



Albania 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Disease Outbreak; Employee Health Safety; Theft; Drug Trafficking; Burglary; Rape/Sexual Violence; IEDs; Religious Terrorism; Riots/Civil Unrest

Europe > Albania; Europe > Albania > Tirana

5/10/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: High

Crime Threats

Although crime continues to remain a concern for most Albanians, violent crime has seen a continual decrease during the last five years. Recent crime statistics indicate a decrease in violent crimes (murder, attempted murder, robberies by force, armed robberies). Police and security forces continue to achieve success in combating illegal weapons and drug trade, but organized criminal groups still operate. While organized crime remains a serious problem, violence related to it rarely affects the international community.

Street crime is fairly common in urban areas, predominantly at night. The most notable increase in crime has been burglaries, theft, and domestic violence claims. The previous increasing trend of the use of explosives, particularly remotely-detonated explosives placed in

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vehicles and at private residences, has declined but is still alarmingly high with several explosions in 2015. These appear to target specific individuals and to be related to internal disputes over business, criminal, or political activity and have not targeted the international community.

Other Areas of Concern

In southern Albania, the area of Lazarat in Gjirokaster District was one of the largest marijuana producing regions in Europe. The security situation has improved in Lazarat; however, the Embassy prohibits personal travel to the area, and visitors are strongly discouraged as well.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Driving can be one of the most dangerous aspects of living and working in Albania. The government has begun stricter enforcement of traffic rules and has started a large-scale information campaign attempting to get drivers to obey traffic laws. While the number of traffic accidents significantly decreased in 2015, Albania still has one of the highest accidents to vehicle ratios in Europe. Road conditions are poor, especially in rural areas. Street lighting is limited and susceptible to power interruptions. The government has undertaken large-scale road improvement projects, and while this has improved several major roadways, the work can be unpredictable and a lack of adequate signage can lead to dangerous driving conditions

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and confused drivers. Some intersections lack traffic signals and stop signs, contributing to often erratic driving patterns.

Public Transportation Conditions

Public transportation options are limited and not generally recommended for visitors. However, marked taxis are considered safe and recommended for use.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Medium

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

A growing concern in Albania and the Balkan region is the increased threat posed by foreign fighters traveling to Syria and returning to the region. Ethnic Albanians from Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Albania are known to have traveled to Syria and Iraq to fight. In 2014, Albanian State Police acted against a Syrian fighter recruitment ring, resulting in the arrest of nine people for "Inciting Acts of Terrorism." Two of the arrestees were imams at mosques on the outskirts of Tirana who teach an extreme version of Islam. Additionally, Albania's parliament passed a series of statutes to Albania's Criminal Code aimed primarily at

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strengthening the government's ability to address the problem of Albanian citizens who travel to fight outside the country in places such as Syria and Iraq.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: Medium

Civil Unrest

Demonstrations and political protests are common. The protests are generally peaceful but have resulted in violence. The demonstrations vary in size from several hundred to several thousand participants and frequently disrupt traffic. Protest organizers are required to apply for a permit from the police prior to any activity. The police closely monitor demonstrations and take appropriate measures.

Post-specific Concerns

Drug-related Crimes

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In 2015, a large scale anti-drug initiative by law enforcement resulted in major seizures of marijuana and several arrests in Lazarat.

Police Response

The government is making a concerted effort to improve the country's law enforcement and reduce corruption and has improved the country's law enforcement and security institutions in the last few years. Police have a visible presence throughout Tirana and other larger cities. However, their response is often delayed due to limited resources and manpower. However, police tend to respond more rapidly when contacted by members of the international community. One concern regarding police performance is their low salaries and the resulting potential for corruption. Regardless, law enforcement capabilities continue to improve, especially in the areas of counter-narcotics and organized crime training.

Crime Victim Assistance

The police emergency number is 129, though response times vary. The government is implementing a plan to place English-speaking officers in a number of accessible police stations throughout Tirana to facilitate communication with foreigners in the event of an emergency.

Medical Emergencies

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Healthcare is a serious problem in Albania; medical care beyond first aid is limited, and emergency medical service (EMS) is virtually non-existent. There are no trauma hospitals outside of Tirana. Individuals under continuing medical supervision should consult their physician prior to travel. Additional information is available here:
<http://tirana.usembassy.gov/medical-information.html#medpers>

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

ABC Clinic

Rr. Qemal Stafa, No.260

Tel: +355-04-223-4105, +355-068-260-0405

Private Hospitals

Hygeia Hospital

Address: Km 01 of the Second road of Tirana-Durres Highway, Tirana, Albania

Tel: +355-04-238-0640, +355-04-239-0000

<http://www.hygeia.al>

German Hospital (Cardiac Specialty)

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Address: Rr. Nikolla Lena / Rr.e Kavajes

Tel: +355 (0) 422 74 577, +355 (0) 422 58930

FAX: +355 (0) 422 71 747

www.german-hospital-tirana.com

E-mail: info@spitaligjerman.com ; heart-centre@spitaligjerman.com

American Hospital

Address: American Hospital, at Military Hospital, Laprake, Tirane

Tel: +355- 04-235-7535; +355-04-235-7011

<http://www.spitaliamerikan.com/al/index.php>

Public Hospitals:

University Hospital Center "Mother Teresa"

Military Hospital (National Trauma Center)

Recommended Insurance Posture

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All visitors are recommended to obtain medical evacuation insurance prior to traveling and should bring a sufficient supply of any required medications. For more information, please refer to OSAC's Report, "Traveling with Medications."

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

Visitors are advised to drink only bottled water, as local tap water is not purified to U.S. standards.

Visitors are recommended to be inoculated against Hepatitis A and B and to receive other vaccinations as a precaution. If travelers are involved in outdoor activities in remote areas or are planning to work with wild animals, it is advised to be inoculated against rabies.

For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/albania>.

OSAC Country Council Information

The Embassy has an active OSAC Country Council. Please contact RSO Jorge I. Conrado at ConradoJI@state.gov for more information. To reach OSAC's Europe team, please email OSACEUR@state.gov.

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U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Embassy Tirana is located at Rruga Elbasanit 103 in Tirana.

Normal operation hours are Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Some sections and agencies may differ. U.S. Embassy Tirana is closed on Saturday, Sunday, and on American and Albanian holidays.

Embassy Contact Numbers

Main phone +355 (0)4 2247 285

After hours emergency +355 (0)4 224 7285 thru 89.

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

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Embassy Guidance

Prior to travel, U.S. citizens visiting Albania should register with the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at <https://step.state.gov/step/>. Travelers can obtain updated travel information at the Embassy's website or via the Department's Country-Specific Information sheet at:
<http://www.travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/albania.html>

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Individuals should use normal security precautions, including maintaining a low profile, being aware of surroundings, and traveling in groups whenever possible. Visitors are advised to comply with demands if confronted by assailants. Individuals are also encouraged to avoid traveling at night between cities because of the risk of automobile accidents and to avoid any demonstration or protest activity.

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