



Australia 2016 Crime & Safety Report: Sydney

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Burglary; Assault; Murder; Cyber; Drug Trafficking; Religious Terrorism; Riots/Civil Unrest; Wildfires; Intellectual Property Rights Infringement; Counterfeiting; Kidnapping

East Asia & Pacific > Australia; East Asia & Pacific > Australia > Sydney

7/12/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Low

Crime Threats

In general, Sydney is a very safe city to visit or reside in. The rate of crime is comparable with most major U.S. metropolitan areas. Property crimes (thefts, pickpocketing/muggings, residential burglaries) are more prevalent in certain parts of major cities. Property crimes (burglary, breaking and entering, theft) occur throughout Australia and are among the crimes most likely to be encountered by Australians and foreign residents alike.

Physical assaults are not common but occur with greater frequency in specific locales, predominantly outside of city centers. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that Australians were more likely to experience face-to-face threatened assault than any of the other selected personal crime types. Physical assault was the second most frequent personal

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crime type experienced in 2014-15. New South Wales Police Force, New South Wales (NSW) Policing had over 30,812 assaults (non-domestic violence related), 28,980 domestic violence related, 4,718 sexual assaults, and 6,486 indecent, acts of indecency, and sexual offences reported in 2015.

There were 1,658 robberies without a weapon, 213 robberies with a firearm, and 1,018 robberies with a weapon but not a firearm.

There were 14,707 vehicle thefts and 41,208 thefts from motor vehicles reported in 2015.

New South Wales recorded 72 homicides in 2015, 38 of them occurring in the greater Sydney area.

Australia has extremely restrictive firearms legislation, and the purchase, licensing, and storage of firearms is very difficult compared to U.S. standards. Although firearms are sometimes used in crimes, they are the exception rather than the rule and are more common for crimes carried out by organized criminal elements such as Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMGs), Middle Eastern gangs, and drug trafficking groups.

Cybersecurity Issues

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Cyber criminals continue to gain access to networks primarily through targeted emails, or spear phishing, which was the number one reported cyber security incident. This aligns with the cyber threat of most concern to businesses, the theft or breach of confidential information or intellectual property.

Other Areas of Concern

Like any major city there can be issues surrounding assaults, drug use, and crimes of opportunity in and around the central business district/night club precinct after midnight.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Speed limits are enforced via cameras and police traffic patrols. Holiday weekends typically see a rise in roadside fatalities, as most Australians drive long distances to popular beach destinations.

Drunk driving checks are conducted frequently, with varied times and locations. Travelers should be prepared to submit to random breathalyzer testing. A driver is in violation of the law if driving with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of 0.05 percent or greater. When stopped by the Police Random Breath Testing Units, a sample of your breath will be tested determining the

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Prescribed Concentration of Alcohol (PCA) and a saliva swab may be taken to determine if you are Driving Under the Influence (DUI) of an illicit drug.

In the event of a motor vehicle accident, you should stop and give assistance to anyone injured. Each party must provide name, address, registration details, and the vehicle owner's name/address to the party involved. This includes the owner of the property damaged or injured person (or a person representing them). All motor vehicle accidents in New South Wales must be reported to police with 24 hours in person at a police station or by calling 131444 (Police Assistance Line). Persons injured in a motor vehicle accident in some states may be covered by compulsory third-party insurance as part of the standard motor vehicle registration. This insurance covers compensation for injuries only, not damage to property or medical costs. If a crash occurs involving an unlicensed vehicle, the driver and owner may be financially liable for the damages paid to the injured person.

Public Transportation Conditions

Public transportation, to include taxis, is efficient and safe but occasionally difficult to find during high demand periods. New South Wales has a small scale light rail in the China Town area. Sydney/NSW has an underground and over ground train network.

The use of taxis is a safe, reliable form of transportation. Travelers should be mindful that many taxi services video record passengers during the trip. As soon as the front/rear passenger door is opened, video recording begins.

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Aviation/Airport Conditions

Australian international and domestic airports meet International Civil Aviation Organization Standards. All international airports are policed by the Australian Federal Police. Sydney has a large commercial airport (Kingsford), internationally certified; both domestic and international flights are available.

Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Medium

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

Australia experienced a number of planned or attempted attacks by extremist individuals in 2014 and 2015. The potential return of dozens of Australian foreign fighters continues to pose a long-term risk, while homegrown extremists targeting host-nation security forces with basic, readily available weapons may be the greatest near-term threat. The majority of recent terrorism-related incidents appear to have been perpetrated by young, "homegrown," Australian nationals who have been influenced or inspired by ISIL over the Internet or via other domestic means. Australia has been repeatedly identified by ISIL leadership as a desirable target. In response to potential threats, authorities updated the National Terrorism Threat Advisory system to better inform Australians about the likelihood of a terrorist attack and to enable authorities, businesses, and individuals to take appropriate safety and security

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measures. The new system includes five tiers, ranging from “Not Expected” to “Certain.” The current terrorism threat advisory level is “Probable,” signifying that while there is no information regarding a specific, credible plot, individuals or groups have developed both the intent and capability to conduct a terrorist attack in Australia.

With recent terrorist attacks worldwide involving ISIL, there have been a number of anti-Muslim demonstrations in all major Australian cities that have been adequately controlled by police. Australian police, in conjunction with federal law enforcement and security agencies, have conducted a number of investigations related to Australians suspected of engaging in or supporting terrorism activities, resulting in at least 25 people being charged in 2015.

In October 2015, a 15-year old Australian citizen shot and killed an IT specialist at the police headquarters in Parramatta, a suburb of Sydney.

In February 2015, police arrested an Iraqi-born, Australian citizen and a Kuwaiti citizen with an Australian spousal visa in Sydney and charged them with planning to carry out an imminent attack against a civilian.

In December 2014, a lone gunman besieged a café in central Sydney, ultimately leading to the death of two hostages and the gunman.

Current guidance suggests that while those with travel or operations in Australia should go about their daily activities as usual, they should exercise caution and remain aware of events immediately around them. Individuals who see suspicious or unusual activity should contact Australia’s National Security Hotline at 1800 1234 00 and a life threatening situation should be reported to the police by calling 000.

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Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

Incidents of political violence directed against the U.S. are relatively infrequent.

In September 2012, police responded to a violent demonstration on the streets outside the U.S. Consulate General in Sydney. This protest followed demonstrations across the Middle East in response to an anti-Islam video on YouTube. The police regained control of the protestors and prevented access/damage to the Consulate.

Aside from these specific incidents, the majority of protests near U.S. diplomatic facilities continue to be peaceful. Visits by high-level U.S. dignitaries can attract various organizations to engage in protests on a variety of topics.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: Low

Civil Unrest

Incidents of civil unrest are relatively uncommon. Occasionally, there are organized protests in/around government and diplomatic enclaves; however, these are typically peaceful. Visitors should be aware that the potential for violence during protests does exist and that they should

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avoid confrontation with protestors.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Australia can experience extreme weather conditions with the warmer months lending themselves to the potential for large-scale fires. Bushfire season is October-May. In addition to claiming lives, bush fires can result in millions of dollars in property damage.

In December 2015, Victoria had large bush fires, which destroyed a large number of homes and continued to burn in January 2016. Western Australia suffered massive losses in January 2016 with whole towns and lives lost to bush fires.

Anyone planning on residing in Australia should devise a bush fire plan of action. NSW has a website (www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fire-information) that provides information on the locations of bush fires.

Travelers should be aware of the impact any natural disaster will have on their visit. RSO encourage Americans to follow the directions of Australian emergency authorities and to carefully review travel plans and have contingencies for bush fires and flooding.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

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Critical infrastructure is relatively stable and secure compared to most countries. Major attacks on critical infrastructure are rare. The most likely threat remains natural disaster from cyclones, bush fires, and flooding.

Australia's critical infrastructure protection arrangements are coordinated by the National Counter-Terrorism Committee (NCTC), a national body comprising of representatives from the commonwealth, state, and territory governments. Australia relies heavily on intelligence and information sharing for critical infrastructure protection. State and territory police meet with owners/operators of critical infrastructure, in accordance with jurisdictional arrangements, to provide information on the national and localized security threat context. Police will communicate directly with owners/operators of critical infrastructure when there is an imminent, specific threat and will coordinate the operational response. Police also gather and disseminate intelligence to relevant agencies as required.

The Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO) has responsibility to provide intelligence and threat assessments to relevant commonwealth government departments, the Australian Federal Police (AFP), and state and territory police.

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Theft

The Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO) has reported that businesses are not immune from foreign government clandestine or deceptive activity. ASIO works closely with

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businesses to counter these types of threats.

Several economic espionage incidents have been reported in recent times, particularly targeted the resources sectors. Economic espionage occurred through cyber attacks originating from overseas.

Australia has strong counterfeiting and piracy legislation protecting patents, trademarks, and designs. IP owners are responsible for enforcing their own rights through private proceedings. Organizations should also ensure they do not accidentally infringe on the intellectual property of others.

Privacy Concerns

The Australian Privacy Act 1988 is similar to that of the U.S Privacy Act 1974 and places strict controls on the storage and release of information. Travelers should be mindful of where personal identification information is stored or who it is provided to.

Personnel Background Concerns

Both private and public organizations must have the consent of the individual for the conduct of any background investigations. A failure to obtain an individual's consent can result in

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serious prosecution. The Australian Privacy Act 1988 requirements apply when seeking to release details to third parties.

Drug-related Crimes

Australia has an ever-growing drug user population, large international drug importation issues, local clandestine laboratory problems, and an increasing number of individuals arrested for drug trafficking. Cannabis, followed by ecstasy, methamphetamine, and cocaine, is the most abused drug in Australia. Cocaine is a very popular drug among the wealthy citizens.

Australia is also seeing an increased use of illegal prescription drugs, performance enhancing drugs, and synthetic drugs (Kronic, Spice). The use of "ICE," a crystalline form of methamphetamine, is growing at an alarming rate in rural and urban areas. The users of ICE are credited with an increase of burglaries and assaults in all states and territories.

The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research for 2014/2015 reports cocaine arrests have increased by more than 50 percent in two years, although it is a trend seen almost exclusively in Sydney. There were 1,700 arrests in a 12-month period for use and possession of cocaine. By contrast, there were nearly 9,000 arrests for possession and the use of amphetamines.

Kidnapping Threat

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Kidnapping offences are reported in New South Wales. Offenses are usually domestic/sexual related, not linked to extortion or terrorism. In recent studies, females accounted for a slightly larger proportion of all kidnapping/abduction victims (57 percent, or 344 victims); Nearly one in three victims of kidnapping/abduction (32 percent, or 191 victims) was 14 years or under. Authorities noted that street/footpath was the most common location for kidnapping/abduction to occur (43 percent, or 258 victims). All incidents or allegations of kidnappings or unlawful detainment should be reported to authorities immediately.

Police Response

Australian police organizations are well-trained and professional. They have well-equipped emergency response teams (SWAT, EOD, negotiator) that can mobilize and respond to any incident with short notice.

000 can be dialed for any emergency. As this number is a call center, callers need to be prepared to provide basic information and services needed (fire, ambulance, police).

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment:

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Complaints regarding NSW policing must be lodged directly with the NSW Police. A complaint can be lodged by completing an online form, visiting, or calling any NSW police station or by contacting the NSW Police Internal Affairs Section.

Crime Victim Assistance

Victim Services NSW can help victims of crime cope with the impact of criminal incidents and can assist them to access their rights and entitlements. Victim Services NSW provides support, counselling, and other services, as well as information, advocacy, and assistance with the criminal justice system, victims' rights, and entitlements. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.victimsservices.justice.nsw.gov.au/>.

Police/Security Agencies

The Australian Border Force is the federal government agency responsible for managing the security and integrity of the border. It facilitates the movement of legitimate international travelers and goods, while protecting the safety, security, and commercial interests of Australians. Australian Border Force can be contacted at 1800 009 623 to report suspicious behavior.

Medical Emergencies

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Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

The Royal Prince Alfred

Missenden Road

Camperdown NSW 2050

Tel: +61 2 9515 6111

Available Air Ambulance Services

NSW Ambulance Service Aeromedical Division provides a high-quality clinical care and health to people residing and visiting New South Wales. The Air Ambulance Service can provide long-distance transport while ensuring the continuation of the patient's medical and nursing care between referring and receiving hospitals. The aircraft becomes the extension of the general hospital ward, Intensive Care Unit, Coronary Care Unit, labor ward, Nursery etc. Requests for any ambulance attendance can be done by dialing 000 and asking for ambulance services.

Recommended Insurance Posture

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Australia has a strong insurance culture; citizens typically insure their houses, household contents, motor vehicle, and medical/health, and businesses. The primary body for the insurance industry is the Insurance Council of Australia (<http://www.insurancecouncil.com.au/>). Australia's Medicare system provides a subsidized health fund for Australian citizens and residents. Travelers are not covered by Medicare.

Travelers are strongly encouraged to obtain full travelers insurance.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at: http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/australia?s_cid=ncezid-dgmq-travel-double-001.

OSAC Country Council Information

To reach OSAC's East Asia & Pacific team, please email OSACEAP@state.gov.

Consulate Location and Contact Information

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Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Consulate General

19 Martin Place

Sydney, NSW 2000

Consulate Contact Numbers

Regional Security Officer: +61-(0)2-9373-9191

Consular Affairs: +61-(0)2-9373-9200 (Mon-Fri 0800 to 1700)

Consular Affairs: +612-4422-2201 (After Hours)

Website: <https://au.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/sydney/>

Nearby Posts

Embassy Canberra: <https://au.usembassy.gov/>

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Consulate Melbourne: <https://au.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/melbourne/>

Consulate Perth: <https://au.usembassy.gov/embassy-consulates/perth/>

Consulate Guidance

See online Consular Travel Reports for additional information.

Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Scams

Travelers should monitor the SCAM Watch website maintained by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) for the latest information on how to recognize, avoid, and report scams.

Situational Awareness Best Practices

Generally, Americans tend to blend in with the general population. Exercising sound judgment and common sense will safeguard most travelers from becoming victims of crime. Travelers

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should exercise the same level of caution and security awareness as they would in any major city in the United States. U.S citizens should consider their personal safety and exercise heightened situational awareness in the central business district/night club precinct. In cities, remain in groups when walking and stick to the major tourist areas. Crimes of opportunity can often be prevented by securing vehicles and removing valuables from plain sight.

The risk of residential burglaries can be reduced by installing an alarm system and motion detection lighting and utilizing locking devices on windows/doors.

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