



## Uruguay 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Burglary; Murder; Assault; Riots/Civil Unrest; Hotels

Western Hemisphere > Uruguay; Western Hemisphere > Uruguay > Montevideo

5/26/2016

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: High

### Crime Threats

The crime rate is high by U.S. standards. In Montevideo, street-level crime (pickpocketing, purse snatching, armed robbery, smash-and-grab robbery, theft from parked cars) is common. Criminals prey on targets of opportunity (tourists openly carrying valuables, motorists stopped at traffic lights with visible valuables, unattended parked cars). Criminals migrate toward popular tourist areas (Ciudad Vieja, Avenida 18 de Julio, Plaza de Independencia, Mercado del Puerto, other ferias) within the city.

Criminals often resort to violence if victims resist. Montevideo continues to experience an increase in violent crime (home invasion robberies, armed robberies of businesses/other locations known to have cash). These criminals are well-armed and brazen. They often wear body armor and do not hesitate to engage the police. Final statistics for 2015 indicate that

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violent crime has increased since 2014. Most notably, within Montevideo, homicides have increased 12 percent at a rate of 7.1 per 100,000 habitants, and armed robberies have increased 2.8 percent at a rate of 654 per 100,000 habitants. Domestic violence and assaults have increased 13 percent and nine percent, respectively.

Residential burglaries are a frequent problem in Montevideo. Ministry of Interior 1st Semester reporting indicated that residential burglaries have increased 9.3 percent since 2014. Single-family residences are more vulnerable to burglary than apartments. The Carrasco, Punta Carretas, and Pocitos areas of Montevideo experience the largest number of residential burglaries due to the presence of many affluent families and foreign diplomats. Most incidents occur while the occupants are away.

Vehicle break-ins remain common place. Ministry of Interior 1st Semester reporting indicated a 3.8 percent increase since 2014. Criminals tend to target vehicles with valuables left in plain view in parked and occupied vehicles. Vehicles operated by single female drivers are frequent targets.

Conversely, vehicle theft experienced a 2.5 percent decrease since 2014, according to Ministry of Interior 1st Semester reporting. Most notably, motorcycle theft experienced a 12.2 percent decrease since 2014. These incidents usually occur while the motorcyclist is stopped at a traffic light. Motorcycles are frequently targeted so that criminals can use them to commit other criminal acts.

## Areas of Concern

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There are no “off-limits” areas of Montevideo, but disadvantaged neighborhoods, many of which border areas frequented by Americans, suffer from higher and more violent crime rates. These areas include Casabo, Cerro Norte, Casavalle, Borro, Marconi, 40 Semanas, and Hipodromo.

## **Transportation-Safety Situation**

### Road Safety and Road Conditions

Uruguay experienced a 5.1 percent decrease in transit-related deaths since 2014, according to Ministry of Interior 1st Semester reporting. Poor illumination, pavement markings, and road surfaces are contributing factors to traffic accidents.

When travelling outside of Montevideo, extra caution should be exercised to mitigate traffic safety concerns. There is a reduced amount of timely police patrols and first responder availability in rural areas. Primary routes between Colonia, Montevideo, and Punta del Este are particularly accident prone due to heavy tourist traffic and offer greater opportunity for speed-related accidents.

Traffic accidents typically increase during the summer months due to Christmas, New Year’s, Carnival, and other local holidays that draw large amounts of tourists and increased alcohol

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consumption.

When travelling in a vehicle, keep purses, backpacks, cameras, and electronic devices out of sight. Vehicle interiors should be kept clean and free of valuables. Parking garages should be used when available.

#### Public Transportation Conditions

The Regional Security Officer advises the use of call-ahead taxis whenever possible.

#### **Terrorism Threat**

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

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

While there is anti-American sentiment in some circles, this sentiment rarely, if ever, takes violent form. The U.S. Embassy has also experienced an increase in small demonstrations since 2014. There are some political protests that tend to target the U.S. Embassy, but

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political violence has been minimal to non-existent in recent years. As of January 2016, there were no credible reports of direct terrorist threats against American interests in Uruguay.

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

Uruguay is a stable democratic republic.

Post Political Violence Rating: Low

Civil Unrest

Two areas prone to demonstrations are Plaza de Independencia and Avenida 18 de Julio. Most demonstrations are peaceful and non-violent. Although public law requires a permit to demonstrate, this is typically not enforced by local police.

## **Police Response**

The Uruguayan National Police have a trained and capable response force. Police typically increase patrols during periods of high tourist activity, especially during the presence of cruise liners in the summer. A minimal police presence remains in the late evening and early

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morning hours. However, their approach to policing is largely reactive. Police presence on the streets is minimal and provides little in the way of a deterrent. Police sometimes face shortages of resources and funding. In addition, Uruguayan law prevents prosecution of minors for non-violent crimes; thus, many crimes are committed by adolescents, who are released within 24 hours. Minors are never tried as adults.

The Centro de Comando Unificado (CCU) is the national 911 system. The CCU continues to improve its capabilities to respond to incidents but is marred by high volumes of non-emergency calls. These calls frequently result in wait times of up to 5 minutes before a caller with a true emergency is connected with a dispatcher. Additionally, there is limited availability of English-speaking dispatchers. Once dispatched, police response time to incidents is generally fast. Most police officers, particularly those assigned to patrol duty, speak only Spanish.

#### Crime Victim Assistance

Police/Fire/Ambulance: 911

Ambulance Services

SEMM: Dial 159 or 598-2-711-1111

SUAT: Dial 133

UCM: Dial 147

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## Medical Emergencies

### Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Hospital Británico:

Avenida Italia 2420, Montevideo

Tel: 598-2-487-1020

Asociación Española:

Bulevar Artigas 1525, Montevideo

Tel: 1920-7000

Hospital Militar:

Avenida 8 De Octubre 3020, Montevideo

Tel: 598-2- 487- 6666

### CDC Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

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For vaccine and health guidance, please visit the CDC at:  
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/uruguay.htm>.

## **OSAC Country Council Information**

The OSAC Country Council was established in 2007. For more information, contact the Regional Security Officer. To reach OSAC's Western Hemisphere team, please email [OSACWHA@state.gov](mailto:OSACWHA@state.gov).

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

### Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

Embassy of the United States of America

1776 Lauro Müller

Montevideo, Uruguay, 11200

### Embassy Contact Numbers

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Embassy Switchboard (24-hours): 598-2-1770-2000

Regional Security Office: 598-2-1770-2318

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

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

### Situational Awareness Best Practices

Visitors who are aware of their surroundings, who explore during daylight hours, and who do not openly display cash or other valuables will minimize their exposure to street-level crime. Do not carry large amounts of cash, multiple credit cards, or original passports. Carry only the money needed for the day, one credit card at most, and a photocopy of the passport identification page. Visitors should also avoid carrying unnecessary valuables to minimize the effects of crime.

Visitors should stay at reputable hotels in the Punta Carretas, Pocitos, or Carrasco area of Montevideo. Outside of Montevideo, reputable hotel chains should be used. The hotel should provide private security and rooms with safes and adequate locks on all doors and windows. Although the quality of hotel safes varies, extra cash, credit cards, and passports should always be secured in the safe.

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Traveling in pairs or in small groups is recommended, especially in tourist areas (Ciudad Vieja, Mercado del Puerto, Plaza de Independencia). Uruguayans are very friendly, but visitors should be alert to people intent on creating distractions.

Precautions for residential security include the use of private security patrols, a centrally-monitored alarm system, grilled windows with tightly spaced cross-members, high perimeter fences, sufficient exterior lighting, and selection of structures without adjacent vacant lots/parks.

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