



Guyana 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Hotels; Murder; Elections; Floods; Employee Health Safety; Rape/Sexual Violence; Hate Crimes; Counterfeiting; Drug Trafficking; Bribery; Disease Outbreak; Burglary

Western Hemisphere > Guyana; Western Hemisphere > Guyana > Georgetown

5/4/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Guyana is a developing nation of 750,000 with a history of sustained high emigration primarily to other Caribbean countries, the U.S., UK, and Canada. Each year, approximately 5,000-6,000 Guyanese legally emigrate to the U.S. Estimates for the number of people in the U.S. of Guyanese descent are as high as 1.4 million people. Although the country markets a few eco-resorts in its rugged interior, the vast majority of annual visitors are of Guyanese descent, and few hotels exist outside Georgetown. Large swaths of the interior can only be reached by plane or boat and are characterized by a general lack of credible law enforcement.

Post Crime Rating: Critical

Crime Threats

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The general crime rate is above the U.S. national average. Criminal activity continues to be a major issue, particularly crimes against people and property. Foreigners in general are viewed as targets of opportunity but are not specifically targeted. Most violent crimes against foreigners have occurred in the capital. However, there have been incidents of violent crimes committed in other parts of the country.

In 2015, local media reports indicated increased levels of criminal activity throughout Guyana. However, an independent review of documented criminal activity from 2013-2015 indicated that while press reporting of crime was clearly up dramatically, the increase in most categories was in single digits for 2014- 2015. In addition, 2015 statistics were overall well below the levels for 2013.

Hotel room break-ins were reported to the U.S. Embassy by American citizens during 2013.

Serious crimes (murder, armed robbery) are common. The most recent information from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime lists Guyana's 2012 homicide rate as 17 per 100,000 people -- the fourth highest murder rate in South America behind Venezuela, Colombia, and Brazil. Guyana's murder rate is almost four times higher than that of the U.S.

Armed robberies occur regularly, especially in businesses and shopping districts. Armed robberies of business/patron establishments do occur in Georgetown. Criminals are often organized, travel in groups of two or more, and conduct surveillance on their victims. Periodically, there are reports of robberies/attacks on American citizens and, at times, in areas frequented by expatriates. The local media reported a total of 140 armed robbery incidents in 2015, but it is likely that many incidents go unreported.

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Criminals regularly use weapons, despite a rigorous licensing requirement for the average person to own firearms. Handguns, knives, machetes, or "cutlasses" tend to be the weapons of choice. Criminals generally will not hesitate to show multiple weapons as an intimidation tactic during a robbery. Criminals may act brazenly, and police officers have been both victims and perpetrators of assaults and shootings.

Cybersecurity Issues

Cybercrime is not a major concern. Use of computers by the local population is low, and the level of sophistication with computers is also low.

Other Areas of Concern

There have been reports of criminal incidents in the vicinities of the major hotels used by tourists and U.S. government employees.

Transportation-Safety Situation

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Road Safety and Road Conditions

Road conditions and road safety standards are below U.S. standards. Road and driving conditions are poor. Roads are rarely maintained. Traffic enforcement is rare to non-existent, and local drivers often drive recklessly. Stop signs and traffic signals are often ignored. Drivers should remain very cognizant of other cars, large commercial vehicles, mini-buses, horse-drawn carts, bicycles, mopeds, scooters, motorcycles, stray dogs, sleeping animals, free range livestock, and pedestrians, as they all share narrow, poorly maintained roads, and most roads have no sidewalks. A combination of very aggressive drivers, along with inexperienced, timid drivers makes driving especially dangerous. Driving at unsafe speeds, reckless driving, tailgating, cutting across lanes, stopping quickly without signaling, passing at intersections, and passing on crowded streets are commonplace. Driving at night poses additional concerns due to poor street lighting and road conditions, drivers not lowering high beam lights, livestock, and pedestrians congregating by the roadside.

Vehicle accidents are very common, and accidents involving pedestrians are also very common. Traffic accidents are a major concern in Georgetown, with speeding and driving under the influence of alcohol as contributing factors.

The law requires persons involved in a traffic accident to remain at the scene until the police arrive to take a report. U.S. citizens should consider their safety in deciding whether to remain at an accident scene or to proceed to a police station. Guyana does not have trained medical personnel who routinely respond to accidents.

Vehicle thefts do occur, and vehicle occupants should keep their doors locked, never leaving

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items in plain sight, and be aware of their surroundings.

Public Transportation Conditions

The use of public transportation (mini-buses) by visitors is highly discouraged. The use of reputable taxis, such as those offered through the major hotels and tourist agencies, is preferable, as they are usually safer, more reliable, and affordable.

Other Travel Conditions

There are a number of tour organizations that arrange travel throughout the country, with varying degrees of service. None are deemed off-limits. Travel to the interior of the country requires planning and caution; travelers wishing to visit the interior are advised to make use of well-established tour companies for safer experiences. Medical and law enforcement resources in many interior locations are significantly less than what is available in the capital. There have been reports of tourists and foreigners being robbed while traveling in the countryside, and there are occasional reports of bandits on rural roads and piracy on the local rivers.

Terrorism Threat

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Post Terrorism Rating: Medium

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

There is no specific threat information concerning the presence of local, regional, and/or international terrorist groups in the country. Likewise, there is no specific threat information concerning U.S. private sector organizations in Guyana.

There are no known indigenous terrorist organizations, and Guyana is not a known base of support or sympathy for terrorists. While Guyana has experienced no terrorist incidents in the last decade, all visitors should be familiar with the contents of the Department of State's periodic worldwide cautionary statement. This statement expresses the Department's concern about continued threat of attacks, demonstrations, and other violent actions against American citizens and American interests abroad.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

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

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

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Although Guyana has ongoing border disputes with Venezuela and Suriname, Guyana is not engaged in any armed hostilities. The U.S. Embassy does not anticipate violence resulting from existing territorial or political controversies with neighboring countries. Guyana is pursuing a diplomatic resolution to its border controversies.

Since 1992, elections have been deemed generally free and fair by domestic and international observer groups. U.S. companies and individuals have not been singled out as targets of politically-motivated violence. National elections in 2011 and 2015 were mostly peaceful. In May 2015, Guyana held peaceful national elections. Local government elections are scheduled for March 2016.

Post Political Violence Rating: Medium

Civil Unrest

Minor protests and demonstrations have sometimes followed announcement of the election results.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

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Guyana is a multi-cultural country. Ethnic groups, consisting mainly of people of East Indian and African descent and Amerindian groups, coexist peacefully. Political differences tend to run along racial divisions. Racially-charged statements made by prominent figures, particularly around elections, have been publicly rejected by broad based civil and religious groups. Ethnic and religious diversity have not been directly linked to incidents of violence in recent years.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

There are two main rainy seasons in Guyana (December-January and May-July). However, throughout the year, heavy rains are possible, and flash flooding can occur. The coastal plain floods occasionally. Serious flooding occurred in greater Georgetown and along the East Coast in January 2005, causing significant damage. There has also been isolated flooding on the East Coast in each of the past several years.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Guyana has adopted a low carbon development strategy. There are few large-scale industrial activities other than the state-controlled rice and sugar production. There has been increased

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activity in the mining and petroleum sectors. Despite the increase of industrial activities, there has been no recent reporting of large scale accidents related to these sectors.

Privacy Concerns

There are privacy laws that govern the release of personal information, but they are not regularly enforced.

Personnel Background Concerns

Violence against women, particularly in a domestic context is a pervasive problem.

Hate-related crimes rarely occur, though some U.S. citizens have reported being the target of comments or actions because of their nationality or race. There have been isolated incidents of violence that appear to be associated with sexual preference or identity.

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

There is an abundance of pirated merchandise readily available from street vendors.

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Drug-related Crimes

Drug trafficking is a serious concern and poses the biggest challenge to law enforcement in Georgetown. Airport security and customs officials frequently detain and arrest individuals attempting to smuggle drugs to the U.S. or other destinations. Apprehensions of drug "mules," often U.S. citizens perceived to be able to travel easily with their U.S. passport, have increased in 2015. In August 2014, a 62-foot Self-Propelled Semi-Submersible (SPSS) vessel was discovered in the sparsely populated northwestern corner of Guyana near the Venezuelan border. The discovery underscores the extent of narcotics organizations' activities in Guyana.

Police Response

The Guyana Police Force (GPF) has resource and manpower limitations that inhibit its ability to deter or respond to criminal activity. Even on the occasions when the GPF responds to a crime scene, victims are asked to go to the nearest police station to file a report and complete other investigative formalities. Confidence in the GPF is low due to the public's perception of heavy handedness, ineffectiveness, and corruption.

Corruption is widely perceived to be commonplace within the police and other government agencies. Police officers often are reportedly paid off by criminal elements and are alleged to work with the criminals by either assisting or protecting them. The judicial system is strained by limited resources and often influenced by threats/bribes. Defendants linked to drug

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organization often use attorneys who are effective in getting cases dismissed or postponed. As a result, criminals go free on a regular basis.

911 is the emergency telephone number for police, fire, and rescue. The fire department generally provides a timely response, while police response, especially during the night, is less dependable. The police response to emergency calls is often slow (15 minutes or longer) or not at all.

Crime Victim Assistance

Americans who become victims of crime are advised to contact American Citizen Services (ACS) at 011-592-225-4900 x4222 or the U.S. Embassy Duty Officer after hours at 011-592-623-1992. Non-emergency email contact is: acsgeorge@state.gov.

Medical Emergencies

Medical care is not equal to U.S. standards. Care is available for minor medical conditions, although quality of care is inconsistent. Emergency care and hospitalizations for major medical illnesses or surgery are very limited due to the lack of appropriately trained specialists, below standard in-hospital care, and poor sanitation.

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Emergency medical services can be contacted by calling 913 for an ambulance from Georgetown Public Hospital, but this number is not always operational, and an ambulance may not be available. There are very few public ambulances. Ambulances generally do not have medical personnel or equipment on board to provide adequate medical care. Generally, ambulance service is limited to transportation and is frequently not available for emergencies. People injured in accidents are often transported by taxi.

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

MINOR INJURIES AND ILLNESS

Dr. Balwant Singh Hospital

314 East Street, South Cummingsburg

Tel : 226-5783, 226-4279

St. Joseph Mercy Hospital (Best for Pediatrician)

130 Parade Street, Kingston, Georgetown

Tel: 227-2072/3 or A&E 226-1592

MAJOR TRAUMA CASES & RESPIRATORY EMERGENCIES

Georgetown Public Hospital

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New Market Street, Georgetown

Tel: 225-3361

PEDIATRICIAN

St. Joseph Mercy Hospital

130 Parade Street, Kingston, Georgetown

Walk-in: Mon-Fri 0900-1300 hours

App: Tue, Wed, Thur. 1215-1400 hours

Kindly phone to discuss appointments

Office: 225-7865

Emergency: 624-6161

Woodlands Hospital

110 Carmichael Street Carmichael St., Georgetown, Guyana

Tel: 226-2024, 223-7023, 231-7024, 225-4050, 227-0355

EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION

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WOODLANDS HOSPITAL: 110 Carmichael Street Carmichael St., Georgetown: Tel. 226-6000, 615-2000 with a full time ACLS trained nurse on board, fee of G\$6000 within Georgetown. Outside of Georgetown cost depends on location.

DAVIS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL: 121 Durban Backlands, Georgetown: Tel. 227-2041-4. Ambulance Drivers 592-654-9667 and 592-644-5331, 24 hours service: Private Ambulance equipped with basic First Aid Equipment. Driver/Attendant with EMT skills training, a fee is required. Georgetown area costs \$5,800.00. Outside of Georgetown cost depends on location.

MMC SECURITY SERVICE: 95 Happy Acres, East Coast Demerara: Tel. 220-6866 or 220-6685 or 220-6841 or 220-5416. Private, 24 hour Service. Transport vehicle only, no EMT skills.

ST. JOSEPH MERCY HOSPITAL: 130 Parade Street, Kingston, Georgetown. Tel: 227-2072 ext. 2 or 654-9667. Private, 24 hour service. Driver/Attendant with EMT skills training, a fee is required. Georgetown area costs \$6000.00. Outside of Georgetown cost depends on location.

GEORGETOWN PUBLIC HOSPITAL: New Market Street, Georgetown: Ambulance: Tel. 226-9449 or 225-3361. In cases of serious emergencies an ACLS trained nurse would accompany the ambulance driver otherwise, a transport vehicle. A fee is required if you are going to a private hospital but no cost if you are going to the Georgetown Public Hospital.

Available Air Ambulance Services

International SOS

Philadelphia Office: 3600 Horizon Blvd, Suite 300, Philadelphia, PA 19053

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Tel: 1-215-942-8000 or 8226

Fax: 1-215-942-2338

email: phlopsmed@internationalsos.com

Tricare Emergency (For Military Personnel)

Contact: 1-800-834-5514

Call collect: 215-701-2800

FAX: 215-354-2338

e-mail: tricarephl@internationalsos.com

National Capital Poison Center

Contact: 1-800-222-1222 or 202-625-3333

Recommended Insurance Posture

Serious illnesses/injuries often require travelers to be medically evacuated where adequate medical attention is available. Such "medevac" services are very expensive and are generally available only to travelers who either have travel insurance that covers medevac services or who are able to pay for the service in advance. The cost for medical evacuation may range from U.S.\$40,000 to \$200,000.

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Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

Visitors are advised to bring prescription medicine sufficient for their length of stay and should be aware that Guyana's humid climate may affect some medicines. Some prescription medicines (mainly generic) are available. For more information, please refer to OSAC's Report, "Traveling with Medications."

Mosquito-borne viral infection is a significant health risk. Such infections include: chikungunya, dengue fever, yellow fever, malaria, and Zika. While chikungunya and dengue fever have become endemic, yellow fever and malaria are more prevalent in the interior. Personnel traveling to regions one, seven, eight, nine, and ten are advised to use malaria prophylaxis. All U.S. government personnel are advised to obtain yellow fever vaccination prior to travel. There are no prophylactic therapies for dengue and chikungunya. On January 15, 2016, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued a Level 2 travel alert for countries affected by the Zika virus. Zika is a mosquito-borne virus that causes 'flu-like' symptoms (fever, headache, joint pain, rash) for two to seven days. Latin America and the Caribbean are the newest regions affected by the Zika virus. More information can be found on the CDC website (<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>). Because of concerns about an association of Zika virus infection during pregnancy with microcephaly, a congenital brain deformity, the travel alert recommends pregnant women and those who may become pregnant avoid unnecessary travel to the region or take special precautions. The most prudent strategy is to prevent mosquito bites through repellents, treated bed nets, window screens, and air-conditioning.

Incidences of water-borne diseases increase during periods of flooding. Only bottled or purified water should be consumed, and special precautions should be taken when eating

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fruits and vegetables, especially during the rainy seasons.

Leptospirosis, while not common, is a viral infection spread via rodent droppings and waste. Given the limitations of the sanitation system, one should exercise caution including vigilant hand washing after outdoor contact and vaccination of pets that may contract the disease from food bowls and other exposed surfaces where rodents may traverse.

Special attention should be paid to HIV/AIDS. In addition to elevated infection rates among high-risk populations (commercial sex workers, men who have sex with men, and mobile populations (miners, loggers)), data from the World Health Organization shows that Guyana has among the highest prevalence rates in Latin America and the Caribbean.

For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at: http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/guyana?s_cid=ncezid-dgmaq-travel-double-001.

OSAC Country Council Information

U.S. Embassy Georgetown launched an OSAC Country Council in 2009. The Regional Security Office (RSO) provides country briefings for representatives of American businesses when requested. For information on joining the OSAC Country Council in Georgetown, attending Country Council meetings, or adding your organization to our electronic mailing list for security information, please contact the RSO by calling 011-592-225-4900 ext: 4243 or

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email at GeorgetownRSO@state.gov.

Further information on OSAC Country Councils can be obtained by visiting <http://www.osac.gov> or by contacting the Overseas Security Advisory Council in Washington D.C. at 571-345-2223. To reach OSAC's Western Hemisphere team, please email OSACWHA@state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

The U.S. Embassy is located at 100 Young and Duke Streets, Kingston, Georgetown.

Embassy Contact Numbers

The American Citizen Services (ACS) Section can be contacted at 011-592-225-4900 x4222.

The Regional Security Office (RSO) number is 011-592-225-4900 ext: 4243.

After regular business hours and on weekends the Embassy Duty Officer can be reached at 011-592-623-1992.

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

Embassy Guidance

The Embassy operates a warden system to communicate with registered American citizens. To register your stay and ensure that you receive warden messages in an emergency, please visit the STEP website at: <https://step.state.gov/step/>. Consular information can also be found on the Embassy Georgetown website at <http://georgetown.usembassy.gov/service.html>.

The U.S. Department of State's Consular Information Sheet for Georgetown provides additional information at <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/guyana.html>.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

All Americans are reminded to be aware of their surroundings, consider security issues when planning activities, and monitor local/international news broadcasts for events that may impact on the local security situation.

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Foreigners are very visible in public and should take precautions when visiting downtown areas. Visitors should avoid wearing expensive jewelry, displaying large sums of cash in public, or otherwise appearing ostentatious. If confronted by an armed criminal, do not argue or attempt to confront him/her. Quickly relinquish your valuables and do not resist, unless you believe your life is in imminent danger.

Visitors are advised to change currency only at legitimate exchanges at hotels or airports. Visitors are strongly discouraged from exchanging currency on the street, as this is a dangerous practice.

Walking alone outside after dark, even in the immediate vicinity of hotels, is not recommended. After dark, it is highly advisable not to walk or bike.

Residential burglaries are less common when homes have guards who pose a deterrent to would-be thieves.

Travelers should use caution when opening their hotel room doors and should safeguard valuables left in hotel rooms.

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