



## Madagascar 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Burglary; Financial Security; IEDs; Coup d'etats; Riots/Civil Unrest; Hurricanes; Floods; Extreme heat/drought; Employee Health Safety; Intellectual Property Rights Infringement; Counterfeiting; Hate Crimes; Drug Trafficking; Kidnapping; Bribery

Africa > Madagascar; Africa > Madagascar > Antananarivo

5/23/2016

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Critical

### Crime Threats

Accurate government statistics on crime rates are not available. The Embassy maintains a crime database based on local news reports, post incidents, and incidents reported by American citizens in-country.

The biggest crime threat to Americans is petty theft, though more serious crimes (home invasions) do occur, especially in areas with limited police/gendarme presence. Most crimes coming to the attention of the Embassy involving American citizens have been thefts and personal robberies. Skilled pickpockets are very active in downtown Antananarivo. Although they primarily target jewelry or mobile phones, identification has also been stolen. Since these

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crimes are primarily for financial gains, there have been no reports of reusing identification for other crimes or reasons.

While there were numerous reports of residential break-ins and home invasions in 2015, the majority appear to be perpetrated by Malagasy on Malagasy households, though the U.S. Embassy has received a small number of reports of physical attacks, armed robberies, and home invasions against foreigners, particularly in coastal tourist areas and large cities. A number of these attacks resulted in serious injuries to foreign nationals and, in rare cases, fatalities.

Criminal elements are becoming bolder when selecting their victims and are committing more crimes in areas that are generally well-illuminated and well-traveled by pedestrians and vehicles.

Organized crime is not a major issue due to poverty and lack of education, though there are reports that a wide-range of mid- and senior-level military and government officials are involved in illegal activities, specifically cattle rustling in the south. In addition, there have been allegations of security forces using their official weapons to conduct home invasions and kidnappings or loaning their weapons to criminal elements to do so. At the upper levels, senior government officials have been linked to smuggling raw materials (gems, endangered animals, rosewood).

A major concern relates to wildlife trafficking, deforestation, and illegal fishing. Weak legislation, poor law enforcement, large geography, dilapidated infrastructure, lack of capacity/resources, and widespread corruption (including alleged involvement of government

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officials) have made Madagascar a safe haven for illegal activities and businesses.

## Cybersecurity Issues

The vast majority of Malagasy citizens cannot afford basic Internet service; however, a notable incident occurred on January 12, 2015, when the website of Madagascar's Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) was hacked. U.S. citizens have reported no other cyber crimes.

## Other Areas of Concern

Large crowds have formed near the Presidential Palace, along Avenue de l'Independence, and near Lake Behoririka. The 67th Hectare is the site of Malagasy-on-Malagasy violence from time to time and can be dangerous. Areas outside tourist areas should be avoided at night.

## Transportation-Safety Situation

### Road Safety and Road Conditions

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Road conditions range from minimally acceptable to terrible. In Antananarivo, the roads are relatively well-maintained except during the rainy season when large potholes are left unattended until the rains subside. Drivers compete with cattle, human-propelled carts, scooters, and “taxi-be” buses, any of which may swerve/stop at a moment’s notice. The roads in most other major cities show signs of wear (potholes, other obstructions).

Nighttime driving is hazardous and is prohibited for Embassy personnel outside of the major cities. Certain roads in Antananarivo have restrictions on tractor trailers during the day, so trucks use the roads at night and do not always follow the traffic rules.

Many vehicles do not meet minimal safety standards and lack working lights. Lock your doors and keep your windows rolled up.

Traffic law enforcement consists of stationary police on foot, typically wearing a white shirt or camouflage uniforms with grey (National Police) or red (Gendarmarie) berets, randomly flagging down vehicles for inspection and verification of identification documents.

There are no sidewalks in the vast majority of the country, and the roads are hazardous for foot travel due to swerving vehicles and uneven surfaces. There are no pedestrian crossing signs or designated pathways, and crossing any street involves an element of risk. Pedestrian injuries are common.

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Accidents, while frequent, are usually not fatal, unless scooters or motorbikes are involved. There is minimal medical care available, especially outside city centers. Four-wheel-drive vehicles are strongly recommended, especially for travel outside major cities.

### Public Transportation Conditions

The reliability, safety, and availability of taxis in Antananarivo is limited. U.S. Embassy employees are advised not to enter cabs without door locks or windows that cannot be secured. Although usage of taxis is discouraged, if you do use taxis, select taxis from illuminated areas, ensure that taxis have a minimum of safety equipment, negotiate the rate before departure, do not enter a taxi that already has other people in it, and do not enter any taxis unless you feel comfortable with the driver.

The U.S. Embassy prohibits its employees from the use of multi-passenger taxi vans, locally called "taxi-be."

### Aviation/Airport Conditions

Madagascar has taken steps in recent years to improve security at some of their international airports (Ivato, Mahjunga, Tulear) where passenger screening is conducted by a contractor and appears to be thorough. At other international airports, passenger screening seems more limited.

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RSO has noted an increase in reporting on checked luggage being stolen at Ivato. Criminals appear to target domestic flights and simply grab luggage off the conveyor belt and exit the airport. If confronted, they claim they have made a “mistake” and return the luggage.

## Other Travel Conditions

U.S. citizens should be aware of the potential for mob violence and ‘popular justice’ that is sometimes directed at foreign nationals. Street altercations and traffic accidents can draw large, and sometimes, violent crowds. The U.S. Embassy urges U.S. citizens to exercise caution and calm if they should find themselves in a dispute, particularly in a public place. U.S. citizens who feel threatened by large crowds should seek intervention from local law enforcement and contact the U.S. Embassy immediately.

## Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

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Most terrorist acts (the detonation of explosive devices) can be linked directly to political violence. The most concentrated series of improvised/homemade explosive devices was within two weeks in September 2013 when five devices were discovered in a major downtown Antananarivo thoroughfare. Three detonated, including the final one that police allege killed the bomb maker. As a result, the area surrounding l'Avenue de l'Indépendance was placed off-limits for U.S. Embassy personnel from September 6-October 29, 2013. In Anakalkely, in December 2014, seven men (four Chinese nationals, three Malagasy nationals) were arrested when a routine search of their vehicle discovered automatic weapons and grenades; allegedly the weapons were to be used in an attack against an unnamed casino in Antananarivo.

The threat of international terrorist organizations remains low; however, in November 2015 an ISIL sympathizer was arrested and subsequently released in Antananarivo. There is no known organization or individuals targeting American citizens or affiliated interests.

#### Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

There were no instances of political violence or terrorism directed against Americans in 2015.

There are some disagreements between the Malagasy and the French government primarily over the ownership of several uninhabited islands to the west of Madagascar. In Antananarivo, there have been several demonstrations by various Malagasy groups at/near the French Embassy, but there has not been any violence associated with these demonstrations.

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## Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Madagascar has a history of cyclical coups d'état, some of which toppled sitting governments. Most of the regime changes were peaceful by most standards, but all involved a certain degree of political instability, most notably in 2009. The current government was elected in December 2013 in polls judged to be fair and transparent by the international community.

In January 2015, Prime Minister Kolo Roger stepped down voluntarily, and the President named a new prime minister and government. Only eight ministers from this government were new, reflecting stability between the first and second year of the government's tenure. Occasionally, the U.S. Embassy will receive rumors that anti-government elements are seeking to destabilize the current government, though none of this can be confirmed.

Post Political Violence Rating: Low

### Civil Unrest

In late 2014, students, teachers, and other social stakeholders held demonstrations against the lack of economic progress under the government and frequent electrical outages, reflecting broader public frustration.

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In 2015, sporadic violent clashes between government security forces and armed cattle rustlers (“Dahalos”) occurred in the southern portion of the island, resulting in injuries and deaths on both sides. The government increased its security presence throughout these regions and in key towns/villages near where the Dahalos traditionally operate. These incidents occurred mostly in rural areas, but several clashes garnered public and media attention.

Visitors are cautioned to avoid any large crowds, public gatherings, or demonstrations. These scenarios have the potential of becoming unruly, which could result in serious physical injury.

## **Post-specific Concerns**

### **Environmental Hazards**

Cyclones (hurricanes) originating from the Mozambique Channel or the Indian Ocean are distinct possibilities.

Flooding and droughts, neither of which are not uncommon, are linked to other environmental issues (disease, locust swarms).

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Embassy personnel are encouraged to keep a supply of water/food in their homes, as most businesses close in anticipation of storms, and supplies very quickly become scarce during emergencies.

### Critical Infrastructure Concerns

There is very limited industry, although there has been modest growth in the mining sector. The U.S. Embassy has not received any reports about major industrial accidents. The electrical power in Antananarivo frequently goes out, sometimes for several hours at a time. The power company has partnered with a Western company to attempt to fix the issue but is unclear if/when stable power will be had in the capital. Power and phone lines may block roads or intersections for days or weeks before being moved or repaired.

### Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

The U.S. Embassy has received some reports that the government itself uses software without appropriate intellectual property rights (IPR). More broadly, pirated movies and music are sold in public markets.

### Personnel-Background Concerns

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While the Malagasy constitution prohibits all forms of discrimination, including on the basis of race, gender, disability, language, and social status, there are no specific government institutions designated to enforce these provisions.

Consensual same-sex sexual relations are criminalized with and between persons under the age of 21, and Malagasy law contains no anti-discrimination protections for LGBT persons. Although the U.S. Embassy is not aware of any recent arrests or prosecutions, it remains illegal and penalties can include imprisonment and fines.

Individuals with disabilities may find accessibility and accommodation very different from what is provided in the U.S. There is ample public transportation, but entering and existing vehicles is precarious, and they are not equipped to accommodate passengers with disabilities. Vehicles are often still in motion as passengers enter/exit. Public spaces are not wheelchair accessible.

## Drug-related Crimes

Madagascar is a transit country for illegal narcotics but has no reported incidents of narco-violence.

## Kidnapping Threat

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No Americans have been kidnapped-for-ransom, and no official diplomats have been targeted, but it is an issue for wealthy Malagasy and the Indo-Pakistani community and on rare occasions expatriates. These kidnappings usually end with a ransom paid by family members and the safe release of the victim. The vast majority of the victims have been affluent locals or their children, especially the Malagasy Indo-Pakistani business community. Most of the kidnappings are related to business deals or local politics.

In 2013, a French individual was kidnapped in the neighborhood adjacent to the area where a significant number of U.S. Embassy families and other expatriates live. This was the first reported incident of a kidnapping of a Westerner in Madagascar. Embassy analysis determined that it was an isolated incident and may have been the result of an illegal or improper business deal.

## **Police Response**

Due to the lack of resources and equipment available, police/gendarme response to victims of a crime is often limited, slow, or nonexistent. This is primarily due to the lack of staffing, training, and funding and reflects the broader economic deterioration. The likelihood of the security forces responding to an incident would depend on availability of personnel and gasoline for vehicles. Although police/gendarme responses to an incident involving a foreigner are normally taken seriously and dealt with quickly, there are reports indicating a failure of law enforcement to respond when called. Most police officers only speak Malagasy or at best minimal French and rarely speak English.

## **How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment**

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The Embassy has received reports of police harassment, primarily in the form of solicitation for bribes related to traffic stops or while walking in public areas. Police occasionally use reasons such as stopping people in vehicles for incorrect data or visa paperwork as leverage to obtain bribes, but in some reported cases the police simply ask for “cadeaux,” or gifts. Harassment is not uncommon but is typically related to bribe requests. The U.S. Embassy recommends not paying any bribes and to report incidents to the Consular Section immediately. In the event of police detention, contact the Consular Section immediately at 020-23-480-00 or 033-443-2000.

#### Crime Victim Assistance

Police: 117

Fire: 118

The police can also be reached in Antananarivo at 020-22-227-35 and 020-22-281-70.

We recommend you use these numbers only if you speak good Malagasy or French.

#### Police/Security Agencies

In major cities, the National Police is charged with maintaining peace and security. Outside of

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major cities, the Gendarmerie is primarily responsible for these duties.

## Medical Emergencies

For medical emergencies, it is better to know where local hospitals are and have direct numbers to call.

Ambulance services are available with Assistance Plus at 032-07-801-10 or 020-22-487-47; Polyclinique d'Ilfafy at 022-425-73 or 033-11-458-48; Espace Medical at 020-22-625-66 or 020-22-481-73 or 034-05-625-66; and CDU (Centre de Diagnostic Medical d'Urgences) at 020-22-329-56. However, due to traffic jams, response times are often dangerously slow.

Hospitals require payment up front, usually in cash, for medical services. Many will refuse service unless advance payment is made.

## Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Each city has independent hospitals and clinics. For emergencies in Antananarivo, the Polyclinic d'Ilfafy Behoririka at 020-22-425-66 is centrally located and provides a variety of emergency services. Some hospitals, such as the Polyclinic d'Ilfafy in Antananarivo, provide ambulance services.

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## Available Air Ambulance Services

Assistance Plus (tel: 032-07-801-10) is the most reliable air ambulance company and is located close to the airport. They have their own planes and can quickly evacuate to Reunion Island or South Africa. They can be called to visit a tourist in their hotel room to assess and stabilize them with 24/7 coverage until the person recovers or can be evacuated. They can also facilitate rescues from any part of the island.

## Recommended Insurance Posture

Travelers should enter Madagascar with current medevac insurance.

## 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/traveler/none/madagascar?s\\_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-double-001](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/madagascar?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-double-001).

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## **OSAC Country Council Information**

Madagascar has no formal OSAC Country Council. The RSO in Antananarivo can provide country briefings for representatives of American businesses and organizations as requested. To reach the OSAC Africa team, please email [OSACAF@state.gov](mailto:OSACAF@state.gov).

## **U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information**

### Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

The U.S. Embassy is located at Lot 207 A, Point Liberty, Andranoro-Antehiroka, Antananarivo (105), Madagascar. The mailing address is B.P. 5253, Antananarivo (105) Madagascar.

Public hours: Mon-Thurs 8:00 AM-4:00 PM and Fri 8:00 AM-1:00 PM.

### Embassy Contact Numbers

Operator: 020-23-480-00 or 033-443-2000

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RSO: 034-117-5369

American Citizen Services (after hours number): 020-23-480-00 or 033-443-2000

Marine Post One: 020-23-480-00 or 033-443-2407

Fax: 020-23-480-35

Website: <http://www.antanarivo.usembassy.gov/>

## Consular Coverage for Multi-Post Countries

U.S. Embassy Antananarivo handles American Citizen Services requests for the Union of the Comoros and the French protectorate of Mayotte.

## Embassy Guidance

All Americans are recommended to register with the Consular Section's American Citizen Services at <https://step.state.gov/step/>. The U.S. Embassy maintains liaison with local law enforcement officials and is available to assist American citizens during their stay.

American citizens are advised to refer to the U.S. Department of State Country Specific Information [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_976.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_976.html) for additional information.

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This resource provides information on a variety of issues intended to ensure your trip to Madagascar is safe and trouble-free.

## **Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim**

### Situational Awareness Best Practices

All American citizens are advised to follow common-sense guidelines to avoid becoming victims of crime. It is essential that visitors maintain heightened awareness and take security precautions. Be alert and aware of your surroundings. Do not discuss travel plans or other business in a venue where others can hear you. Minimize outdoor activities during hours of darkness. If you feel threatened or fear for your safety, leave the scene and go to the nearest police station or public area.

Do not leave valuable items unsecured in your residence/quarters. Do not invite strangers into your residences. Always keep the doors and windows to your residence or hotel room secured. Do not keep excessive currency or other valuable items at your residence, as it may attract the attention of criminals.

Maintain control of your personal items when in public areas and move away from anyone who you believe is acting suspiciously. Never carry anything that you are not willing to relinquish in a confrontation with a thief. Do not carry valuables in excess of immediate needs and keep what you need in a secure place on your person. Practice good operational security if you are transporting valuable items into/around Madagascar. Avoid wearing flashy jewelry,

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clothing, or carrying expensive cameras in public. Ladies should avoid carrying large purses or bags, as they are enticing targets for criminals. Should you become the victim of crime, we suggest handing over your valuables (if robbed), making a police report and contacting your Embassy for further assistance.

Credit cards machines are frequently down. When your card is swiped, do not let it out of your line of sight. Credit card machines operate over the cell phone system, so the machine should be brought to you. Credit cards are generally accepted at most grocery stores, restaurants, and hotels. Carefully protect all financial and personal information. Do not respond to any unsolicited opportunities to make money, including business opportunities that seem too good to be true.

If you receive a threatening text message, phone call, or a call in which the caller attempts to solicit personal information (bank account number, home address, etc.), do not become trapped in conversation and hang up. Record the message and/or the originator's phone number and file a police report and notify the phone company.

Be alert to any unusual surveillance or activity. Vary your routes/times so that other cannot predict your schedule. When on foot, walk with a companion. Appear to walk with a purpose; do not give the impression that you are lost or wandering. There is evidence that criminals observe these vulnerabilities and target the individuals that display them.

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