Sweden 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Cyber; Fraud; Winter weather; Religious Terrorism; Riots/Civil Unrest; Floods; Wildfires; Hate Crimes; Drug Trafficking

Europe > Sweden; Europe > Sweden > Stockholm

5/13/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Low

Crime Threats

The general crime rate in Sweden is below the U.S. national average; however, the notion that foreign travelers are immune to crime is a common misconception. The prevalent rate of crime in major urban areas shows travelers are actually more susceptible to certain types of crime (thefts) than national criminal statistics would indicate. Sweden’s geographic locale and climate affect crime rates, as crime tends to increase acutely in summer months when tourism, empty residences, and diminished police resources contribute to a spike in theft during extended daylight.

According to official statistics, 2015 saw an four percent increase in reported crimes compared to 2014. The categories of crimes that reported the highest increases were
vandalism and computer-based fraud. 2015 saw a slight decrease in thefts, sex offenses, and traffic crimes. In 2015, car thefts and thefts from vehicles increased one percent from the previous year for a total number of 67,400 reported crimes. The homicide rate in 2015 remained relatively unchanged from 2014 with approximately 90 reported cases. The country is not immune to random acts of violence.

On August 10, 2015, two individuals were stabbed to death in an IKEA store in Västerås. On October 22, 2015, a 21-year-old man attacked and killed three individuals in a school in Trollhättan (the perpetrator was shot and killed by police).

Criminal networks from neighboring Schengen countries can impact the nature of criminal activity in Sweden, but it is unknown exactly how much influence these networks have. Organized criminal activity is driven by low-level organized criminal groups, many associated with larger motorcycle gangs and organized crime elements from Eastern Europe. Small businesses have reported extortion; however, larger, international companies and franchises have not reported being targeted. Between January-August 2015, Malmö experienced 31 grenade attacks, which resulted in no deaths and minor injuries to a few individuals, that police attributed to conflicts between organized crime elements. Police made a concerted effort to stop grenade attacks, and none have been reported since then.

Cybersecurity Issues

The four percent rise in the crime rate in 2015 is greatly attributed to the rise in computer-based fraud.
Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Sweden has excellent transportation infrastructure. Driving is on the right side of the road (driver is on the left side of the vehicle). Sweden has a zero tolerance policy for drinking and driving; it is illegal to drive after one drink. Drivers in the winter should ensure they have proper winter tires and emergency roadside kits. Pedestrians have priority at crosswalks. Headlights must be on at all times, but dim them when meeting another car. Right turns on red are prohibited. Do not use your horn unnecessarily. Trams always have priority in cities. Driving on shoulder is permitted in order to allow faster cars to pass (on highways).

Seat belts are mandatory for all passengers. Infant seats should be used for children up to 9 months old. Rear-facing car seats are for children from 9 months to 4 years. Child/booster seats are required up to age 10 or 140cm (about 4'6""). Cushion/booster seats with seatbelt are for children up to 10 years old.

Travelers should avoid parking cars in poorly illuminated areas overnight and should use parking garages when possible. Travelers should avoid leaving valuables in plain sight. Travelers should consider using anti-theft devices to lock the steering wheel and brake mechanism.
Many vehicular accidents involve wild animals. Watch for road signs indicating wild animals (usually moose or deer).

Public Transportation Conditions

Stockholm has an excellent public transportation system of buses, subway (T-Bana), and commuter trains (Pendeltåg, Lidingöbanan). The Storstockholms Lokaltrafik (SL) operates both the bus and subway systems, and their tickets are interchangeable. The system is divided into zones, and the ticket price will increase for each border you cross (except for monthly card holder for whom there are unlimited zones). There are several ticket options for public transportation. The SL website (www.sl.se) provides detailed information in English.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Medium

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

Sweden’s political engagement abroad has not cultivated homegrown domestic terrorist groups with a clear mandate/agenda to target Swedish infrastructure or government. However, the U.S. Embassy recognizes the possibility that unaffiliated/autonomous groups...
may conduct terrorist attacks.

The Schengen enlargement, which in December 2008 opened EU borders to the Baltic states, expanded the open border area with Belarus and Russia by 1,800 kilometers. Sweden has seen a rise in the number of asylum seekers entering their country. The Swedish Migration Agency estimated that the country would receive between 160,000-190,000 asylum seekers in 2015, the highest per capita in the EU. In November 2015, Sweden began temporary internal border controls in response to massive immigration flows.

In December 2010, a busy commercial district of Stockholm experienced its first reported suicide bombing. The bomber activated his devices prematurely and killed only himself.

In September 2011, four men were arrested by the Swedish Security Service for plotting to murder artist Lars Vilks.

The Swedish Security Service (SÄPO) is concerned with rapidly increasing numbers of foreign terrorist fighters who have left Sweden to join violent extremist groups in Syria. Of the 280 individuals who traveled, some 40 were killed in action, 125 remain in country, and 115 returned to Sweden. Thirty-five of the foreign fighters were females.

On November 18, 2015, SÄPO raised the national alert level to “four,” just below the highest level, indicating a real threat from a serious perpetrator with means to carry out an attack. This is the first time in modern history that Sweden has had a Level Four alert.
On December 14, 2015, the Gothenburg District Court sentenced two individuals to life in prison for “the crime of terrorism through murder” after it ruled that graphic video evidence showed the pair taking part in the beheadings of two people in Syria. The verdicts marked the first time foreign fighters were convicted in Sweden of crimes committed in Syria, and the first time individuals were convicted for the crime of terrorism as opposed to the secondary charges of crimes against humanity and murder.

Extreme right- and left-wing groups and ethnic-based groups have targeted one another in low-level violence, some of which was either attributed to commemorating anniversaries to their respective causes or in retaliation to perceived attacks.

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

**Post Political Violence Rating: Low**

**Civil Unrest**

Sweden’s laws allow for peaceful demonstrations, and 2015 saw multiple demonstrations directed at the U.S. Embassy. However, these demonstrations were not “anti-American” and ended peacefully without incident. In 2015, there were demonstrations that did escalate into
violence; thus, travelers should recognize the possibility that peaceful demonstrations can turn violent unexpectedly and quickly.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Sweden does experience heavy rains, heavy snowfall, flash floods, and forest fires that have contributed to multiple injuries, deaths, and evacuations of residents. Travelers should refer to weather forecasts prior to traveling.

Privacy Concerns

There are very strict privacy laws that govern the release of personal information, especially criminal histories.

Personnel-Background Concerns

Hate-related crimes do occur. For example, 2015 saw acts directed at mosques, the Jewish
community, asylum centers, and the immigrant community.

Drug-related Crimes

Drug trafficking is limited to low levels of domestic consumption/transit. This consists of cocaine from South America via Spain; heroin from Central Asia via Poland and the Baltics; methamphetamines from Poland; marijuana from continental Europe; and khat from the Horn of Africa (consumed by Sweden’s sizable Eritrean, Ethiopian, and Somali populations).

Travelers can expect to see heavy drug use in/around major urban centers (near the central train station). Cocaine and methamphetamine are prevalent in some night clubs; however, narcotics do not seem to be a major precursor for violent crime.

Police Response

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Police harassment is exceptionally rare; however, if U.S. travelers are detained or harassed by police, they should immediately call the U.S. Embassy duty officer or American Citizen Services.
Crime Victim Assistance

Travelers who are victims of crime should expect a police response commensurate with the criticality of the incident. For instance, a victim of a violent crime can expect rapid, expert support/investigation. Victims of purse snatching, for example, should expect formal, polite assistance but possibly lengthy delays in investigation or resolution.

Local police non-emergency Tel: 114-14
All emergencies Tel: 112

Police/Security Agencies

In 2015, Swedish law enforcement reorganized to unite the country’s 21 separate county police departments into one national agency with seven regions. This reorganization aimed to streamline police work through clearer guidance and centralization of law enforcement efforts.

SÄPO was not affected by the reorganization.
Medical Emergencies

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Travelers in Stockholm requiring emergency medical attention can use a number of 24-hour hospitals and by dialing the nationwide emergency telephone number 112; however, the two largest and most likely hospitals to be used are:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hospital Name</th>
<th>Telephone Numbers</th>
<th>Address</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karolinska Hospital</td>
<td><a href="http://www.ks.se">www.ks.se</a></td>
<td></td>
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A large number of other medical and consultation services are available throughout Stockholm; information is readily available in English on the Internet.

Travelers outside of Stockholm should consult local directories for contact information for the appropriate local hospital in their area.

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Available Air Ambulance Services

Emergency helicopters are available in Stockholm County.

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/sweden.

OSAC Country Council Information

OSAC constituents may contact the RSO directly and work in cooperation with the American Chamber of Commerce. The U.S. Embassy Stockholm is working with OSAC constituents in order to re-establish Stockholm’s OSAC Country Council. Point of contact is RSO George Semertsidis, +46-8-783-5413, SemertsidisGA@state.gov. To reach OSAC’s Europe team, please email OSACEUR@state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

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Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

Dag Hammarskjölds Vag 31
115 89 Stockholm, Sweden

Operating hours: Mon-Fri, 8:00am-4:30pm (closed Saturday and Sunday)

Embassy Contact Numbers

Embassy Operator: +46-8-783-5300
Regional Security Officer: +46-8-783-5412
Medical Unit: +46-8-783-5464/5564
Consular Affairs: +46-8-783-5375
Political/Economic Section: +46-8-783-5321/4515
Marine Post One: +46-8-783-5310
Website: http://stockholm.usembassy.gov/
Embassy Guidance

Please take the time to tell our Embassy about your presence in-country. If you enroll in STEP, we can keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements. It will also help your friends and family get in touch with you in an emergency. To enroll your stay or visit, click the STEP (Smart Traveler Enrollment Program) button at http://travel.state.gov.

The Department of State has issued a Worldwide Caution to update information on the continuing threat of terrorist actions and violence against U.S. citizens and interests throughout the world. U.S. citizens are reminded to maintain a high level of vigilance and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness. The Worldwide Caution may be found on the U.S. Embassy Stockholm’s website.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Travelers should use common sense when traveling and attempt to reduce the impact of crime by not carrying large sums of cash/valuables on their person.
Travelers should be especially wary in train/subway stations for petty thieves and pickpockets and should be careful of distractions and other techniques used to divert attention. Travelers should be vigilant and aware of their surroundings, as robberies occur in high commercial areas.

Travelers should exercise caution when using ATMs and should inspect card insertion areas for modifications and “skimming” hardware. Travelers should only use reputable cash exchange outlets when withdrawing cash on credit/debit cards.

Travelers should carry a copy of the biographical page from their passport and emergency contact information for the U.S. Embassy and local police at all times.

Travelers should store valuables in hotel safes or safety deposit boxes when available.

Travelers should avoid demonstrations.