



Japan 2016 Crime & Safety Report: Osaka

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Financial Security; Rape/Sexual Violence; Assault; Anti-American sentiment; Riots/Civil Unrest; Earthquakes; Tsunamis; Drug Trafficking

East Asia & Pacific > Japan; East Asia & Pacific > Japan > Osaka-Kobe

7/6/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Low

Crime Threats

The crime rate is below the U.S. national average. Crimes against U.S. citizens usually involve personal disputes, theft, or vandalism. Pickpocketing and other petty crimes do take place in crowded shopping areas, bars/nightclubs, train stations, and airports. Every year, a number of U.S. citizens report their passports lost or stolen at Narita airport. Non-violent crimes, especially financial crimes that include the use of stolen credit cards and credit card numbers, occur on a regular basis in Osaka.

Although underreported, there is strong anecdotal evidence to suggest that sexual assault in the form of groping and molestation is a regular occurrence on crowded railways. This is

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evidenced by the female-only railway cars that have come into existence on certain train lines.

Osaka is renowned for purse snatchings. Most of the episodes involve a snatch-and-grab with the perpetrator(s) being on foot. However, there have been reported incidents of thieves using bicycles as a getaway.

Visitors should be aware that most drinking establishments have a set charge as part of the bill that does not include food or beverages. This charge can range from approximately U.S.\$5 to several hundred dollars, depending on the establishment. This charge has led to misunderstandings and confrontations between businesses and foreign visitors who are unaware of the custom and think they are being scammed or overcharged. As a result, many drinking establishments have opted to put "no charge" signs in English that are visible to foreign patrons. If no sign is visible, this issue may be inquired about with the management of an unfamiliar drinking establishment upon entry in order to avoid any possible misunderstandings.

By U.S. standards, violent crime is extremely rare in Osaka. Homicide, armed robbery, and rape statistics reveal rates are a small fraction of what is typically found in similarly-sized U.S. cities, with crimes involving firearms almost non-existent.

Other Areas of Concern

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For decades, the Nishinari District was infamous for numerous violent confrontations between the large homeless population and local police. In recent years, these clashes have subsided, however; the district is still home to a transient population, a thriving sex trade with heavy mafia involvement, and an above average crime rate. The Regional Security Office recommends avoiding this area after dark.

The large entertainment districts of Umeda and Kita Shinchi in the northern part of downtown Osaka and Shinsaibashi in the south have thousands of restaurants, clubs, and late night drinking establishments. In general, these areas are well-policed and safe for couples or groups to visit at night; however, visitors should be aware that drug use and regular clashes between patrons at bars is often reported from the “American-mura” portion of the Shinsaibashi entertainment district. In addition, the Regional Security Office notes that after-hours these entertainment districts have large numbers of intoxicated people who may be prone to engaging strangers on the street, especially women walking alone. All visitors should be vigilant with regard to situational awareness when visiting these areas at night.

The Fukushima Nuclear Reactor is a continuing nuclear incident. The government maintains a 20-kilometer exclusion zone around the plant. All U.S. personnel should avoid personal travel to this area.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

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Road conditions and road safety standards meet or exceed U.S standards except in the most remote areas or islands. Roads are well-maintained, and extensive lighting exists. Vehicle accidents, including those involving pedestrians, are common. Traffic enforcement includes extensive use of cameras.

Public Transportation Conditions

The overall transportation system is an efficient, safe system. The railway system is a combination of local trains and high-speed trains. All riders on public transportation should maintain a strong situational awareness and immediately move away from and/or confront any individuals attempting physical molestation.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

All major U.S. airlines service the international airports.

Other Travel Conditions

There are a number of tour organizations that arrange travel throughout the country, with varying degrees of service. None are deemed off-limits.

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Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

There are no known indigenous terrorist organizations, and Japan is not a known base of support or sympathy for terrorists.

In 2015, there was a rise of ISIL-related sympathizers among Japanese nationals. Media reported on Japanese nationals who travelled or attempted to travel to Syria to join ISIL.

While Japan has experienced no terrorist incidents in the last decade, all visitors should be familiar with the contents of the Department of State's periodic worldwide cautionary statement. This statement expresses the Department's concern about continued threat of attacks, demonstrations, and other violent actions against American citizens and American interests abroad.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

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The U.S. Embassy routinely is the target for peaceful demonstrations, usually protesting the U.S. military presence on Japanese soil.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: Low

Civil Unrest

Violent demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience are generally limited. Most protests are peaceful. Numerous demonstrations with the number of participants varying in size from a few to several thousand took place in 2015. Demonstrators are required to apply for a permit from the government prior to any activity. The police closely monitor demonstrations, and information is usually passed to the RSO.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

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Japan is in an active seismic region, known as the “Ring of Fire,” and often experiences minor tremors and earthquakes. Japan has suffered from large earthquakes in major metropolitan areas, and the 9.0 earthquake north of Tokyo in 2011 resulted in a tsunami that caused widespread damage to coastal cities and the Fukushima nuclear reactor. Coastal cities remain susceptible to tsunamis, which stem from earthquake epicenters in the ocean and can arrive on shore within minutes.

Japan has made great advances in building, railway, and road construction that minimizes collateral damage in the metropolitan areas. All U.S. personnel should have an emergency plan for earthquakes and tsunamis. These plans should include contingencies for communications and evacuations.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

The Fukushima Nuclear Reactor is a continuing nuclear incident. The government maintains a 20-kilometer exclusion zone around the plant.

Privacy Concerns

There are very strict privacy laws that govern the release of personal information.

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Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

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

Personnel-Background Concerns

Hate-related crimes rarely occur, though some U.S. citizens have reported being the target of comments or actions because of their nationality or race.

Drug-related Crimes

Drug-related crime takes place in Japan. Illegal drugs (methamphetamine, marijuana, cocaine, synthetic drugs) exist. However, narco-violence remains rare.

Police Response

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Police substations, called Kobans, are located throughout the cities. They are staffed by one or more police officers and are open 24/7. Police are well-trained and can be counted on to provide travelers with assistance. The quality of interpreting from Japanese to English can vary, and for some U.S. citizen victims, this has caused a problem.

Japan has strict laws regarding the use and possession of dangerous weapons. Firearms are illegal without a proper license. Carrying a pocket knife (including Swiss Army-style knife), craft/hunting knife, or box cutter in public is illegal. Violators can be subject to arrest and incarceration.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

U.S. Embassy Tokyo's American Citizen Services provides assistance to American citizens in Japan. The telephone number is 03-3224-5000. U.S. Embassy Tokyo is located at 1-10-5 Akasaka, Minato-Ku Tokyo.

Crime Victim Assistance

Countrywide, the police emergency number is 110. Response is dependable although may be hampered by the Japanese/English language barrier.

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Some U.S. citizens report that police procedures appear to be less sensitive and responsive to a victim's concerns, particularly in cases of domestic violence or sexual assault or when the victim and the perpetrator are foreigners. Few victims' assistance resources or battered women's shelters exist in major urban areas, and they are generally unavailable in rural areas. Investigations of sexual assault crimes are often conducted without female police officers present, and police typically ask about the victim's sexual history and previous relationships.

Police/Security Agencies

The National Police Agency, Prefectural Police Department, city police, and police Kobans comprise Japan's police system.

The National Police Agency is responsible for the administration of police services.

Prefectural Police Departments maintain a regional responsibility.

The city police provide police services at a more local level.

And, the Koban are the most typical point of interaction for people with the police.

Medical Emergencies

The countrywide emergency number for fire and ambulance service is 119. This number may not work from cell phones, and English-speaking dispatchers may not be available.

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Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Consult the Embassy's American Citizen Services website (<http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/tacs-main.html>) for information on English-speaking medical facilities.

Available Air Ambulance Services

There are many air ambulance services available in Japan.

Recommended Insurance Posture

Travelers should verify the validity of their medical insurance prior to personal travel. Medical caregivers require full payment at the time of treatment or proof of the ability to pay before treating a foreigner who is not a member of the Japanese national health insurance plan.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

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For CDC country-specific vaccination and health guidance please visit the CDC at:
<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/japan.htm>.

OSAC Country Council Information

The OSAC Country Council is active in Tokyo, meeting on a monthly basis at the Embassy or a pre-arranged location. Additional or interested members are always welcomed and may obtain further information by accessing <https://www.osac.gov/Pages/Home.aspx>. The Embassy's Regional Security Office can be reached at 03-3224-5000 from phones in Japan or 81-3-3224-5000 when calling from outside Japan. Additionally, the RSO can also be reached at: DSRSOTKY@state.gov. To reach OSAC's East Asia & Pacific team, please email OSACEAP@state.gov.

U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information

Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Consulate General in Osaka is located at 2-11-5, Nishitenma, Kita-ku, Osaka 530-8543.

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General Business Hours: 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mon-Fri. The Embassy and Consulates are closed on American and Japanese holidays.

Consulate Contact Numbers

Switchboard: 066-315-5900 (or 011-81-66-315-5900 from the U.S.)

Website: <http://osaka.usconsulate.gov/>

Nearby Posts

Embassy Tokyo: <http://japan.usembassy.gov/>

Consulate Naha: <http://naha.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Sapporo: <http://sapporo.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Nagoya: <http://nagoya.usconsulate.gov/>

Consulate Guidance

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A check of the Embassy's American Citizen Services website is also recommended to obtain the latest Japan-specific threat information.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

All visitors should use common sense and take basic security precautions. Travelers should always strive to maintain a low profile and should always be aware of their surroundings.

All personnel should use caution in all entertainment and nightlife districts throughout Japan.

Visitors should be aware of their surroundings at all times and cognizant of what they carry on their person (purse, shopping bag, computer case). Keep all belongings close so as not to present a moment of opportunity when walking on the street or using public transportation.

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