



## Mauritius 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Financial Security; Maritime; Hotels; Burglary; Riots/Civil Unrest; Religious Violence; Hurricanes; Floods; Intellectual Property Rights Infringement; Rape/Sexual Violence; Drug Trafficking; Disease Outbreak

Africa > Mauritius; Africa > Mauritius > Port Louis

5/26/2016

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Medium

#### Crime Threats

Mauritius is one of the safest countries in the region for resident and visiting Americans. Crime rates have remained relatively flat in recent years. Crime in Port Louis is lower than in most U.S. cities of similar size and on the rest of the island is generally lower than in Port Louis. The overall crime rate is low, and violent crime involving tourists/business travelers is not common. Though physical assaults and sexual violence occur, most criminal activity against foreigners is non-violent.

Crimes are predominantly motivated by economics (pickpocketing, purse snatchings, petty thefts). These incidents often occur in crowded outdoor shopping areas, including areas that

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cater to the robust tourist industry. Police have disrupted a handful of ATM skimming operations. Most of these have been detected before actual losses were sustained.

Public beaches are generally safe and often crowded on weekends and holidays. Thefts do occur. While all beaches are public by law, hotel beaches are accessed mainly by guests. Hotel room thefts can occur.

Residential break-ins occur with some frequency, but most burglars are keen to avoid confrontation, and break-ins do not typically involve violence. However, some burglars have brandished weapons (knives, machetes) when confronted.

Violent crimes (serious assaults, murder, rape) occur but are uncommon when compared to other African countries.

Neither Americans nor foreigners are generally singled out for criminal activity, but they may become targets of opportunity. The Embassy is not aware of any violence specifically targeting American residents or visitors.

Mauritian economic success over the last several decades has come from the establishment of offshore banking and financial services sectors. Mauritius is a low-tax, high "ease of doing business" jurisdiction that markets itself as a platform for investment in Africa. While relatively well-regulated, there are some concerns that the financial sector could be used to launder financing for terrorists and transnational criminal organizations as more traditional illicit

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routings come under tighter control.

## Cybersecurity Issues

Instances of serious cyber crimes are low. The Mauritius Police Force (MPF) has a capable Cyber Crime Unit, which has received U.S. government training. Organized hacking operations by indigenous criminal groups are very limited, although the extent of hacking operations conducted by external actors is unknown. Visitors should practice standard cyber security precautions.

## Other Areas of Concern

There are no recommended off-limits areas. Travel about the island is not restricted by the government or by Embassy policy. Port Louis and the areas of Flic en Flac, Grand Baie, or any place frequented by tourists are likely to have higher petty crime rates, especially at night. Prostitution and drug activities are prevalent in downtown Port Louis after dark, particularly in "Company Gardens" public park in the city's center.

## Transportation-Safety Situation

### Road Safety and Road Conditions

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Mauritius and the U.S. have a driver's license reciprocity convention in place. Motor vehicles are right-side drive, and traffic moves on the left. The use of turn indicators does not always follow international conventions. Roads are generally narrow with cars commonly parked in the roadway, making traffic accidents a constant concern. Most streets outside of the capital are two lane roads. Truck and bus traffic is heavy, and safe passing opportunities can be few (though that does not stop vehicles from passing).

Poor civil planning adds a complex variable to the driving experience. The vast majority of roads pre-date automobile traffic. They can be very narrow and generally have deep unmarked open gutters or walls/hedges line them instead of a shoulder, resulting in no visibility and no room to maneuver. Construction crews often do not provide adequate advanced notice of lane or road closures, and it is common for traffic traveling in both directions to be funneled to a single lane without traffic controls of any sort.

Sidewalks are not common outside of urban centers, and there is often little/no shoulder for vehicles. Despite this, animals, pedestrians, bicycles, and motorbikes regularly use these limited shoulders and pose safety hazards to vehicular traffic. Sidewalks are overcrowded, and pedestrians often walk in the streets, competing for space with vehicles.

Traffic in Port Louis is very heavy on weekdays during the main commuting hours and often congested throughout the day. Motorcycles and scooters move between and around traffic, often disregarding traffic laws. For example, motorcycles and scooters must only pass in the far right lane, but it is common practice to see them drive in between lanes and pass on the left.

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Driving at night brings additional challenges. Street lighting is poor, and in many locations there is no lighting. Headlight use varies; it is common to see cars with no lights or constantly running high beams, either scenario makes it difficult for oncoming traffic to see. Motorcyclists must wear reflective safety vests at night.

Collisions among vehicles, motorcycles/scooters and/or pedestrians are frequent and, when combined with the higher speeds on country roads, can be serious. Motorists must have auto insurance. Host country laws regarding vehicle accidents allow motorists involved in an accident where no injury has occurred to exchange information and then report details to the authorities. However, for foreigners, it is recommended to not move the vehicle from the site of the accident and to request local law enforcement to assist. If an individual is in fear of personal safety, s/he may depart the area but should proceed immediately to the nearest police station to report the incident. Motorists involved in an accident are encouraged to not admit fault (insurance companies/courts will decide fault) and to only sign statements to the police that the motorist has written in his/her own words.

Police enforce traffic laws randomly. Typical enforcement focuses on making sure that all vehicles have the appropriate registration and insurance stickers on their vehicle. Speed traps are normally set up around construction, towns, and city speed zones. Police personnel wear official uniforms and use clearly identifiable police vehicles at speed traps and checkpoints. Numerous fixed and portable speed cameras are in use, but they are always preceded by clearly marked signs.

The Embassy recommends travelers take common sense precautions when driving and always pay particular attention to their surroundings. While at a stop light/sign, consider

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leaving adequate maneuver room between your vehicle and the one in front. Always keep car doors locked when driving and keep belongings out of plain view/reach before you park. Park only in well-illuminated areas, preferably in parking lots with a security guard, and ensure vehicles are locked.

### Public Transportation Conditions

Public transportation is relatively safe, inexpensive, and reliable. Bus schedules vary, but major routes are well-served, especially during commuting hours. Taxis are affordable, safe, and available at identified taxi stands, including near most hotels. Most taxis are metered, but drivers do occasionally recommend paying a flat amount, which is not advised. Taxis do not routinely circulate such that customers could hail them on the street. "Gypsy" taxis are not recommended, as higher fares are frequently charged to unsuspecting visitors.

### Aviation/Airport Conditions

Mauritius' international airport, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport (MRU), has a new passenger terminal, opened in late 2013, and is a state of the art international airport with many modern security technologies. Airport and aviation safety/security concerns have not seriously impacted individual travelers' welfare or safety. In December 2015, an Air France flight departing Mauritius made an emergency landing in Kenya due to a suspicious package in a lavatory. The package was a hoax, and an investigation determined that there were no security lapses at MRU related to the incident

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## Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

### Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

Mauritius is a non-aligned country with no significant enemies and is not targeted by any known radical groups. Government and community leaders have publicly stated their support for U.S. counterterrorism efforts, and Mauritius has not been affected by terrorist incidents. There are no known indigenous or international terrorist organizations operating in Mauritius. In February 2015, several Mauritians attempted to illegally cross into Syria from Turkey, purportedly to fight with ISIL. They were deported back to Mauritius. In December 2015, the press reported extensively on a Mauritian supporter of ISIL who had posted a recruitment video on YouTube encouraging Mauritians to travel to Syria. In January 2016, unspecified threats to various locations on the island that never materialized were e-mailed to the Prime Minister's office. The investigation was ongoing, but all signs indicated that the e-mail was a hoax.

### Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

There have been very few indicators of anti-American or anti-Western sentiment. Anti-American demonstrations have not resulted in violence. A few demonstrations at the U.S.

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Embassy have been related to support for the Palestinians, but the demonstrations have been peaceful and rarely attracted more than 20 demonstrators.

## **Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence**

### Civil Unrest

Political violence and civil unrest have occurred but are not common. Most protests end peacefully. There are occasional tensions between unlicensed street vendors and police, particularly around Christmas, but these tensions have not turned violent since 2012.

Demonstrations are normally peaceful, and police response is appropriate. Embassy personnel are advised to avoid large crowds and gatherings that appear to be political. American citizens are encouraged to follow this same guidance.

Indigenous inhabitants from the islands that include Diego Garcia, known as "Chagossians," conduct occasional demonstrations directed against the Mauritian government and the British High Commission. All of these demonstrations have been non-violent. The Chagossians have also peacefully delivered petitions to the U.S. Embassy to gain attention and garner support for their cause.

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## Religious/Ethnic Violence

Mauritius is a multi-ethnic, multi-faith nation that has managed its diversity well when compared to other African countries. However, there are underlying socio-economic tensions related to this diversity that occasionally manifest themselves. These tensions were apparent in September 2015 when acts of vandalism at a temple and a mosque stoked suspicions and inflamed tempers but did not result in violence. The situation was astutely handled, with senior members of the government and of the religious communities calling for calm and the police responding in a measured way.

## Post-specific Concerns

### Environmental Hazards

Cyclones are the biggest environmental hazard. The core cyclone season is November-April, although off-season cyclones can occur. Persons traveling during these months are cautioned to remain aware of weather and traveling conditions.

Low lying coastal areas can be affected by sporadic flooding if there is heavy rain or storm surge due to large and localized weather events. These storms can stir up the fresh water reservoirs significantly enough to have the government issue a boil notice for drinking water that will remain in place for a few days after the storm passes.

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## Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

Intellectual property theft is a concern. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) laws are selectively enforced. Counterfeit goods and the unlicensed sale of name-brand products manufactured in Mauritius are often available in markets, especially in Port Louis, and little effort is made to stop their sale. Clothing items, jewelry, watches, and software are commonly in violation of IPR laws.

## Personnel-Background Concerns

Women walking by themselves may be at greater risk for verbal harassment and criminal targeting, including groping and other forms of sexual assault.

While there is a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community, LGBT rights are generally ambiguous, and same-sex couples are not legally recognized. Discrimination against the LGBT community is prevalent, though open hostility is not common.

Persons with disabilities should be aware that infrastructure does not meet Western access and accommodation standards.

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## Drug-related Crimes

In recent years, drug use has increased. The police have a limited capacity to secure their borders due to the expansive coast line and proliferation of small water craft that move without impediment. Cannabis is the most widely used drug, followed by heroin, which has become heavily-trafficked since small amounts can provide significant cash flow. Subutex (buprenorphine – sublingual) is also popular. Mauritian laws are very strict for drug possession, and prison sentences of up to 35 years are possible if convicted.

## Police Response

The MPF has provided excellent protection to the U.S. Embassy and has responded positively to the needs of the U.S. community. The MPF is a well-trained, professional, and generally responsive national police force by regional standards. Foreigners can expect to be treated with courtesy, and petty corruption does not plague the public's daily interaction with police, though it does exist. The MPF emergency telephone number is 999. Most police officers speak English reasonably well. An MPF "Tourist Police" unit patrols resort hotels and tourist areas.

## How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

Any Americans arrested, detained, or victimized by police harassment are reminded to contact the U.S. Embassy American Citizen Services (ACS) section by calling (230) 202-4400

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or 202-4432 during business hours or the U.S. Embassy duty officer at (230) 5253-3641 after hours. More information can be found at the U.S. Embassy's ACS webpage: <http://mauritius.usembassy.gov/service.html>.

Mauritius Police Force

Line Barracks (Police Headquarters)

Port Louis, Mauritius

Emergency Number: 999

Crimestoppers: 148

Main Number: (230) 208-1212

Police/Security Agencies

Mauritius has no military but has a paramilitary unit and coast guard within the MPF.

## **Medical Emergencies**

Medical attention is adequate at major hospitals, and private clinics staffed by foreign-trained

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doctors also exist. Emergency ambulance service can be obtained by dialing 114 or 118.

#### Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital (SSRNH) (government hospital)

Pamplemousses (north of the island) with 100 beds.

Tel: (230) 246-4669

Fax: (230) 243-8965

Jeetoo Hospital (government hospital)

Port Louis, Mauritius

Tel: (230) 208-7095

Apollo Bramwell Hospital (private hospital)

Moka (south of Port Louis), Mauritius, with 200 beds.

Tel: (230) 605 1000

Fax: (230) 605 1100

Email: [info@apollobramwell.com](mailto:info@apollobramwell.com)

The Fortis Darné Clinic – North (Fortis Clinique Darné) (private hospital)

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La Croisette Mall - Office C, CO - 05A & C2 - 204

Grand Bay (north of the island) 24/7 emergency and ambulance services.

Tel: (230) 601-2300

Fax: (230) 269-6224

E-mail: [clinique@cliniquedarne.com](mailto:clinique@cliniquedarne.com)

The Fortis Darné Clinic - Central (Fortis Clinique Darné) (private hospital)

Georges Guibert Street

Floréal (center of the island), Mauritius with 50 beds.

Tel: (230) 601-2300

Fax: (230) 696 3612 (admin)

## Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required for travelers coming from infected areas.

Visitors from malaria-stricken areas are noted upon entry and may be tested by local mobile health officials.

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Ebola screening at the airport and port are in effect. Foreign nationals who have visited any of the countries affected by Ebola Virus Disease within 21 days will not be allowed entry into Mauritius.

It is recommended to drink filtered bottled water. For more information, please refer to OSAC's Report, "I'm Drinking What in My Water?."

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

## **OSAC Country Council Information**

Mauritius does not have an OSAC Country Council. The Regional Security Office (RSO) can be contacted by calling (230) 202-4470. The RSO provides country briefings for representatives of American businesses and organizations upon request. To reach OSAC's Africa team, please email [OSACAF@state.gov](mailto:OSACAF@state.gov).

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

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## Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

The U.S. Embassy in Port Louis is located on the fourth floor of Rogers House, President John Kennedy Blvd.

Working hours: 0730-1645 Mon-Thurs, or 0730-1230 Fri

## Embassy Contact Numbers

Switchboard: (230) 202-4400

For emergencies outside of normal working hours, call (230) 5253-3641 to reach the U.S. Embassy Duty Officer.

Consular office: (230) 202-4432

Economic/Commercial office: (230) 202-4470.

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

## Consular coverage for multi-post countries

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Consular coverage also includes Seychelles.

## Embassy Guidance

Travelers should stay informed of the security situation in Mauritius through the media and the U.S. Embassy's website and should register with the Embassy through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) <https://step.state.gov/step/>.

For updated information, please contact the Consular Section of the American Embassy in Port Louis, or consult the web sites of the Consular Bureau of the Department of State ([www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)) or of the United States Embassy in Port Louis.

## Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

### Situational Awareness Best Practices

The common sense precautions one would take in any large city are appropriate on the island. To avoid becoming a victim of pickpocketing or purse snatchings, be alert and aware of your surroundings, especially in outdoor markets. It is recommended to keep a low profile and not to carry large sums of cash or wear expensive jewelry. If possible, leave wallets or purses secured at home or in a hotel safe and carry only necessary cash and ID in a front

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pocket. Purses/shoulder bags should be kept closed, tucked under the arm, with the strap held.

Many streets are poorly illuminated; individuals should exercise caution when walking alone at night outside hotel grounds and in unknown areas. It is not common for people, especially foreigners, to walk alone in urban areas after dark. Most shops and businesses are closed by 1700 weekdays and by 1300 on Sundays.

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