



Republic of Congo 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Disease Outbreak; Theft; Burglary; Maritime; Elections; Riots/Civil Unrest; Employee Health Safety; Surveillance; Counterfeiting; Hate Crimes; Drug Trafficking; Bribery; Financial Security

Africa > Congo, Republic of the; Africa > Congo, Republic of the > Brazzaville

5/23/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

The Republic of the Congo (RoC), often referred to as “Congo-Brazzaville” to avoid confusion with neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), is a developing nation in central Africa. The official language is French. The largest cities are the capital, Brazzaville, on the Congo River, and Pointe-Noire on the Atlantic coast. Facilities for tourism are very limited.

Post Crime Rating: Medium

Crime Threats

Most crime against expatriates is for economic gain. Incidents of petty street crime or burglaries against Americans have occurred. Criminal elements do not typically single out Americans but may view them as targets of opportunity depending on their dress, actions, behavior, and level of perceived vigilance. Petty crime often happens in large crowds. The area of Centreville (downtown) is considered to be the safest part of Brazzaville and is where

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most expatriates live and where most major restaurants and hotels are located. The Marché Total and Bacongo neighborhoods of southern Brazzaville and the Mougali area of northern Brazzaville are high-crime areas. There has been an increase in gang activity in Bacongo. The Embassy has documented a steady increase in violent crimes, particularly violent assaults against local women.

Pointe-Noire has the same concerns as Brazzaville with one exception: the beaches, where violence sometimes occurs. The Embassy has designated one portion of the beaches in Pointe-Noire as permissible for Embassy employees to visit: from The Yes Club to VIP Escalade Demex. This portion of the beach is the most populated and contains many higher-end hotels, which combine to provide an increased sense of security. All other public beaches are off-limits to Embassy personnel.

Reports of violent crime are not common among expatriates.

There is a spike in crime around the December holiday season.

Areas of Concern

The Embassy recommends that you completely avoid all beaches at night, as this is a popular time for crime.

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Large tracks of forested areas along the RoC frontier with the Central African Republic, Cameroon, and the DRC remain a haven for illegal game poachers.

Visitors should also pay close attention to events in DRC, as unrest in Kinshasa can affect Brazzaville. For the most up-to-date security and safety information on the RoC and DRC, please refer to the Department of State's Travel Warning and Country Specific Information Sheet for the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Road conditions have greatly improved, with one excellent N/S highway (N2) from Brazzaville to Ouessou on the border with Cameroon. Another E/W highway branches off N2 at Owando and heads west to the border with Gabon. To the south, the N1 highway traverses the southern part of the country, approximately 500KM from Brazzaville to Pointe-Noire. A 200KM portion of this road (between Kinkala and Dolisie) remained under construction as of late 2015. Beyond Dolisie the road is pristine (and as good as any found in the Western world) as it climbs steeply and meanders through breathtaking rainforest vistas before plunging toward Pointe-Noire.

The road improvements have not been accompanied by corresponding campaigns to improve road safety awareness, and fatal accident rates are climbing in areas with new highways, as neither pedestrians nor drivers are fully aware of how to handle the new high speeds that

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vehicles can reach. Drivers often overtake vehicles around blind curves at high speeds. Extreme caution and defensive driving are urged on the highways.

Secondary roads outside of Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire are often non-passable during the rainy seasons (September-December, February-May). Outside of Brazzaville, the RoC is replete with vast rainforests and open savanna. Preparation and extreme caution must be exercised in these remote and potentially unforgiving areas. Ensure you have appropriate protective clothing, sufficient food, water, and medical supplies and a good, reliable form of communication (satellite phone, GPS) when visiting isolated areas such as the gorilla reserve at Lefini. Gasoline and diesel fuel are sometimes unavailable in the major cities and especially in the more isolated regions. The Embassy advises keeping cash or valuables out of sight if left in a vehicle, particularly in areas with poor lighting.

Public Transportation Conditions

Travel by bus is strongly discouraged due to poor maintenance of vehicles, overcrowding, reckless driving, and the potential for crime.

While there are no officially registered taxi companies, taxis in the major cities are required to have an operating permit and to be a specific color. While taxis are a convenient and relatively safe alternative for transportation in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, the Embassy does not endorse the use of any local taxi operators. It is each person's responsibility to determine whether the basic concerns and risks are commensurate with his/her transportation needs. The Embassy proposes a few guidelines for local taxi usage:

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Hire only taxis painted in the authorized colors: green and white in Brazzaville and blue and white in Pointe-Noire. Taxis are not metered, so passengers should negotiate fares before using a taxi. It is customary for drivers in major cities to charge a supplemental fee to/from airports. Fares are normally in the 1,000-2,000 CFA range. Taxis do not normally carry small bills and are often unable to make change, so travelers should keep small denomination bills. Passengers should take note of the vehicle's registration in case of an incidents or issues with taxi operators. Taxis vary greatly in terms of operating state and are generally not air conditioned. Taxis do not undergo routine inspections and vary significantly in their state of disrepair.

The Embassy does not prohibit staff from using the "La Gazelle" train, which travels from Brazzaville to Pointe-Noire, with various stops along the way. A one-way trip usually takes approximately 15 hours, although this can vary significantly. Derailments are not uncommon, and any traveler should consider very carefully whether to take a train in the RoC.

Commercial ferry service between Brazzaville and Kinshasa may close completely with minimal notice. A visa for the DRC is required to cross into Kinshasa. Likewise, a visa for the RoC is required when arriving in Brazzaville by boat.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

Brazzaville's Maya-Maya International Airport (BZV) received a new runway in 2010 and a new terminal in 2013. Local carriers (Trans Air Congo (TAC), Equatorial Congo Airlines (ECAir)) and international companies (Air France, Ethiopian Airlines, South African Airways) provide service on the continent, to Europe, and beyond. The Embassy utilizes the following airlines for intra-Congo travel on a regular basis: ECAir, Trans Air Congo, and the United

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Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS). These carriers are compliant with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

Though there have been no terrorist attacks in the RoC, Cameroon has experienced repeated attacks by Boko Haram and other terrorist groups.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

The RoC is more than a decade beyond its nearly decades-long period of unrest and civil-war. The last rebel group signed a ceasefire with the government in March 2003. The RoC expects to hold presidential elections in March 2016. Travelers during this time should monitor the Department of State's travel page for developments.

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Post Political Violence Rating: Medium

Civil Unrest

After the announcement of a controversial constitutional referendum, large-scale violence broke out in October 2015, when security forces prevented opposition supporters from attending rallies in Pointe-Noire and Brazzaville. The bulk of the violence was concentrated in the southwest neighborhoods of Brazzaville and in Pointe-Noire and Dolisie. The civil unrest paralyzed the affected portions of Brazzaville from October 20-21 and resulted in at about 20 deaths in Pointe-Noire, about 20 reported deaths in Brazzaville, and hundreds of injuries and arrests. The atmosphere in the RoC remained tense, as the March 2016 presidential elections approached.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

Clashes between locals and West African immigrants and shopkeepers occur from time-to-time. Although ethnic fault lines exist (mainly along a North/South divide), ethnic violence has not surfaced since the civil war of 1997-2003.

Post-specific Concerns

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Critical Infrastructure Concerns

The RoC is not considered to conform to Western standards for workplace security. A primary example is the few safety features on construction sites.

Cell phones and Internet are private but subject to government control and monitoring and are extremely expensive and very slow. The Internet, and SMS services, were entirely shutdown by the government for 10 days during referendum-related, civil unrest in October 2015.

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

There is an abundance of pirated merchandise readily available from street vendors.

Privacy Concerns

The government maintains strong control over the media and communications. Cell phone conversations may not be private. There are no international landlines.

Personnel-Background Concerns

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U.S. military members and guests of Embassy employees have faced increased scrutiny by host government officials.

Homosexuality is not a crime, though members of the LGBT community face heavy stigmatization.

Drug-related Crimes

Drug-related crimes are rare, though Pointe-Noire experienced a large drug bust in 2013, and authorities have commented on an increase in attempted transshipment of illegal drugs from Angola and elsewhere.

Police Response

Security services, including the police and gendarmerie (police force under the control of the Ministry of Defense), are capable.

It is important to carry some form of identification at all times. The Embassy recommends that

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all travelers carry a copy of their U.S. passport and Congolese visa rather than the originals.

U.S. citizens are subject to local laws. There are also some things that might be legal in the country you visit but are still illegal in the U.S. for which you can be prosecuted under U.S. law. If you break local laws in your host country, your U.S. passport will not help you avoid arrest or prosecution. Congolese law strictly prohibits the photographing of military installations, police/military personnel, industrial facilities, government buildings, and infrastructure (roads, bridges, dams, airfields, etc.). Such sites are rarely marked clearly. For more information, please review OSAC's Report "Picture This: Dos and Don'ts for Photography." The law also prohibits the exports of artifacts and other items of historical significance. Local law also prohibits exiting the country with local currency.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

It is relatively common for police to stop foreigners and accuse them of minor infractions (which may or may not be valid). Police typically do not want to write a ticket, but rather request the person to pay a fine (for "juice") on the spot. The U.S. Embassy does not encourage anyone to pay fines.

There are reports of increased arbitrary arrests of Congolese citizens in late 2015. But, the detention of U.S. citizens is rare, and the police have allowed U.S. citizens to contact the Embassy in the few instances of the arrest of an American. If you are arrested or detained, you have the right to request that authorities alert the U.S. Embassy in accordance with the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. U.S. citizens are encouraged to use whatever means of communication available to alert the U.S. Embassy of your situation.

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Crime Victim Assistance

There is no functioning emergency line. The local equivalent is 118; however, police resources are limited and response to emergency calls is often slow or non-existent. U.S. citizens who are victims of a crime, you should contact the local police and the U.S. Embassy Consular Section at +242-06-612-2000 or the Embassy duty officer after business hours at +242 05 526 3533. If your passport is stolen, the Embassy can help you replace it.

When reporting a crime to the police, you should ask for a police report. There is a CFA 15,000 charge for the police report. For violent crimes (assault, rape), RSO can help you find medical care, contact family members/friends, and help them send you money. Although the investigation and prosecution of a crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and provide you with a list of local attorneys, if needed.

Medical Emergencies

Health facilities are very limited and are considered adequate only for stabilization and emergency care. Hospitals in Brazzaville suffer from inadequate facilities, outdated equipment, and shortages of supplies/medications. All facilities require a cash deposit (dependent on the type of medical condition) before admittance and forbid medical release until all accrued charges are paid. There is a shortage of physicians and other qualified medical personnel. Emergency assistance is limited. Some hospitals have ambulance

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services, but these are limited, unreliable, and require an on-scene cash payment. Psychiatric services and medications are very limited. Travelers must carry their own supplies of prescription drugs and preventive medicines. For more information, please refer to OSAC's Report, "Traveling with Medications."

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

CHU (Centre Hospitalier et universitaire)
ICU unit

13, Avenue Marechal Lyautey

Dr. Fabrice Ottiobanda

Tel : 06-610-8512/04-404-7270

Dr. Peggy Mawandza

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Tel : 06-690-9302

Clinic Pasteur
Hours: 24/7
In and out patients, family practice and E.R

Djambala street #88, close to Mounjali roundabout

Receptionist

Tel:06-990-63-77

Dr Landry Soussoumian (E.R)

Tel:05-749-48-56

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Dr. Deen Adebo (family practice)

Tel:05-551-02-01

Netcare
Open 24 hours for true emergencies

Avenue Marechal Lyautey front university hospital

Administrator

Tel:06-679-5911

Outpatient clinics: specialists, X-ray only by appointment

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Military hospital for trauma cases

Military camp 15 aout

Dr. Ikapi (surgeon)

06-662-04-80

SOS Air Rescue Africa:

Tel: 00-27-800-127-600 OR 00-27-11-541-1350, OR 00-27-11-541-1000

Website: www.internationalsos.com

E-mail: sosairrescueafrica@isos.co.za

AMREF "Flying Doctors of East Africa" (24 hours Emergency Control Center at Wilson Airport/Nairobi):

Tel: 00-254-20-315454, OR 00-254-20-315455, OR 00-254-20-60009 OR 00-254-20-602492, OR 00-254-20-600602, OR 00-254-20-600552 OR 00-254-20-600833, OR 00-254-20-600868

Mobile Phone: 00-254-733-628-422, OR 00-254-733-639-088, OR 00-254-722-314-239

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Satellite Phone: 00-873-762315580

Radio: HF 9116 kHz OR 5796 kHz LSB

Call Sign: "Foundation Control"

E-mail: emergency@flydoc.org

Available Air Ambulance Services

Local air ambulances operating locally are available from Abyssinian Flight Services.

251 911 456685 / 84

251 911 206081

<http://www.abysinnianflights.com>

Recommended Insurance Posture

Serious illnesses/injuries often require travelers to be medically evacuated to where adequate medical attention is available. Such "medevac" services are very expensive and are generally available only to travelers who either have travel insurance that covers medevac services or who are able to pay for the service in advance. Travelers should make sure their health

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insurance covers them while overseas and should strongly consider purchasing supplemental insurance that includes medical evacuation.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

Mosquito-borne illnesses (malaria, yellow fever, chikungunya) are a major problem, and prevention of bites and proper immunizations are important for all areas. Use mosquito repellents containing at least 20 percent DEET or picaridin and sleep under insecticide-impregnated mosquito nets if possible. There are extremely high malaria transmission rates throughout the year, and malaria chemoprophylaxis is recommended for even short stays in large cities. If you become ill with a fever or flu-like illness, and for up to one year after returning home, seek prompt medical attention. Tell the physician you have traveled into a malarial area and what antimalarial medication you have been taking.

Diarrheal diseases are prevalent and may be contracted even in luxury hotels in major cities. Follow scrupulous hygiene and safe food preparation. Wash hands thoroughly before eating, preparing food, and after use of sanitation facilities. Be very careful with food (especially raw vegetables and leafy salads) and water, including ice. For more information, please refer to OSAC's Report, "I'm Drinking What in My Water?."

Be up-to-date on all vaccinations. Hepatitis A, typhoid, and rabies are common.

Bites and scratches from dogs, bats, and other animals should be immediately washed with

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soap and water and evaluated to determine if further rabies immunization is warranted.

African trypanosomiasis is transmitted by the bite of the tsetse fly. Wear light-colored (but not blue, which attracts tsetse flies), heavyweight clothing.

Loiasis, a filarial infection transmitted by large tabanid flies (Deer or Mango Fly), is highly endemic in forested areas.

Schistosomiasis is caused by a parasitic worm. Avoid wading, swimming, bathing, or washing in, or drinking from bodies of fresh water.

Tuberculosis (TB) is an increasingly serious health concern. For further information, please consult the CDC's information on TB: <http://www.cdc.gov/tb/>

Although Ebola-free, Congo experienced a small Ebola outbreak in the remote province of West Cuvette, bordering Gabon, in 2012. Authorities remain vigilant against further outbreaks and require all tourists to submit a health questionnaire and submit to temperature scan upon entry.

Consult the CDC website for the Republic of the Congo prior to travel for the most up to date health information. For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit

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the CDC at: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/congo>.

OSAC Country Council Information

The Embassy has an OSAC Country Council. You can email the Brazzaville OSAC Country Council at osac-brazzaville@googlegroups.com or the Country Council Steering Committee (governing body) at osac-brazzaville-leadership@googlegroups.com. To reach OSAC's Africa team, please email OSACAF@state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

The Embassy is located in Brazzaville on Denis Sassou N'Guesso Boulevard (formerly known as Maya-Maya Boulevard) and is on the same road as the airport.

Hours of operation are Mon-Thurs 0730-1700 and Frid 0730-1230.

Embassy Contact Numbers

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The Embassy's main number is +242 06 612 2000.

U.S. citizens needing assistance outside of business hours should contact the Embassy duty officer at +242 05 526 3533.

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

Embassy Guidance

A passport, visa, and evidence of yellow fever vaccination are required for entry. It is not possible to obtain a visa at the point of entry.

The Embassy recommends that all travelers enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program so we can keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

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When confronted by an armed individual, the best practice is not to resist. Resistance or hesitation can result in serious injury. Keep your hands visible and follow instructions carefully. Any furtive movements might startle an attacker. Be as compliant as possible.

Avoid large crowds and demonstrations. Vary routes/times to avoid becoming predictable. Avoid walking alone, especially at night or in poorly illuminated areas.

Avoid carrying credit cards, U.S. driver's license, or other important documents around town. Most establishments accept only Central African Francs (CFA). Always carry some form of identification that you are prepared to surrender. The RoC is primarily a cash economy. Euros and U.S. dollars can be exchanged at the airport and at some banks and hotels and are accepted at the major grocery store in Brazzaville. ATMs are available but are unreliable. Only major hotels accept the major international credit/debit cards, although connectivity problems sometimes limit their availability. The West African CFA, while pegged at the same rate, is not accepted in RoC.

Buy a local cell phone and SIM card. Program important phone numbers into the cell phone. Inform someone of your plans so that they are aware of where and when to expect you.

Do not leave valuables in an unoccupied room unless secured in a proper safe. Know where the fire extinguishers and fire escapes are. Familiarize yourself with hotel staff. Find out if your hotel has contingencies in place for "active shooter" or terrorist attack scenarios and become familiar with these plans.

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