



Australia 2016 Crime and Safety Report: Melbourne

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Burglary; Assault; Cyber; Other; Religious Terrorism; Anti-American sentiment; Religious Violence; Wildfires; Floods; Economic Espionage; Drug Trafficking; Kidnapping; Fraud

East Asia & Pacific > Australia; East Asia & Pacific > Australia > Melbourne

11/1/2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Post Crime Rating: Low

Crime Threats

Melbourne is generally a very safe city; however, it is not immune from crimes commonly associated with large urban areas. For the period 2014-15, there were 220,088 victims of crime recorded by the Victoria Police. The majority, 82.2 percent, were people while 17.8 percent were organizations. Approximately 3 in every 100 people in Victoria were victims of crime in 2014-2015 while statistically there were 1.5 alleged offenders for every 1,000 people. One of the most common crimes is non-violent theft, resulting from targets of opportunity.

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.

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Vehicle theft is fairly low. The frequency of such crime is on par with most major U.S. metropolitan areas.

Violent crime is relatively low, with fewer than 100 reported cases of armed robbery, murder, or sexual assault per 100,000 persons nationally.

Crime statistics for Victoria reflect a significant increase in the number of weapons and explosives offence to for the 2014-15 period (increasing 12 percent to 14,404). Armed robberies can occur and are more prominent in high-density cities. The most common weapon used in armed robberies in Victoria is a knife. Although firearms are used, Australia has extremely restrictive firearms legislation, and the purchase, licensing and storage of firearms is very difficult compared to U.S. standards. Local police have attributed a majority of burglaries and robberies to a growing problem with heroin and methamphetamine (ICE) addiction.

In Victoria, there were 165 homicide offences for the period 2014-15. The most common type of homicide offence is murder.

Physical assaults are not common but occur with greater frequency in specific locales. In Victoria, the majority of crimes against a person were assault offences (38,071), many of these are attributed to fighting and alcohol related incidents. In Victoria, the reported number of stalking, harassment, and threatening behavior offences has significantly increased within the reporting period (up 12.9 percent to 12,162 offences). The most common location where assaults occurred was in residential locations followed by street/lane/sidewalk.

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Cybersecurity Issues

Cyber criminals continue to gain access to networks primarily through targeted emails, or spear phishing, which was reported as the main cyber security incident experienced. The main motivation for cyber attacks is considered to be competitors seeking commercial advantage. This aligns with the cyber threat of most concern to businesses, which is theft or breach of confidential information or intellectual property.

There were 32,618 deception-related offences in Victoria during the 2014-15 period, which was nearly identical to the volume of incidents during the 2013-2014 period. The majority of deception offences are committed in retail/financial locations.

The Australian Cybercrime Online Reporting Network (ACORN) provides information on how to recognize and avoid common forms of cyber crime, including advice for victims (<http://www.acorn.gov.au/>).

Other Areas of Concern

Outlaw motorcycle gangs are present, with international outlaw clubs (Bandidos, Hells Angels, Gypsyjokers) and local groups (the Rebels). In general, these groups are known for drug trafficking and other organized criminal activities (sex trade). Gang violence has become high

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profile to the point where various state governments have taken steps to change laws to focus on the problem, and police have set up groups to deal with the threat.

Youth gangs are also present. During the summer holiday (mid-December-February), these groups are responsible for an uptick in nuisance activities (hooliganism).

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

Basic safety on Australian roads is considered to be excellent. Speeding is enforced via an extensive system of cameras and officer enforcement. Holiday weekends typically see a rise in roadside fatalities, as most Australians drive long distances to popular beach destinations. Traffic accidents and fatalities typically rise during holiday periods, especially country areas.

Drunk driving enforcement checkpoints operate randomly and frequently with varied times and locations. For persons driving with a full license, the legal blood alcohol limit in Victoria is 0.05 percent, for persons without a full license there is a zero limit.

In the event of a motor vehicle accident, you should stop and give assistance to injured persons. Each party must provide name, address, registration details, and vehicle owner name/address to the party involved. This includes the owner of the property damaged or

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injured person (or a person representing them). If anyone is injured (or under the influence of alcohol/drugs) and police are not present, report the crash in person to the nearest open police station. If property is damaged as a result of the crash, report the crash in person to the nearest open police station if the owner is not present. 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, trains, trams, buses, and taxis, is generally safe and heavily utilized by the residents of Melbourne. Taxis are safe, but expensive and occasionally difficult to find during high demand time periods. While the trams cover most of the city center, the most common location that public transport offences occurred in was train stations. In Victoria, there were 1,924 offences against the person recorded at public transport locations during 2014-15.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

Australian international and domestic airports meet with International Civil Aviation Organization Standards. All international airports are policed by the Australian Federal Police. Melbourne has two large commercial airports and two smaller airfields. Melbourne Airport is the largest; Avalon Airport is approximately 50 kilometers to the southwest of Melbourne.

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Terrorism Threat

Post Terrorism Rating: Low

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 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.

During 2015, the Victoria Police, in conjunction with federal law enforcement and security agencies, conducted a number of investigations relating to individuals and groups suspected

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of engaging in, or supporting, terrorism.

In September 2014, police shot and killed a teenager in Melbourne after he stabbed two counter-terrorism officers. The teenager had reportedly planned to behead an officer, drape an Islamic flag over the body, and post images of the killing online.

In 2015, a 17-year old male was arrested for planning to detonate three explosive devices in Melbourne.

The government continues to make public service advertisements requesting citizens to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activities to the authorities. The public are encouraged to report suspicious activities to the National Security Hotline via 1-800-123-400.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

There have been incidents that were directed at the U.S.

In September 2012, police responded to a violent demonstration on the streets outside U.S. Consulate 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.

There were no demonstrations against the U.S. Consulate Melbourne in 2015.

Aside from these specific incidents, the Embassy and Consulates continue to experience a steady number of peaceful protests by various groups. Visits by high level U.S. dignitaries also attract issue-motivated groups.

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Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Post Political Violence Rating: Low

Civil Unrest

Incidents of civil unrest do not occur often. Occasionally, there are organized protests in/around government and diplomatic enclaves; however, they are typically peaceful. Visitors should be aware that the potential for violence during protests does exist and to be sure they are familiar with their surroundings and avoid confrontation with protestors.

Religious/Ethnic Violence

Police quelled a Muslim protest in Sydney in September 2012, and police organizations are working with the Muslim community to prevent future violence.

Post-specific Concerns

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Environmental Hazards

Australia can experience extreme weather conditions with the warmer months lending themselves to the potential for large-scale fires. Bush fire season is October-May. Bush fires claim lives and millions of dollars in property damage. A significant number of bushfires have been attributable to arsonists.

During 2009, in the Victoria countryside, bush fires killed 173 people, destroyed entire towns, consumed thousands of hectares, and damage was in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

The 2015 summer was hot and dry with a number of bushfires occurring in regional Victoria.

Anyone planning on residing in Australia should devise a bushfire plan of action. The Victoria government has setup a bush fire help-line at 1-800-240-667 and website: www.cfa.vic.gov.au.

The 2010 and 2011 summers were extremely wet with some Victoria locations experiencing record rainfall and flooding.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

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

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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 Thefts

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

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

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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 very popular among the wealthy, primarily in Sydney.

Australia is also seeing an increased use of illegal prescription drugs, performance enhancing drugs, and synthetic drugs (Kronic, Spice). A lot of ecstasy pills sold in Australia contain no MDMA but do contain a variety of unknown synthetic drugs. The result is ecstasy users are routinely ingesting ecstasy with unknown chemicals that can cause dangerous side effects.

Drug dealing and trafficking, along with drug use and possession offences significantly increased during 2015 (both in excess of 20 percent). The majority of drug offences were related to amphetamines and cannabis. There were 4,947 drug dealing and trafficking offences recorded in Victoria for 2014-15. The most common type of drug seized was cannabis.

Kidnapping Threat

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There were 708 reported cases of kidnap/abduction for the 2014-15 period. The most common abduction/kidnap offence is false imprisonment. A percentage of these offences are attributable to family incidents.

Police Response

Australian police organizations are well-trained and professional. Police 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

Complaints of a minor nature regarding the Victoria Police should be directed to the nearest police station commander. Matters considered to be more serious should be directed electronically via the "Compliments and Complaints" via the Victoria Police website or through the Independent Broad Based Anti-Corruption Commission (IBAC).

Crime Victim Assistance

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The Victoria Department of Justice and Regulation operates victims of crime service. The website victimsofcrime.vic.gov.au provides full details on how to manage the effects of crime and a helpline: 1800 819 817 (8am-11pm, 7 days a week). In addition, the Victoria Police can provide guidance to individuals seeking crime victim assistance. They have are able to assist in providing details of centers and services (family violence, sexual offences, child abuse cases). Agencies available to assist include the Sexual Assault Crisis line (for adults), Gatehouse Centre for Assessment and Treatment of Child Abuse, Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service, Men's Referral Service.

Police/Security Agencies

The Australian Customs and Border Protection Service is the Australian 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. For general enquiries, CBPS can be contacted at 1300 363 263.

The Victoria Police provides policing services to the Victorian community 24 hours a day, seven days a week and has over 17,000 officers. Their role is to preserve the peace, protect life/property, prevent offences, detect/apprehend offenders, and help persons in need. Accordingly, the Victoria Police will respond to all manner of crime.

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Medical Emergencies

Australia has a high level of professional emergency medical services. By dialing 000, any person can obtain emergency medical assistance throughout most of Australia.

Ambulance service staffed with certified emergency medical technicians is the standard throughout most of Australia.

Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

Victoria has a number of major hospitals. Two major hospitals within Melbourne are:

The Alfred Hospital

55 Commercial Rd,

Melbourne VIC 3004

+61 3 9076 2000 (Switchboard)

+ 61 3 9276 3405 (Emergency)

Royal Melbourne Hospital

300 Grattan St,

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Parkville VIC 3050

+61 3 9342 7000 (Switchboard)

+61 3 9342 7666 or + 61 3 9342 7009 (Emergency)

Available Air Ambulance Services

Medical evacuation via air is used in remote and urban areas depending on the degree of injury. Air Ambulance Victoria operates four ambulance airplanes and can reach most of Victoria within one hour. These aircraft (King Air B-200) are used mainly for transporting patients from rural towns to the major hospitals in Melbourne. In addition, Air Ambulance Victoria operates five air ambulance helicopters. The ambulance helicopters are used as an emergency response to critical medical situations, providing an advanced level of care, quick attendance and fast transport to major hospitals.

Recommended Insurance Posture

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.

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CDC 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.

U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information

Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

United State Consulate General Melbourne

553 St Kilda Road

Melbourne Victoria, 3004

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Mon to Fri: 8:00am to 5:00pm (excluding public holidays).

Consulate Contact Numbers

Regional Security Officer (Canberra): 61-02-6214-5733

Consulate Operator: 61-03-9526-5900

Consular Affairs: 61-03-9526-5988

Marine Post One (Canberra): 61-02-6214-5900

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

Nearby Posts

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

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

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

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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

Travelers should exercise the same level of caution and security awareness as they would in any major city in the U.S. 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. In cities, remain in groups when walking and stick to the major tourist areas.

You should take appropriate steps to ensure your personal belongings are appropriately secured. By securing vehicles and removing valuables from plain view, crimes of opportunity relating to vehicles and homes can be minimized. The risk of residential burglaries can be further reduced by installing an alarm system and motion detection lighting and utilizing locking devices on windows/doors. If you choose to leave personal items of value in hotel rooms, utilize the in-room safe provided. Do not leave personal items unattended in cafes and restaurants or in plain view within motor vehicles. In restaurants/cafes, place your bag on your lap. Carry your purse and handbag close to your body.

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