



Guinea 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Burglary; Hotels; Riots/Civil Unrest; Employee Health Safety; Disease Outbreak; Fraud

Africa > Guinea; Africa > Guinea > Conakry

5/26/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: High

Crime Threats

The general crime rate in Conakry is above the U.S. national average. Poverty and desperation have created a criminal threat that does not differentiate between nationalities.

Residential break-ins, burglaries, and other opportunistic crime are not uncommon. Several well-secured and protected homes were broken into in 2015. Petty theft from secured hotel rooms also occurred. Violence is not a common component to these opportunistic crimes. Reports of purse snatching and smash-and-grabs from both occupied and unoccupied vehicles are rare, but several reports were registered with the Regional Security Officer in 2015.

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Other Areas of Concern

Reticence to the international Ebola response is difficult to articulate. Although the Ebola Virus Disease is believed to be eliminated, suspicions remain as to the intent and purpose of foreigners operating in remote areas. Special care should be given to the perception that is created by American citizen activities in Guinea.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Guinea's road networks, both paved and unpaved, are underdeveloped and unsafe. Roads and vehicles are poorly maintained, and there are few traffic signs. Livestock and pedestrians create constant road hazards. Drivers are poorly trained, and road safety rules are routinely ignored. Defensive driving is crucial, as drivers commonly pull in front of other vehicles or stop abruptly without warning. Equipment (turn signals, mirrors, headlights, tail lights) on many local vehicles and taxis do not function. Be alert to motorcycles when changing lanes or when stopped in traffic. Drivers should pay attention to side streets and honk when approaching intersections during the day to avoid being hit from the side. When making cross-lane turns, always check rearview mirrors. It is not uncommon for traffic to pass on the side you are turning, even when you are using turn signals.

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Nighttime travel is not advisable because of the large number of animals and people on the roads. Further, most roadways have no street lights, and vehicles frequently operate without headlights.

For travel outside Conakry, prior planning is essential to ensure fuel points, lodging, and food/water availability.

Drivers should always lock doors and close windows and should only open vehicle windows enough to converse, if necessary. Failure to do so has resulted in carjacking and vehicle intrusion while stopped. Keep valuables out of sight or locked in the trunk. Thieves have reached in open windows and opened doors of stopped vehicles and grabbed items before passengers had time to respond. Always leave a car length distance between vehicles, especially while stopped in traffic. Always be attentive for signs of a potentially dangerous situation developing ahead (a large crowd, a large police presence) in order to change routes to avoid risk. If the need arises, most vehicles can drive over any curb or barrier that is lower than the car bumper, if driven over at a slight angle.

Soldiers manning checkpoints at night and police at intersections during the day will often solicit bribes. Display requested documents but do not surrender them, as officials may take them if bribes are not paid.

Public Transportation Conditions

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The Regional Security Office advises Embassy personnel to avoid using public transportation. Vehicles are filled beyond capacity and offer few safety features. Reports of inappropriate touching and opportunistic theft were common in 2015.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

Travelers should avoid unsolicited offers of assistance at the airport or hotels, as these individuals may be seeking opportunities to rob visitors of their bags, purses, or wallets. Visitors who arrange to be met at the airport by hotel personnel or business contacts can reduce vulnerability to these crimes. Security at Gbessia International Airport was nearly non-existent, but the creation of a new, modern terminal, professionally made access badges, and heightened security have improved the situation.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

Terrorist activity in the region is of concern. Anti-Western extremism has been seen in neighboring countries. The potential for movements across the porous frontiers has received

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renewed attention from the security services of Guinea.

There are no known indigenous terrorist organizations in Guinea; however, regional terrorist attacks and the specter of encroaching extremism have been a focus for Guinean security services. Porous borders and lack of immigration controls have allowed for a disconcerting ease of passage for undesirable elements. In 2015, Guinea interdicted and extradited several extremists, proving that Guinea is relatively easy to enter. Conversely, Guinea has proven the ability to identify, track, and locate wanted individuals. While Guinea has remained relatively free from extremist activity and violence, all visitors should be familiar with the most up-to-date security information.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: High

Civil Unrest

Guinea has a fragile government and a tenuous relationship with its citizens. Poor infrastructure and lack of basic utilities has led to occasional protests and the associated disruptions to traffic and commerce. 2015 saw presidential elections that were free from widespread violence. After successful legislative elections in 2013, international efforts to combat the deadly Ebola Virus Disease, and 2015 presidential elections, it appears that Guinea has weathered a series of potential storms. This relative success in surviving drawn

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out and complex civil challenges has set the stage for, what Guinea hopes is, a return of sustained international investment.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Dust and pollution can irritate respiratory systems. Although not a critical concern, burning refuse and unchecked vehicle pollution have led to many seasonal complaints of Conakry's air quality.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

The electricity service is unreliable, and visitors could find themselves on a dark street at anytime.

Police Response

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Police or gendarmes are often nearby in Conakry. Local authorities are poorly equipped and trained. Local authorities have little/no emergency response capabilities and usually require the victim to drive them from the police station to the accident or crime scene.

Poor discipline within the security services has led to numerous reports of extortion at police checkpoints, or claims of unauthorized photography near “sensitive” installations is often the basis for an on-the-spot fine. Explicit permission from the government should be obtained before photographing military and transportation facilities, particularly airports, government buildings, or public works. Visitors who take photographs without permission in any public area may agitate security personnel or create offense among those being photographed. 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

Activity that can, even unfairly, be perceived as suspicious may result in an artificial fine, or bribe. Many officials solicit bribes and are often involved as co-conspirators in criminal activities. Do not exhibit potentially suspicious behavior (photography, accessing restricted areas, etc.) in front of police.

Where to Turn to for Assistance if you Become a Victim of Crime

Major traffic circles will likely have police, and precinct stations are typically manned, although

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at night, duty officers may be asleep or unavailable.

Police/Security Agencies

The distinction between criminal investigative responsibilities can be confusing. Police are formally tasked with security and law enforcement within the cities and towns, while the Gendarmes have an official role in security and law enforcement outside of the city. That said, the Gendarmes have found an effective role inside major towns and cities as well. It is now more common that the Gendarmes will have a primary role in both security and investigations. Police maintain a criminal investigations unit and have responsibility for vehicle traffic.

Medical Emergencies

Health facilities are very limited and are considered adequate only for stabilization and emergency care. Hospitals suffer from inadequate facilities, outdated equipment, and shortages of supplies/medications. Facilities may require a cash deposit (depending on the type of medical condition) before admittance and forbid medical release until all accrued charges are paid. After two years of the Ebola outbreak, there is a shortage of qualified physicians and other medical personnel. Emergency assistance is also limited. Some clinics have ambulance services, but these are limited and unreliable. Emergency transportation usually requires independent and creative solutions. Psychiatric services and medications are very limited. Travelers should carry their own supplies of prescription drugs and preventive medicines and a doctor's note describing the medication. If the quantity of drugs exceeds that which would be expected for personal use, a permit from the Ministry of Health is recommended. Pharmaceuticals are available, but authenticity/quality cannot be guaranteed.

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For more information, please refer to OSAC's Report, "Traveling with Medications."

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

There are several private clinics and services available to address many types of emergencies. There are four hospitals and clinics in the Conakry area: (tel numbers include the country code; in Guinea use only the last eight digits):

Clinique Pasteur, Dr. Ben Baba + 224 64 28 91 21

Clinique Ambroise Pare, Dr. Saad, Director, + 224 64 25 13 44

Cabinet Medical, Dr. Maria G. Doumbouya, + 224 64 25 13 44

International Medical Center, Dr. Rodingher, + 224 60 29 71 17

Available Air Ambulance Services

Serious medical problems may be stabilized in Conakry while awaiting medical evacuation. There is no private air ambulance service. If medical evacuation is necessary, arrangements can be made with:

S.O.S. Air Ambulance: www.internationalsos.com

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Recommended Insurance Posture

Serious illnesses/injuries often require travelers to be medically evacuated 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; it can range from US\$40,000-\$200,000. Medical evacuation insurance is highly recommended for travelers visiting Guinea.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

Diseases (malaria (cerebral malaria), hepatitis, intestinal disorders) are endemic. Proper use of anti-malarial medication is required.

Although Ebola is largely believed to have been suppressed, international responders and local health officials remain poised to address a re-emergence of the disease. Throughout the life of the outbreak (2014-2015), reticence to the response was one of the major hindrances to effective outreach and engagement efforts. This reticence remains in some areas through distrust of government activities and international responders. Misunderstandings and skepticism continue to be obstacles not only for public health but other initiatives as well.

For additional vaccine and health guidance, please visit the CDC at:
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/guinea>.

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OSAC Country Council Information

The Embassy does not have an active OSAC Country Council. You can email the Regional Security Office at DS_RSO_Conakry@state.gov to register your interest. 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 U.S. Embassy is located in Koloma, Conakry, east of Hamdallaye Circle at the following address:

American Embassy Conakry

P.O. Box 603

Transversale No. 2

Centre Administratif de Koloma

Commune de Ratoma

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Conakry, Republic of Guinea

Embassy Contact Numbers

U.S. Embassy Conakry: 224 65 10 40 00

American Citizen Services Officer: 224 65 10 43 34

After Hours American Citizens Services Officer: 224 67 10 43 11

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

Embassy Guidance

All Americans should register with American Citizen Services when they arrive in Guinea. The U.S. Embassy maintains a liaison with local law enforcement officials and is available to assist American citizens during their stay in Guinea. U.S citizens can check with American Citizen Services at the U.S. Embassy prior to departing for up-to date information.

If you are going to reside in or visit Guinea, please take the time to tell our Embassy about your presence in-country. If you enroll, 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)

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button at <http://travel.state.gov>. Consular information is available at:
http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1113.html.

To avoid confusion or delays, travelers are strongly advised to obtain a valid Guinean visa at a Guinean Embassy prior to arrival. You must obtain a visa prior to arrival if you plan to enter Guinea by any land port of entry. Guinean visas have been available at ports of entry, but this method is unreliable and may cause unnecessary delays or unexpected returns. Travelers should check with their sponsoring organization to ensure they have the correct documentation in place or risk penalties (detention, fines, deportation).

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Scams

Some crimes involve land or mining schemes. American citizens have been lured by the promise of mining rights and mineral wealth. These deals and claims are almost entirely fraudulent and should be avoided.

If someone bumps into you, immediately check your pockets.

Situational Awareness Best Practices

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Conakry offers several expensive hotels to travelers, though the accommodations do not compare to standards elsewhere. Do not discuss your business or travel plans in public areas. Selecting a hotel room on the third to fifth floors generally will keep you out of reach of criminal activity from the street but still within reach of fire escape ladders in case of an emergency. Do not entertain strangers in your room. Never leave valuables exposed or unattended, even if locked in a suitcase. Place valuables in a hotel safe deposit box. Familiarize yourself with escape routes in case of fire or other catastrophe. Lock your doors and use the bolt lock whenever you are in your room. Use the door viewer before opening the door to any visitor. Report any suspicious activity to the hotel manager/security officer immediately.

Pay all bills in cash. Guinea has ATMs and credit card terminals, but the U.S. Embassy does not hold much confidence in the security measures in place.

Personal awareness is your best defense. By being aware and taking a few basic security measures, travelers can significantly reduce their vulnerability. While departing a hotel or residence, driving or exiting a vehicle, travelers should pay attention their surroundings. Visitors should make eye contact and acknowledge those who may be observing their movements. Along walking and driving routes, identify safe havens where one could seek refuge or help. Try to identify what looks normal and avoid anything out of the ordinary. If driving, look for things that could stop you. Criminals, as well as terrorists, will look for established patterns. Vary the times/routes for all travel and reduce predictable behaviors. When possible, travel during daylight hours and in the company of another person. Share travel plans with a friend or business associate.

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Routine personal security considerations (locking doors/windows, employing technological security measures) helps reduce exposure to risk significantly. Careful consideration of means of transportation and specific times and locations deemed dangerous can also help reduce the instances of crime.

If walking down a crowded street, stay to one far side or the other. It is easier to pay attention to 180 degrees, and any potential threats must cross traffic to intercept you. Do not walk or ride bikes after dark. Avoid poorly illuminated streets, alleyways, and side streets. Travelers should wear little/no jewelry when shopping or in crowded areas. Be alert when carrying handbags and never flash any money. Money should be divided into small amounts and secured in different pockets. Carry only the amount of money needed. Cellular telephones should be used cautiously in public. They are easily snatched and are a prime target for thieves. If confronted, do not resist. The assailant may be armed and have the advantage of surprise. It is better to lose valuables than to risk serious injury.

The ability of the U.S. Embassy to extricate U.S. citizens from unlawful business deals is extremely limited.

All visitors should have a passport, visa, and inoculation card. It is best to have a copy to present to officials, who may attempt to keep the document until a bribe is paid. The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to local authorities and to the U.S. Embassy.

Do not transport persons who have no identification. Doing so will bring police suspicion upon the driver and increase the chance of an incident during a routine roadblock.

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It is advised to restrict photography to private gatherings.

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