Japan 2017 Crime & Safety Report: Tokyo

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Crime; Natural Disasters; Employee Health Safety

East Asia & Pacific > Japan; East Asia & Pacific > Japan > Tokyo

1/31/2017

Overall Crime and Safety Situation
U.S. Embassy Tokyo does not assume responsibility for the professional ability or integrity of the persons or firms appearing in this report. The American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit cannot recommend a particular individual or establishment and assumes no responsibility for the quality of services provided.
The U.S. Department of State has assessed Tokyo as being a low-threat location for crime directed at or affecting official U.S. government officials.
Please review OSAC’s Japan-specific webpage proprietary analytic reports, Consular Messages, and contact information.

Crime Threats
Even though Japan’s national crime rate is well below the U.S. national average, crimes do occur. In Tokyo, the Roppongi, Shinjuku (especially in Kabuki-cho), Shibuya, and Ikebukuro neighborhoods are moderate-risk crime areas for foreigners. Crime in these areas is commonly related to the bars, clubs, and massage parlors. Japanese crime syndicates (Yakuza) and other organized crime (African criminal groups) are prevalent and use nightlife establishments as fronts for their criminal operations, running various schemes to defraud customers. All personnel should use caution in entertainment and nightlife districts throughout Japan.
In Roppongi, foreign visitors regularly report falling victim to fraud or extortion, including incidents involving drink spiking, which frequently involves a victim ingesting a drug unknowingly and becoming incapacitated, at which point bar employees escort the victim to a nearby ATM. The victim then withdraws a large sum of money and turns it over to the bar employees. Some victims regain full consciousness at a bar or club, while others may awaken on the street.
Another common scheme involves bars or clubs substantially overcharging customers’ credit cards, often by thousands of dollars. In other situations, a victim may use his/her credit card legitimately at a bar, but the credit card information is later used fraudulently. When these types of crimes are reported to the local police, a subsequent investigation and review of surveillance video may show what appears to be the victim willingly withdrawing cash from an ATM or signing a bar bill. As a result, the victim has little recourse in recouping the lost funds.

Drink spiking can result in sexual assaults. It is best to order drinks where a can or bottle is opened in front of the patron, and patrons should maintain control of their drinks.

Pickpocketing and other petty crimes occasionally take place in crowded shopping areas, bars/nightclubs, train stations, and airports. Third-country national pickpockets are known to target the Akasaka and Harajuku neighborhoods. In December 2016, several Chinese perpetrators were arrested for theft and pickpocketing in these neighborhoods. Additionally, in December 2016, a Chief of Mission employee was pickpocketed in the Harajuku area. A number of U.S. citizens report their passports lost or stolen at Narita airport.

Violent crime is rare, but it does exist. Although firearms are prohibited, licenses may be issued for hunting rifles. Rifles, knives, and illegal pistols are sometimes used in violent crimes. Japan has strict laws regarding the use and possession of dangerous weapons. Carrying a pocket knife (including Swiss Army-style knife), craft, or hunting knife or box cutter in public is illegal. In July 2016, a Japanese citizen broke into a hospital for the disabled and stabbed 19 victims.

Cybersecurity Issues
Cybercrime is an emerging problem in Tokyo but is not a paramount concern. However, foreigners should always take care in protecting their personal identifiable information. Discretion should be used when connecting to networks in Internet cafés, hotel business centers, or Wi-Fi “hotspots.”

Other Areas of Concern
In the aftermath of the Tohoku earthquake in March 2011, the Fukushima Nuclear Reactor experienced a core meltdown, releasing radioactive material. Public access to areas surrounding the plant remains-off limits or is restricted by the government of Japan. For more details reference Fukushima Prefecture’s official website.

Transportation-Safety Situation
Japan is a left-hand traffic country, so those visiting from right-hand traffic countries should take care when walking or driving. Road conditions and road safety standards meet or exceed U.S standards, except in the most remote areas or islands. Roads are well maintained with...
extensive lighting. However, vehicle accidents may still occur and accidents involving pedestrians are common. Traffic enforcement involves the extensive use of cameras. Driving under the influence is a crime. Individuals arrested for drunk driving can expect to remain in police custody for up to 22 days.

Public Transportation Conditions
Tokyo’s public transportation is excellent, both in terms of efficiency and safety. The railway system is a combination of local trains and high-speed trains. There are instances of victims (Japanese and foreigners) being “groped,” particularly on subway trains. In response, authorities have designated certain cars as “women only” during crowded rush hours.

Terrorism Threat
The U.S. Department of State has assessed Tokyo as being a low-threat location for terrorist activity directed at or affecting official government interests.

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns
In 2015, Japan continued to see a rise of ISIL-related sympathizers among Japanese nationals who traveled or attempted to travel to Syria in order to join ISIL. While Japan has not experienced any terrorist incidents in the last decade, all visitors should be familiar with the U.S. Department of State’s Worldwide Caution. This statement expresses the Department’s concern about the continued threat of attacks, demonstrations, and violent actions against U.S. citizens and American interests abroad.

Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment
Most Japanese regard Americans and Westerners in a positive manner and are friendly to foreigners. The U.S. Embassy is routinely the site of peaceful demonstrations, often protesting the U.S. military presence on Japanese soil.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence
The U.S. Department of State has assessed Tokyo as being a low-threat location for political violence directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

Civil Unrest
Violent demonstrations and acts of civil disobedience are very rare throughout Japan. Most protests are peaceful and require organizers to submit a government application so that an official permit can be granted. The police closely monitor demonstrations and inform RSO regarding planned protests.

Post-specific Concerns
Environmental Hazards

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Since Japan is in the “Ring of Fire,” an active seismic region. The 2011 9.0 earthquake in Tohoku 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 epicentered in the ocean. A tsunami can arrive on shore within minutes and can cause widespread destruction of property and loss of life. Japan has made great advances in building, railway, and road construction that minimizes collateral damage in the metropolitan areas.

Critical Infrastructure
The government continues to closely monitor the conditions at and around the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. People considering travel to affected areas in Fukushima Prefecture should follow current guidance on expected levels of radiation and recommendations for reducing exposure to radiation in these areas.

Privacy Concerns
There are very strict privacy laws governing the release of personal information.

Personal Identity 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
Illegal drugs (methamphetamine, marijuana, cocaine, synthetic drugs) are present, but drug-related violence remains rare.

Visitors should be aware that pseudoephedrine, an over-the-counter medication in the U.S., is illegal. Prescription medications containing amphetamine or other stimulants (Adderall, Ritalin), are also illegal. Possession of these and other illegal medications is a crime. For more information, please refer to OSAC’s Report, “Traveling with Medications.”

Police Response
How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment
U.S. Embassy Tokyo’s American Citizen Services provides assistance to American citizens. See contact information below.

Crime Victim Assistance
The police emergency number is 110, and the response is generally very dependable. Police are competent and can be counted on to provide travelers with assistance.

When compared to the U.S., some report that police procedures appear to be less sensitive and responsive to a victim’s concerns, particularly in cases of domestic violence, sexual assault, or when the victim and the perpetrator are foreigners. Investigations of sexual assault
are often conducted without a female police officer present, and the police typically inquire about the victim’s sexual history and previous relationships. Few victim assistance resources or battered women’s shelters exist in major urban areas and the services are generally unavailable in rural areas. The quality of interpreters converting Japanese to English can vary, and for some victims translation issues are a problem.

Police/Security Agencies

The National Police Agency, Prefectural Police Department, City Police, and Police Kobans (substations) 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. The Koban (Police Boxes) are the most typical point of interaction for visitors with the Japanese police. The Kobans are located throughout Tokyo and are staffed by one or more police officers 24-hours, seven days a week.

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. 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.

Contact Information for Available Medical Services

Consult the Embassy’s American Citizen Services webpage for information on English-speaking medical facilities.

Insurance Guidance

Travelers should verify the validity of their medical insurance prior to personal travel. Japanese medical providers typically will not accept foreign medical insurance. Travelers should confirm coverage in Japan with their insurance companies before traveling.

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

The CDC offers additional information on vaccines and health guidance for Japan.

OSAC Country Council Information

The OSAC Tokyo Country Council is active and generally meets on a monthly basis. Please contact OSAC’s East Asia Pacific team if you are interested in private-sector engagement in
Tokyo or have questions about OSAC’s Country Council programs. The RSO can be reached at 03-3224-5000 in Japan, at 81-3-3224-5000 outside Japan, or by email.

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

**Embassy Address and Hours of Operation**

U.S. Embassy Tokyo

1-10-5 Akasaka, Minato-Ku

Tokyo, Japan

Hours of Operation: Mon-Fri, 0830-1730. (except U.S. and Japanese holidays)

**Embassy Contact Numbers**

Embassy switchboard: (03) 3224-5000

Regional Security Office: (03) 3224-5000

Website: [http://japan.usembassy.gov](http://japan.usembassy.gov)

**Nearby Posts**


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