen Services: +254-020-363-6451 (M-TH:0800-1600Fri: 0800-1200)

American Citizen Services Email: [Kenya\\_ACS@state.gov](mailto:Kenya_ACS@state.gov)

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## Crime Victim Assistance

Nairobi Area Control Room: +254-020-272-4154; +254-020-355-6771

Diplomatic Police Hotlines: +254-0708-589-522; +254-0731-170-666

Police Headquarters: +254-020-342-305; +254-020-341-411

## Police/Security Agencies

The Kenya Police Service (KPS) is the national agency in charge of law enforcement, to include city and county police divisions. The KPS is headquartered at local police stations. All these elements report to the National Kenya Police Headquarters in Nairobi.

Although there are a number of security and private guard companies throughout Kenya's larger cities, it is advisable to research any prospective security company for quality and reliability when considering hiring their services.

## Medical Emergencies

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Kenya's countrywide emergency number is 999. The blood supply is generally considered unsafe, and the use of blood products is not recommended. It is advised that those needing blood utilize trusted sources (family, friends).

#### Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

There are three hospitals in Nairobi that U.S. personnel and other Western expatriates typically use. The quality of care at each is considered good, and U.S. Embassy personnel assigned to Kenya often uses their services.

##### Nairobi Hospital

Tel: +254-20-284-5000/6000/5506/7/8, +254722 204114/5/6/7; +254 733 639301/2/3/4

##### Aga Khan Hospital

Tel: +254-20-366-2025/3740000/3662000/3750290/3661000; +254 711 092000; +254 732 102000

Aga Khan Hospital tests their blood supply for infectious diseases, Hepatitis A, B, C and HIV.

##### Gertrude Garden Children's Hospital

Tel: +254-20-376-3474/244 5350; 720 6000; +254 722898948; +254 733639444

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## Recommended Air Ambulance Services

AMREF (The Flying Doctors Service)

Wilson Airport

Langatta Road, P.O. 18617 -00500, Nairobi, Kenya

Tel: +254-20-699-2000; 699 2299; +254 733639088; +254 722314239

## 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/kenya.htm>

## OSAC Country Council Information

RSO Nairobi has an OSAC Country Council that meets on a quarterly basis. The RSO POC is Deputy Regional Security Officer Karen Brown Cleveland, +254-20-363-6301. To reach OSAC's Africa team, please email [OSACAF@state.gov](mailto:OSACAF@state.gov).

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## U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

### Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

The U.S Embassy is located on United Nations Avenue, Gigiri, Nairobi, Kenya.

The Consulate's American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit requires an appointment for all non-emergency services. Appointments can be made online: <https://evisaforms.state.gov/acs/default.asp?postcode=NRB&appcode=1>. Public hours are Mon-Thur from 8:00 AM-4:00 PM and Fri from 8:00 AM-12:00 PM. ACS is closed to the public the last Wednesday of every month and all Kenyan and American holidays.

### Embassy Contact Numbers

Embassy Nairobi 24 Hr. Switchboard: +254-20-363-6000

Consular Section/American Citizen Services: +254-020-363-6451 (M-TH: 0800-1600 Fri: 0800-1200)

American Citizen Services Email: [Kenya\\_ACS@state.gov](mailto:Kenya_ACS@state.gov)

Regional Security Office: +254-20-363-6301

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

## Embassy Guidance

The Embassy operates a warden system to communicate with registered American citizens in Nairobi. Periodic messages are sent to test the system so that it will be effective should an emergency situation arise. To register your stay in Nairobi and ensure that you receive warden messages in an emergency, please register at: <https://step.state.gov/step/>

## Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

### Situational Awareness Best Practices

U.S. citizens should be extremely vigilant with regard to their personal security, particularly in public places frequented by foreigners (clubs, hotels, resorts, upscale shopping centers, restaurants, places of worship). U.S. citizens should also remain alert in residential areas, at schools, and at outdoor recreational events.

Normal crime prevention methods will help lessen the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime while in Kenya. Walking alone is not advisable especially in downtown, public parks, beach areas, and other poorly illuminated areas particularly at night. Being aware of one's surroundings has been a time-tested method for avoiding becoming a target of opportunity for

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crime. Carjackings, burglaries, and home invasions are the most serious crimes, but if measures are taken, they can generally be avoided. Resistive behavior causes more violence by the attackers.

Visitors are advised not to carry expensive valuables on their person, but rather store them in their hotel safety deposit boxes or room safes. However, hotel safes can be broken into or carried out of a room. These safes may also be accessible by hotel personnel even when locked. It is important to limit the amount of debit/credit cards you carry. Should a victim be carrying ATM or credit cards, a criminal may prolong the incident so they can take the victim to multiple ATMs, even keeping overnight for additional withdrawals.

Travelers should only use banks and ATMs in well-illuminated locations and never at night. Credit cards can be used in certain establishments (major hotel chains, some local restaurants) but caution is advised. One should check statements shortly after all transactions, as the Embassy often receives reports of credit card skimming.

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