



Singapore 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Cyber; Drug Trafficking; Fraud; Theft; Stolen items; Hotels

East Asia & Pacific > Singapore; East Asia & Pacific > Singapore > Singapore

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Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Low

Crime Threats

Singapore continues to enjoy one of the lowest crime rates in the world. Almost all non-cyber crimes registered a decrease compared to 2014. In fact, violent/serious property crimes and housebreak-in-related crimes registered a 20-year low in 2015 while theft and related crimes registered a 10-year low. With the exception of crimes that occur in housing developments, crime is generally non-confrontational and non-violent. If a weapon is involved, it is likely an edged weapon (knife or box cutter), as firearms are strictly controlled and the punishment is severe. Criminal acts are usually crimes of opportunity (purse snatching, pickpocketing, thefts of unattended property). Violent crimes are rare.

Motor-vehicle thefts registered a 20-year low in 2015, owing to the presence of in-vehicle cameras in motor vehicles. The Vehicle-on-Watch (VOW) project is a partnership of car

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owners and police, in which a camera is installed in a person's car, and vehicle owners may be approached by the police for footage from their in-vehicle cameras for investigations.

Singapore is considered 7 out of 168 on the list of least corrupt countries in the world, according to Transparency International's most recent Corruption Perception Index.

While organized criminal groups exist, their strength remains unclear, and it is believed that they focus on prostitution, loan-sharking, and narcotics trafficking and rarely target foreigners. Unlicensed moneylending harassment cases registered a 10-year low in 2015, mostly owing to the extensive network of Police Cameras (PolCams), which has deterred would-be criminals, and to the community's active participation in neighborhood watch groups that consist of more than 14,000 members island-wide.

Cybersecurity Issues

The crime rate increased in the first half of 2015, due largely to an increase in the number of cyber crime incidents involving e-commerce, credit-for-sex, and Internet love scams.

Cyber extortion cases decreased by 66 percent from 2014, perhaps in large part to Singapore's many anti-scam public education initiatives that began in 2015 (print/broadcast media, outdoor advertorials, traditional social media platforms (YouTube, Facebook Twitter)). The website www.scamalert.sg was created to feature the latest scams and to allow members of the public to share their experiences with others.

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Areas of Concern

Geylang and other lower-cost government housing areas suffer from more serious crimes (muggings, loan sharking, illicit drug use), although still not on the scale of a similar sized U.S. city. Geylang is a known “red light” district, harboring prostitutes and reportedly experiencing an increase in organized criminal gangs. Prostitution is legal, but various prostitution-related activities are not. This includes public solicitation, under-age prostitution, pimping, living on the earnings of a prostitute, and maintaining a brothel. In practice, the police are believed to unofficially tolerate and monitor a limited number of brothels.

The areas where bars stay open late (Robertson, Clarke, Boat Quays along the Singapore River; Orchard Towers complex on Orchard Road) represent the most likely zones for potential security incidents in Singapore, especially at night.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Singapore is a right-side drive nation with first-world road conditions, which includes well-illuminated, well-paved, English-language thoroughfares and 4-6 lane expressways spanning the island. Traffic and driving can be a bit more hectic than typical American driving,

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with drivers seemingly occupying two lanes at once and motorcycles darting from lane to lane between cars. Traffic accidents, however, appear surprisingly rare. Drivers should be cautious, as police strictly enforce speeding violations and speed cameras are prevalent. Drivers should also recognize the difficulty posed by frequent, sometimes heavy rains that can dump several inches of water on the roads in minutes.

Public Transportation Conditions

Public transport covers a variety of transport modes (bus, rail, taxi) as a result of the great emphasis by the government to promote its use over private transport. About 5.4 million trips are made on a daily basis on the public transport system, and at least half of Singapore's population utilizes it daily.

Singapore's public transport system was reliant largely on buses until the opening of the first section of the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) in 1987. Although buses still enjoy an average daily ridership exceeding twice the number carried on both the MRT and Light Rail Transit (LRT) systems, the Land Transport Authority plans to expand the rail system such that buses will play only a feeder role to an extensive rail network.

The MRT network consists of five main lines, for a total network length of 153.2 km (95.19 mi) and with 104 stations. The North-South Line, East-West Line, and Circle Line are operated by SMRT Trains (SMRT Corporation), while the North-East Line and Downtown Line have been operational since December 2013 and are run by SBS Transit.

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Aviation/Airport Conditions

Singapore Changi Airport (SIN), with its three terminals, is one of the most important air hubs in the region. The international airport is situated at the easternmost tip of the main island and serves 185 cities in 58 countries. With the opening of the third terminal, Changi handles 64 million passengers every year.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

Singapore remains relatively free from civil unrest, political instability, and credible terrorism threats. Local press express concerns that home-grown, self-radicalized terrorists may become a security issue. The government reported that several Singaporeans went to Syria to join the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In an effort to counter these concerns, the government has continued to make use of the Internal Security Act (ISA), which grants it the authority to arrest and detain individuals suspected of potential involvement in terrorism for up to two years without trial in certain circumstances.

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Singaporean officials frequently emphasize the importance of community involvement and preparedness as a critical element in national security, as well as the importance of the private sector in fighting both crime and terrorism.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

The government is defined by the Constitution of the Republic of Singapore to mean the executive branch, which is made up of the president and the cabinet. Although the president acts in his personal discretion in the exercise of certain functions as a check on the cabinet and parliament, his role is largely ceremonial. It is the cabinet, composed of the prime minister and other ministers appointed on the advice of the president, that generally directs and controls the government. The cabinet is formed by the political party that gains a simple majority in each general election. Singapore has one of the most stable governments in the world, with the People's Action Party (PAP) assuming power in an election before independence and returning to power in every general election (the most recent in 2015) and has formed the cabinet since 1959. The government is generally competent in managing the country's economy and largely free from political corruption. On the other hand, it has been criticized for using unfair election tactics and violating freedom of speech, although the national elections in September 2015 were considered free, fair, and competitive.

Post Political Violence Rating: Low

Civil Unrest

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Demonstrations or protests are rare even though the law allows for permits of assembly to be granted. The reality is that permits are generally not issued for any potential demonstration or gathering. There has only been one incident of violent civil unrest in the last 40 years.

In December 2013, about 400 Bangladeshi and Indian guest workers rioted in Little India district after a co-worker was struck and killed by a private bus. In two hours of violence, rioters destroyed or damaged 25 emergency vehicles and injured 39 police officers. In response, Singapore deported 52 foreign workers and another 28 foreign workers received multiple strokes with a rattan cane and are serving multi-year jail sentences.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Singapore has not experienced natural disasters recently. In September-October 2015, a thick haze from burning brush in Indonesian Sumatra covered much of the island, elevating health risks for certain segments of the population prone to respiratory problems and disrupted business and international flights.

Drug-related Crimes

Despite severe laws, drugs can still be found, and individuals frequenting nightclubs should be particularly vigilant and remain aware of their surroundings. Incidents of individuals

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unknowingly ingesting a drug placed in a drink occasionally occur.

Kidnapping Threat

Kidnappings remain rare, although kidnapping scams – where an individual calls a family and advises them that a member of the family has been kidnapped and will be harmed unless a ransom is paid – are common.

There have only been three confirmed cases of kidnapping-for-ransom in the last 12 years, and all perpetrators were arrested and jailed for life.

The last kidnapping-for-ransom occurred on January 10, 2014; the CEO of a popular supermarket chain received a call from a stranger who demanded S\$20 million in ransom for the return of his elderly mother. He negotiated the ransom down to S\$2 million and under instructions from the kidnappers, placed the ransom in one of his mother's designer bags and dropped it off at a local park. The victim was released at a nearby bus stop a few hours later. Police subsequently arrested two kidnappers and recovered the ransom. The two suspects were convicted and were sentenced to life imprisonment.

Police Response

Police response to crime incidents is professional and generally effective. The police are professional.

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U.S. companies assigning personnel to Singapore should conduct security and cultural awareness training for their employees and accompanying family members. Rude and disorderly behavior, particularly directed against women, is prohibited. Inappropriate behavior, classified as “Outrage of Modesty,” is strictly enforced and carries severe penalties to include caning and imprisonment. Visitors should be knowledgeable of the severe penalties for narcotics trafficking, including the death penalty.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Any report involving police harassment is handled promptly and in accordance with the prescribed regulations.

Crime Victim Assistance

Police assistance can be readily obtained by dialing 999. If you are the victim of a crime, file a police report. The police must know that a crime has occurred in order to solve it and/or be more responsive to future problems. Every district has a dedicated neighborhood police center, and any neighborhood police center, not just the district where the crime took place, will accept the filing of a police report. Post-incident crime victimization reports be completed and submitted online.

Orchard Road Shopping District Police: +(65) 6733-0000

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Central Business District Police: +(65) 6334-0000

Medical Emergencies

Individuals should call 995 in the event of a medical emergency. Medical services are on par with or better than those of the major U.S. cities and other first-world capitals. Ambulatory services are available island-wide (although response times vary), and hospitals specialize in cardiology, oncology, or treating burn victims.

Recommended Air Ambulance Services

Singapore is a Department of State regional medical evacuation destination, and private citizens from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia often travel to Singapore for medical treatment. Air ambulance services are not necessary and are not offered in Singapore.

Recommended Insurance Posture

The purchase of travel medical insurance to cover unexpected medical emergencies is recommended. The cost of medical care is high and commensurate with the standard of care.

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CDC Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

For specific vaccination and health guidance, please visit the CDC at:
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/singapore>.

OSAC Country Council Information

Embassy Singapore has a very active OSAC Country Council chapter with over 300 members. For specific information, please contact the Regional Security Office at SingaporeRSO@state.gov or +(65) 6476-9284. One of the best sources for overseas security information is OSAC.gov. To reach the OSAC East Asia Pacific team, please email OSACEAP@state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Embassy Singapore

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27 Napier Road

Singapore 258508

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

Business hours: Mon-Fri 8:30 a.m.-5:15 p.m.

Embassy Contact Numbers

Embassy Switchboard: +(65) 6476-9100

Same contact number for after-hours emergency

Fax: +(65) 6476-9232

American Citizen Services (ACS): +(65) 6476-9321 / 9251 / 9258

Embassy Guidance

American visitors and residents of Singapore should enroll in STEP, the Smart Traveler Enrolment Program (<http://step.state.gov>), to enable the U.S. Embassy to provide urgent updates and to contact them in the event of an emergency. Travel advisories, country

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background notes, and links to other U.S. government travel and security services are also available at <http://travel.state.gov> or via the U.S. Citizen Services tab at the Embassy website.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

The Embassy notes that “low” crime does not mean no crime, so individuals should still take common sense precautions to avoid being victimized. Visitors should exercise the same level of caution they would in any large city regarding their personal safety and security.

Avoid carrying excess cash and credit cards, and only use credit cards at reputable establishments. After using a credit card, check your receipts to ensure that only proper charges have been levied against your account, confirming these with your monthly statement.

Always remain alert in crowded, public areas (hotel lobbies, subway stations, shopping centers other tourist areas) where pickpocketing or other petty crimes often occur. Do not leave valuables in plain sight.

While staying in hotels, always use hotel safe deposit boxes or in-room safes to secure your valuables and never leave personal or financial information unattended. Additionally,

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valuables should never be left unattended in hotel rooms or in plain sight in vehicles. For fire safety, learn escape routes from your hotel room immediately upon checking-in.

Exercise caution when you come across unrealistic bargains for concert tickets, apparel, hotel stays, and electronic products. Be wary of strangers who befriend you online or for offers for escort, massage, or sexual services on social media.

Prudent measures should continue to be taken by businesses, schools, churches, and other locations where Americans assemble. Travelers should be vigilant when using public conveyances (buses, subways, trains, planes, ferries). Individuals should be especially alert in crowded buses, the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system, streets, markets, and night clubs. Heed all warnings with regard to soft targets and potential terrorist threats. Know how to contact local emergency services for police, fire, and medical personnel.

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