



Vietnam 2016 Crime & Safety Report: Hanoi

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Burglary; Riots/Civil Unrest; Floods; Hurricanes; Landslides and mudslides; Tornadoes; Extreme heat/drought; Employee Health Safety; Economic Espionage; Counterfeiting; Surveillance; Drug Trafficking; Bribery

East Asia & Pacific > Vietnam; East Asia & Pacific > Vietnam > Hanoi

5/13/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Medium

Crime Threats

Although most travelers to Hanoi feel relatively safe, pickpocketing and petty crimes do occur. Petty theft, purse snatching, and pickpocketing are most common in crowded areas frequented by foreigners, including major hotels, tourist sites, airports, and public parks. One common method of purse snatching involves two individuals riding a motorcycle, with the passenger snatching a victim's bag, camera, cellular phone, etc. Often, motorcycles involved in such thefts are traveling at the same speed or faster than street traffic. This method can be especially dangerous to victims if the straps of the bag are over the shoulder or around the neck, as the victim can be pulled down or dragged by the strap until it breaks. In other instances, a knife or other sharp cutting instrument is used to cut the strap or to make a hole to reach in and steal valuables.

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In general, the safety and security of guest rooms in quality hotels is adequate.

In 2015, several burglaries were reported in the Tay Ho and Ciputra residential areas, both popular neighborhoods for the expatriate and diplomatic communities.

RSO is aware of numerous instances of domestically-employed staff stealing valuables from employers. In one case, a housekeeper forged her employer's signature on a check and withdrew over US\$60,000 from their bank account.

There have been reports of drinks being tampered with in order to incapacitate a potential victim.

Violent crimes (armed robbery, kidnappings, murder) against Westerners or tourists remain relatively uncommon but are on the rise.

Other Areas of Concern

Travel options to Vietnam's outer provinces may be limited. The government restricts travel

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and photography in some areas, including near military facilities and sensitive border areas.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

The two most dangerous activities in Vietnam are crossing the street and driving/riding in traffic. The road system is underdeveloped, and traffic rules are widely ignored. The lack of open sidewalks and adequate traffic controls creates a precarious situation for all pedestrians and motorists. It is not uncommon for visitors or residents to be involved in some type of road incident while attempting to cross one of the many motorcycle-clogged streets in Hanoi. It is also not uncommon for visitors or residents to be involved in some type of incident on a sidewalk, or in a park, as local drivers use these as thoroughfares when traffic is stopped.

Motorcycle accidents are particularly common and serious since motorcyclists generally have less training than car/truck drivers. There were 8,996 recorded vehicle fatalities in Vietnam in 2014 and approximately 8,700 in 2015. In accordance with local law, a helmet must be worn to ride a motorcycle.

Public Transportation Conditions

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It is recommended that travelers use only metered/marked taxis at night, preferably from the larger taxi companies (Hanoi Taxi, CP Taxi, Mai Linh Taxi). Be aware that less reputable taxi drivers have painted their vehicles to resemble more reputable taxis companies. Do not take a taxi that looks suspicious (no meter, no signage) and be aware of drunk drivers, which are common in the evenings. If you smell alcohol on the breath of a driver or in a vehicle, exit the vehicle and find an alternative.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: Low

Civil Unrest

Aside from unrest in the Central Highlands in 2001 and 2004, political demonstrations are uncommon, and the threat from civil unrest in the cities is generally minimal.

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Peaceful demonstrations have occurred as a result of territorial disputes between Vietnam and China in the South China Sea, but they have been tacitly sanctioned and heavily controlled by the local government. Demonstrations over the South China Sea turned violent for several days in May 2014, targeting businesses perceived as Chinese-owned. The government has since reassured investors that it will not allow similar instances that might threaten businesses.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Frequent storms hit the long coastal regions, and flooding may affect much of the country. Flooding, tropical storms (typhoons), landslides, flash floods, droughts, and tornadoes are common natural disasters and are often devastating. Other environmental hazards that occasionally affect parts of the country include forest fires and salt water intrusion. Less common incidents include major earthquakes and major industrial accidents.

In addition, Vietnam is expected to be one of the most severely impacted countries due to effects of climate change. There have been strong indications that the frequency and severity of storms hitting Vietnam have worsened over the past two decades, and researchers warn that this trend is likely to continue.

Some of the important actions that can be taken to prepare for natural disasters include preparing disaster risk plans, preparing emergency plans for staff, preparing plans for

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moving/protecting assets, preparing contingency plans for clients/suppliers, preparing emergency communications plans/telephone trees, arranging spare equipment/supplies (fuel, batteries) for use during an event, and purchasing storm/flood insurance. International businesses that have been able to resume operations rapidly after a storm have found that suppliers and clients often have difficulty resuming operations, which can prolong recovery. Before and during a storm event, business managers should closely monitor information from the Central Committee from Flood and Storm Control, the National Centre for Hydrometeorological Forecasting, and local people's committees for information on impending conditions and on possible evacuations.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Worker safety is a concern. There have been many fatal accidents that come with a lack of training and experience for employees and a lack of first responder capabilities. In order to save money, employees and contracted companies may force employees to go beyond their abilities and experience to accomplish a job.

In the event of a large accident, the local first responders may be overwhelmed or lack the training/equipment to resolve an emergency situation. For instance, the local fire departments may not have a truck with a ladder that goes past the tenth floor. In a critical incident, people trapped above the tenth floor may have to wait for a helicopter or alternative means of rescue.

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

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Economic espionage is a concern for most businesses and industries manufacturing in Vietnam. Although many of the items that infringe on patents, copyrights, and trademarks come from China, there is a vast network of organized crime groups in Vietnam also engaged in counterfeiting activity.

Personnel-Background Concerns

One should assume that all rooms, telephones, and fax machines could be monitored, and all movements and activities may be subject to surveillance. Personal possessions, media, and documents kept in hotel rooms, apartments, or at the workplace may be searched. Visitors and residents should be cautious when discussing sensitive or proprietary information.

Drug-related Crimes

Drug use, particularly the increasing use of methamphetamine and intravenous drugs, contributes significantly to the crime rate and is an increasing problem. Although Vietnam is a gateway for shipping drugs, drugs are ubiquitous. Organized crime has collaborated to import drugs or to distribute drugs manufactured locally. Violence associated with the drug trade has been pre-meditated and limited to rival gangs, but local authorities have noted a rise in the level of violence associated with those crimes (assaults, homicides, robberies).

Kidnapping Threat

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Although several kidnappings have happened, none have involved Western children.

Police Response

Policing is largely done by the Ministry of Public Security. The entities that most citizens will come in to contact with are the traffic police (cảnh sát giao thông) and the police (công an). The traffic police wear khaki uniforms and are similar to highway patrol units or police officers whose primary job is the enforcement of traffic laws. The police are in charge of security and enforcing local laws.

Police are often under-funded and lack training. While the overall situation is improving, some police have been openly solicitous of compensation, ostensibly to support local police efforts or to facilitate an investigation of a crime.

Individuals should be alert for signs warning of zones where photography is restricted. For more information, please review OSAC's Report "Picture This: Dos and Don'ts for Photography."

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

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Individuals involved in a situation in which a police officer is soliciting money are advised to contact American Citizen Services at the Embassy.

If you are detained by the local police, the process is similar to that in the U.S. If arrested for a crime, you will be transported to a jail and brought before a judge. If you cannot contact American Citizen Services directly, consider calling your hotel to interpret for you and calling American Citizen Services at the Embassy.

Crime Victim Assistance

If you are involved in a traffic accident, altercation, or other situation that draws a crowd, leave the immediate area and contact the police.

You can contact the police in Hanoi by dialing 113.

Medical Emergencies

Be aware of the limitations of medical care. The quality of medical care in major cities is limited, and medical care in rural/provincial areas can be non-existent. Even when adequate medical care is available at private clinics, it is often expensive.

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Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

International SOS

1 Dang Thai Mai Street, Hanoi

Tel: (84-4) 934-0666

Emergency: (84-4) 934-0555

Hanoi Family Medical Clinic

298-I Kim Ma Road, Hanoi

Tel: (84-4) 843-0748 / (84) (0)90-340-1919

Hanoi French Hospital

Phuong Mai Street, #1, Hanoi

Tel: (84-4) 577-1100

Emergency (84-4) 574-1111

Recommended Insurance Posture

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American/Western medical insurance with medical evacuation coverage is highly recommended.

CDC Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

The CDC suggests routine vaccination updates for visitors. Although there have been no reported cases of malaria in Hanoi, consult with your doctor if you are going to visit the Red River Delta and the coastal areas around Nha Trang.

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

OSAC Country Council Information

The Embassy has an OSAC Country Council. You can email the OSAC Country Council at osac-hanoi@googlegroups.com for information or to request to join the mailing list. To reach the OSAC East Asia Pacific team, please email OSACEAP@state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

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Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Embassy Hanoi

7 Lang Ha Street

Hanoi, Vietnam

Embassy Contact Numbers

Tel: within Vietnam: (04) 3850-5000; from the U.S.: (011) (84-4) 3850-5000

Note: the local time in Vietnam is GMT+7

Email: DS_RSO_HANOI@state.gov

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

Nearby Posts

Consulate Ho Chi Minh City: <http://hochiminh.usconsulate.gov/>

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Embassy Guidance

Please take the time to tell the 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>. Consular information is available at: http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1113.html.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Be aware of your surroundings. Travelers are strongly advised to review their personal safety and security posture, to remain vigilant, and to be cautious when frequenting prominent public places and landmarks. Avoid dark alleyways and overgrown brush where assailants can easily conceal themselves. Avoid walking around alone after dark. Try to walk in groups. Female travelers should be cautious if traveling alone. Beware of street children. Varying your travel times/routes is suggested to reduce predictability of movement. Travelers should maintain a high level of vigilance when in public, especially when walking. Change direction or depart the area if you notice suspicious people, groups, or activity.

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Keep valuables out of sight. Refrain from carrying credit cards, large sums of cash, or valuables that you are unwilling to give up in a robbery. You should leave valuables in a hotel safe or other secure place. Keep wallets and other valuables where they will be less susceptible to pickpockets. Avoid carrying handbags. Always carry a copy of your passport, keeping the original stored in a safe place. If you are threatened with violence over money/belongings, RSO recommends complying with demands and attempting to end the confrontation as quickly as possible.

Foreign currency should be exchanged in authorized banks, hotels, and other legally-authorized outlets, and proper receipts should be obtained for the transactions.

Carry your cell phone at all times. Do not leave valuables or large amounts of cash in your house. These items are best kept locked in a secured area at work. Only give your keys to a trusted person; do not leave them in the possession of others. Keep your doors and vehicle locked even when you are at home.

Please consult with the local American Chamber of Commerce or the U.S. Embassy if you feel your product has been illegally copied or distributed.

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