



Papua New Guinea 2016 Crime & Safety Report

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Oil & Energy; Extreme heat/drought; Carjacking; Fraud; Cyber; Political Violence; Riots/Civil Unrest; Earthquakes; Volcanoes; Hurricanes; Landslides and mudslides; Counterfeiting; Drug Trafficking; Intellectual Property Rights Infringement; Disease Outbreak; Rape/Sexual Violence

East Asia & Pacific > Papua New Guinea; East Asia & Pacific > Papua New Guinea > Port Moresby

7/11/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Critical

Port Moresby ranks 137 of 140 countries in the Economist Intelligence Unit's livability index, with a score that indicates that "most aspects of living are severely restricted." There is high unemployment, and up to half the population reportedly lives in squatter settlements. In 2015, much of the country was affected by persistent El Niño-related drought conditions, and its export-driven economy has been negatively affected by falling global commodity prices.

Crime Threats

The crime rate in Papua New Guinea (PNG) is considered among the highest in the world. In 2014, The World Bank produced excellent reports on trends in crime, the drivers of crime, and

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the business cost of crime in PNG. Carjackings, armed robberies, and stoning of vehicles are problems in/around major cities but can occur elsewhere. The high rate of crime, to include those committed by the infamous “Raskol” gangs, can be opportunistic. Sophisticated criminal enterprises do exist, and their capabilities often exceed that of local enforcement authorities.

Corruption of public servants is a recurring theme. Education certificate fraud is common, so a private company may face challenges verifying an applicant’s previous employment and education. The best course of action is to speak directly with the individual’s previous employer.

Cybersecurity Issues

Cyber crime is not common. However, as the utilization of technology increases, so too does the threat of cyber crime. The government’s proposed cyber crime policy is evidence of the growing concern.

Other Areas of Concern

Be particularly cautious of pickpocketing threats when in crowded public places, especially the local public markets.

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Visiting unguarded public sites (parks, golf courses, beaches, cemeteries) can be dangerous. Incidents have happened at all hours in these locations. Robberies have occurred around Parliament Haus on the weekends when it is unguarded.

You should consult with local authorities or the U.S. Embassy before traveling on the Highlands Highway.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Traffic moves on the left. Travel on highways outside of major towns can be hazardous. There is no countrywide road network, and most roads, especially in rural areas, are in a poor state of repair. Other common safety risks include erratic/drunk drivers, poorly maintained vehicles, rock throwing, and over-crowded vehicles. Sabotage of roads by disgruntled workers is common. During the rainy season, landslides occur on some stretches of the Highlands Highway between Lae and Mount Hagen. Potholes and road erosion necessitate that vehicles travel slowly and attentively. Further, killing a dog/pig is almost certain to trigger a demand for monetary compensation, so exercise caution when driving through rural areas.

Motor vehicle accidents are a common cause of serious injury. Accidents involve vehicles traveling on the wrong side of the road in an attempt to avoid potholes. You should always wear a seatbelt. After an accident, crowds can form quickly and may attack those whom they hold responsible by stoning and/or burning vehicles. Friends and relatives of an injured

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person may demand immediate compensation from the party they hold responsible for injuries, regardless of legal responsibility. If involved in an accident and you feel threatened, go directly to the nearest police station. Remain calm; take note of the area; identify landmarks; and do your best to provide the police with applicable information.

Police roadblocks to check vehicle registrations are a regular occurrence in Port Moresby. You should ensure that your vehicle registration and safety stickers are up-to-date in order to minimize difficulties at roadblocks. For specific information concerning driving permits, vehicle inspection, road tax, road safety and mandatory insurance, please call the Papua New Guinea's Motor Vehicle Institute Limited at 675-325-9666 or 675-302-4600. It is not uncommon for police officers to use these roadblocks as an opportunity to solicit bribes, particularly before the holidays.

Criminal roadblocks on the Highlands Highway may occur during daylight hours but are more common at night. Incidents of robbery and carjacking can be coordinated based on known chokepoints. Criminal gangs use any means necessary to get you out of your car for the purpose of robbery.

For example, criminals place a car seat with a fake baby or a lone child crying by the roadside and wait for someone to stop and check on the abandoned baby. The location of this hoax is usually on a roadside or grassy area where the victim can be captured and dragged away unnoticed, assaulted, and robbed.

If you are driving at night and eggs are thrown at your windshield, do not stop to check for damage. Do not apply water or operate the windscreen wiper, as eggs mixed with water become milky and impossible to see through, forcing you to stop and likely become a victim.

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While traveling by car, keep the doors locked and windows up.

Public Transportation Conditions

While public transportation options are available, the density of passengers and lack of reliable, safe services means public transportation should be avoided. If you must use public transportation, use a service provided by your hotel or colleagues.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

As there is no direct commercial air service to the U.S. by carriers registered in Papua New Guinea, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed the government's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards. Further information may be found on the FAA's safety assessment page. In-country air travel on PNG airlines is possible. Airline pilots in PNG face challenging terrain and a difficult flying environment.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

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Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

Transnational terrorism is not common. Outsiders do not blend in well into PNG culture; therefore, attack planners may find it difficult to carry out an attack.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Since gaining independence in 1976, PNG has struggled politically. While endowed with a wealth of natural resources, the country struggles to provide basic education, health, and infrastructure services. Intense disputes between politicians often gridlocks Parliament while inadequate resources, understaffing, and corruption erode services provided by lower government.

Post Political Violence Rating: Medium

Civil Unrest

There is a moderate amount of civil unrest due to the lack of control by the government and individual economic woes. There have been demonstrations regarding government

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entitlements/pensions and landowner disputes regarding payments associated with natural resource projects.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

Tribal warfare occasionally resembles indigenous terrorism, but it is usually carried out on an individual-to-individual scale. Tribes often battle each other with traditional and conventional weapons over land, water, livestock, and marriages. One act of violence often draws a retribution attack.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

PNG lies on the Pacific Rim of Fire. It regularly experiences earthquakes, volcanic activity, cyclones and is occasionally threatened by tsunamis. Rains have also caused landslides and flooding outside of Port Moresby.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

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Infrastructure improvements are being made, especially with the influx of business interests in natural resource sectors (particularly liquefied natural gas). A booming mining, liquefied natural gas, and possible hydroelectric industry provide an environment for increasing industrial accidents.

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

The government has made improvements in its enforcement of intellectual property rights. Notwithstanding, some stores still openly sell pirated copies of movies, television shows, music, and counterfeit clothing, jewelry, and other luxury goods.

Personnel-Background Concerns

Expatriate women should take caution not to dress provocatively. Local women typically do not wear revealing clothing.

Drug-related Crimes

The Royal Constabulary has a task force to combat drug trafficking where there is evidence of trade for weapons. Reports suggest drugs (marijuana) are exchanged for weapons with Indonesia and through the Torres Straits to Australia. However, authorities suffer from a lack

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of resources to effect arrests. There is a growing concern for the local manufacturing and use of synthetic drugs. Marijuana is grown and distributed on a small-scale.

Kidnapping Threat

With an influx of expatriate workers supporting the extraction industries (technically and administratively), there is concern that the frequency of kidnappings will increase. A spike in the trend in 2008 and 2009 lent credence to these fears, and the kidnapers were often paid as a result. In most of the cases, the amounts were relatively small and were readily on hand. The number of kidnappings in PNG is negligible.

Police Response

PNG has approximately 4,500 national police charged with law enforcement; it is one of the lowest police-to-population ratios in the world. The Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary faces daunting obstacles in trying to gain the cooperation of local communities, who frequently prefer to deal with criminals by themselves. The Constabulary also faces resource constraints and difficulties in imposing internal discipline. Consequently, police are thin on the ground, and response time may be measured in hours, not minutes. These criminal indicators offer some perspective on the serious security threats PNG faces.

Obscene (pornography) materials are illegal, and the interpretation as to what constitutes obscene is loosely defined.

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PNG law permits police officers to search any person, building, vehicle, cargo, or baggage that s/he has reasonable grounds to believe is connected to any offense against public order or the crime decree.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

If a foreigner is arrested, authorities are required to notify the appropriate Embassy. If you are concerned that the U.S. Department of State may not be aware of your situation, you should request the police or prison officials notify the U.S. Embassy of your arrest.

Crime Victim Assistance

The local Port Moresby police telephone number is 675-324-4200. This number will connect you to the Boroko Police Operations Center. They may also help you with providing local police numbers throughout PNG, but in the event of an emergency, the local police may not have the resources to respond in a reasonable time.

If you are a victim of crime, you may report or register a complaint at any police station in the jurisdiction where the crime occurred. Please file a police report as soon as possible after the crime has been committed. If you, as the victim, are not capable of reporting the crime in person, someone else may file a police report on your behalf. You will be given a copy of the

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report after paying required fees. The police will provide an interpreter, if needed. You can report a crime to the nearest Papua New Guinea Embassy in the U.S. if you have already left the country. The U.S. Embassy may also file a complaint on your behalf. If you have difficulties filing your police report with an official, please contact the U.S. Embassy immediately. You may need a police report to file for crime victim compensation or insurance reimbursement. If you do file a report, please send a copy to the Embassy, along with your address and phone number in the event the Embassy needs to communicate with you. While the Embassy cannot act as a legal representative, prosecutor, or investigator, the RSO can help track the progress of your case and advise you of any developments.

Medical Emergencies

Medical facilities vary between hospitals in Port Moresby and the larger towns, to aid posts (including some missionary stations) in remote areas. The quality of care varies, but facilities in the larger towns are usually adequate for routine problems and some emergencies. However, equipment failures and shortages of common medications can mean even routine treatments and procedures (X-rays) may be unavailable. Pharmacies are typically small and may be inadequately stocked. For more information, please refer to OSAC's Report, "Traveling with Medications." Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for medical services.

A hyperbaric recompression chamber for diving emergencies is in Port Moresby but is difficult to access and may be inaccessible during emergencies.

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

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Please see the U.S. Embassy website for a list of medical facilities in PNG at <http://portmoresby.usembassy.gov/>.

Available Air Ambulance Services

Niugini Air Rescue

Tel: (675) 323-2033

Fax: (675) 323-5244

Airport: (675) 323-4700; A/H Mobile (675) 683-0305

Toll free: 0561293722468, 24hrs

Medevac Pacific Services

Tel: (675) 323-5626; 325-6633

Mobile: (675) 683-8767

PNG Wide Toll free: 1801 911 / 76835227, 24hrs

International SOS (Medevac Service)

Port Moresby: (675) 302-8000

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Sydney: (61) 2 9372 2468

Tropicair (Medevac Service)

Port Moresby: (675) 311-2673

Australia: (61) 4-2523-3357

Recommended Insurance Posture

Medical evacuation companies charge thousands of dollars for transport to Australia or the U.S. Before traveling overseas, ensure your insurance covers you outside of the U.S. For more information, visit the State Department's medical insurance overseas page. The most commonly used facilities are in Brisbane and Cairns (Australia). However, a last minute, one-way commercial ticket can be quite expensive. If you anticipate the possible need for medical treatment, you should obtain entry permission for Australia in advance. The Australian High Commission in Port Moresby can grant entry permission, but it is easier to obtain an Electronic Travel Authority (ETA) prior to leaving the U.S.

CDC Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

Cholera cases have been reported in Morobe, Madang, East Sepik, West Sepik, Southern Highlands, National Capital District, and in Daru, Western Province. A number of deaths have resulted from the outbreak. Anyone visiting the affected areas should exercise strict hygiene

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precautions including careful, frequent hand washing.

U.S. Embassy personnel regularly drink water from the tap in Port Moresby. However, outside of Port Moresby, travelers are advised to drink water only from known safe sources (bottled, chlorinated, boiled water); to avoid ice cubes and raw/undercooked food; and to maintain strict hygiene standards. Local water supplies may be interrupted or polluted. 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/papua-new-guinea?s_cid=ncezid-dgmgq-travel-single-001. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the World Health Organization.

OSAC Country Council Information

PNG's Country Council consists of approximately a dozen constituents including corporate interests, NGOs, and faith-based missionary groups. For more information, please contact the Regional Security Office at (675) 321-7902 or (675) 321-1455 ext. 2145 or PortMoresbyRSO@state.gov. To reach OSAC's East Asia Pacific team, please email OSACEAP@state.gov.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

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Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

Douglas Street (downtown), adjacent the Bank of Papua New Guinea.

Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday-Friday

Embassy Contact Numbers

Tel: (675) 321-1455

24-hour Duty Officer: (675) 7200-9439

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

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Situational Awareness Best Practices

The vast majority of visitors who exercise common sense and apply appropriate security measures leave Port Moresby unscathed. Most expatriates are able to move around the city

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safely and conduct business without significant issue. Many of these businesses have gated parking lots with guards on duty.

A best practice habit is to always be aware of your surroundings. Travelers are strongly advised to review their personal safety/security posture, to remain vigilant, and be cautious especially when frequenting public places. Avoid walking outside after dark, specifically when alone. Try to consistently walk in groups. You are more vulnerable to robbery or rape when traveling alone.

Women are at a higher risk for sexual assault. As such, women should avoid traveling alone.

Whether in a vehicle or on foot, change direction or depart the area if you become apprehensive of suspicious people, groups, or activities. If you suspect a vehicle is following you, do your best to avoid traveling to an enclosed area where you could be entrapped and forced from your vehicle. Carry your mobile phone and inform others of your travel plans when possible.

Travel in groups and/or with an experienced guide. Be cautious of displays of wealth and keep valuables out of plain sight; do not carry anything with you that you are not willing to part with if confronted. Expatriates may be perceived as wealthy, potentially making them targets of opportunity for criminals.

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