Mexico 2017 Crime & Safety Report: Guadalajara

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Narco-Terrorism; Political Violence; Natural Disasters; Crime

Western Hemisphere > Mexico; Western Hemisphere > Mexico > Guadalajara

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Overall Crime and Safety Situation
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THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS ASSESSED GUADALAJARA AS BEING A HIGH-THREAT LOCATION FOR CRIME DIRECTED AT OR AFFECTING OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERESTS.

Please review OSAC’s Mexico-specific webpage for proprietary analytic reports, Consular Messages, and contact information.

The U.S. Consulate General in Guadalajara covers the states of Jalisco (pop. 7,873,608), Aguascalientes (pop. 1,312,544), Nayarit (pop. 1,209,777), and Colima (pop 711,235). The U.S. private sector boasts a significant presence in Guadalajara, Aguascalientes, Puerto Vallarta, and Manzanillo (Mexico’s largest containerized cargo port). The cities of Tepic, Colima City, Tequila, and Lagos de Moreno follow closely with sizeable U.S. businesses. Guadalajara is the capital of Jalisco and is home to over 200 successful American companies. Guadalajara is the second largest city in Mexico with a robust middle class.

Crime Threats
The city has a reputation for illicit money transactions and legitimate business and drug trafficking organization (DTO) activity intermingle.

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There are multiple reports of homicides, assaults, robberies, and car theft. Robbery, auto-part theft, and telephonic extortion are the most frequently reported non-violent crimes in the Consular District. Thieves often operate in heavily congested areas to steal bags, technology, and jewelry, typically using motorcycles to escape quickly. During the Christmas season, the Guadalajara Metropolitan Zone typically experiences an increase in crime. In 2016, Jalisco experienced an increase in disappearances, which are not categorized as a kidnapping or a homicide. The sons of Joaquin El Chapo Guzman were kidnapped while dining at a restaurant in Puerto Vallarta. Reports of virtual kidnapping scams continue to surface – a telephonic extortion scam is one where people are not physically detained by the perpetrators. Telephonic extortion is an umbrella term for a variety of scams in which a caller uses a ruse to convince the victim to transfer money. In many cases, a caller claiming to be a member of a well-known DTO will contact a family member of an alleged victim to demand ransom for their release. Other types of virtual kidnappings include communicating via text message only from stolen/lost cell phones or convincing individuals to isolate themselves in an effort to extort money from their families. Information that can be used against victims may also be obtained from social networking websites. Do not reveal any personal information and any kidnapping should be reported to the police and the U.S. Consulate. If you think you hear gunshots, seek cover. If you are unsure of what is happening, you should still react as you continue to assess the situation. Auto-part theft is very prevalent in the Guadalajara Metropolitan Zone. Thieves usually target easy-to-remove parts (spare tires, side mirrors) and side molding and grilles. These thefts usually occur after dark from cars parked on the street. Utilizing pay lots is the easiest way to reduce the risk of auto-part theft. Auto-theft commonly involves the threat of force (carjacking), where thieves target late-model trucks and SUVs. Jalisco experienced a 15% increase in car theft in 2016; and one carjacking led to the death of a 17-year old American. In cases where the victim does not resist, thieves rarely do any physical harm to the victim. Reducing travel in marginalized or rural areas and non-toll highway roads, especially after dark, can significantly reduce the threat of carjacking. Residential break-ins usually occur at moderately wealthy homes where thieves have conducted surveillance. Some investigations reveal domestic staff have been complicit. Homes with extra security measures or personnel are less likely to be targeted. Homeowners
are advised to vet domestic staff and never keep large quantities of cash at home. Never give out personal information in an open setting. Reports of sexual assaults on U.S. citizens mostly occur in popular tourist destinations along the Mexican Riviera. Often, the perpetrators target clearly intoxicated tourists in bars and nightclubs. Going out in groups, avoiding excessive use of alcohol, and closely monitoring your drink are the most effective ways to reduce the chance of sexual assault. For additional information, please see the OSAC report “Shaken: The Don'ts of Alcohol Abroad.” Colima came into the national spotlight in 2016, as the per capita homicide rate consistently competed with the leading state of Guerrero. However, the violence appears to be contained among DTOs. Aguascalientes continues to be one of Mexico’s safest states. The State Police are extremely effective in curbing criminal activity and benefit from the latest technology and training. Their police force is a national example that other jurisdictions seek to duplicate. The most dangerous area of the state continues to be the border with Zacatecas due to constant cartel fighting in southern Zacatecas. The Executive Secretariat of the National System of Public Security reports yearly data on homicides, kidnappings, and various other crimes in every Mexican state. The charts (see attached pdf) compare reported homicide and kidnapping statistics in Jalisco, Nayarit, Colima, and Aguascalientes. Wrong-place/wrong-time violence is the greatest threat to personal safety, and the risk is equally likely in upscale and lower-income areas. The best ways to reduce the risk is to practice good personal security habits, especially maintaining high situational awareness and promptly departing from situations. Other Areas of Concern The U.S. Consulate advises caution to U.S. citizens when traveling to areas that border Zacatecas. **Transportation-Safety Situation** Road Safety and Road Conditions A variety of road conditions exist throughout the region. Toll (cuota) highways are comparable to U.S. interstate highway standards with multiple traffic lanes and broad paved shoulders. The cuotas generally have better lighting, frequent police patrols, fewer access points (on/off-ramps), and are considered a safer way for overland transit. Drivers can further reduce the risk of carjacking by limiting intercity travel to daylight hours.
Non-toll (libre) highways are usually in poorer condition. They are usually two-lane roads with no shoulder. There are more reported incidents of carjacking and shootouts between rival criminal groups, particularly after dark, on the libre highways.

Road conditions in urban areas can also vary considerably. In upscale or tourist neighborhoods of major cities, the roads are well maintained, whereas roads are often poorly maintained in marginalized areas. There are large speed bumps installed around major cities, including on some highways, that are often poorly marked. Drivers should be alert for changing road conditions. Drivers routinely disobey even the most fundamental traffic laws and commonly treat red lights like stop signs, crossing as soon as they have checked for opposing traffic. For more information on self-driving, please review OSAC’s Report “Driving Overseas: Best Practices.”

In traffic, drive defensively and leave space to maneuver. Be prepared to take evasive action. If you are being followed/harassed by a driver, find the nearest public facility to call the police. Do not stop until you reach a safe location and never lead them back to your home.

During the rainy season (July-August), major thoroughfares, including tunnels and underpasses, often become flooded and seriously disrupt traffic. Heavy rain also frequently causes traffic lights to stop working. Puerto Vallarta and other cities in the district experience similar problems.

Public Transportation Conditions

Taxi service in the major cities is generally reliable and safe. Most taxi drivers operate from a marked and registered taxi stand (sitio). Restaurant and hotel staff can also be relied upon to summon a registered taxi. Uber is also very popular, and U.S. government personnel are authorized to use it.

In Guadalajara, mass transit is generally considered unsafe for travelers. Pickpocketing, bag-snatching, and armed robberies are common on buses. However, the most dangerous aspect of using the bus is the operator’s reckless driving, which often kills passengers and pedestrians.

Generally, taking a charter bus is safe, except in those areas where the U.S. Travel Warning advises against non-essential travel. U.S. government personnel often use charter buses to move between Guadalajara and Puerto Vallarta.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

Taxi service from the airports is also considered safe. Arriving passengers should look for a sitio taxi kiosk in the arrival terminal of the airport and pay the fare at the kiosk before exiting.
the airport and boarding a taxi.

**Terrorism Threat**

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS ASSESSED GUADALAJARA AS BEING A **LOW**-THREAT LOCATION FOR TERRORIST ACTIVITY DIRECTED AT OR AFFECTING OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERESTS.

**Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence**

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS ASSESSED GUADALAJARA AS BEING A **HIGH**-THREAT LOCATION FOR POLITICAL VIOLENCE DIRECTED AT OR AFFECTING OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERESTS.

**Civil Unrest**

Non-violent demonstrations routinely occur in Guadalajara and other cities in the region. They are primarily organized by political parties, students, labor-rights, or indigenous-rights groups and are mostly non-violent. Demonstrations have blocked roads or obstructed access to businesses. Demonstrations against U.S. private sector interests are only likely in response to business practices that are perceived to be unfair/corrupt. There were no such incidents against U.S. private sector interests reported to the Consulate this year.

**Post-specific Concerns**

**Environmental Hazards**

Pacific hurricanes are a threat to the coastal areas of Puerto Vallarta and Manzanillo, but the 2016 season was calm and did not cause any damage to the coastline.

**Drug-related Crimes**

Drug trafficking continues to be a significant issue, as Nayarit, western Jalisco, and Colima are major marijuana cultivation zones. The region is also known as the primary methamphetamine production area in Mexico. The port in Manzanillo (Colima state) is a major gateway for precursor chemicals.

Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG) is the most powerful DTO in the region; they continue to display their dominance. Jalisco averages three deaths daily, the majority of which the State Police attribute to DTO violence. In 2016, there were months of violence in Lagos de Moreno, mass graves throughout Jalisco, and an assassination attempt against the Michoacán Mayor visiting Guadalajara. Colima’s homicide rate in 2016 was three times greater than the 2015 rate due to DTO violence between CJNG, remnants of Los Caballeros Templarios (LCT), and the Sinaloa cartel. The violence in Manzanillo, Tecoman, and Colima City among the DTOs results from a fight for control of the Manzanillo port and local drug distribution sites. Targeted violence has
not impacted the civilian population. Recent violence targets government officials and law enforcement personnel. The Manzanillo port continues to be the site of many large-scale drug seizures by enforcement authorities.

**Police Response**
The DTO threat has increased the military support of law enforcement operations; thus, military and law enforcement convoys are frequent. From 2015 to 2016, 10 CJNG leaders were arrested in military/law enforcement operations. The Jalisco State Police unified command approach to policing is primarily focused on supporting under-equipped municipalities. However, the Guadalajara Metropolitan Zone is establishing a unified municipal command that is focused on community policing. Police are more responsive in cases of active threats or violent crime.

**How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment**
In some instances, U.S. citizens have become victims of harassment, mistreatment, and extortion by alleged and certified Mexican law enforcement. Mexican authorities have cooperated in investigating such cases, but one must have the officer's name, badge number, and patrol car number to pursue a complaint effectively. Please note this information if you ever have a problem with police or other officials. When in doubt, ask for identification.

**Crime Victim Assistance**
Reporting crimes can be a long, frustrating experience. Uniformed police officers cannot take reports of crime, and all reports (denuncias) must be made to the local branch of the State Prosecutor's Office (Ministerio Publico). When making a denuncia, the burden of proof is on the individual to substantiate that a crime occurred. Even when a denuncia is properly filed, it must be ratified by the complainant several days later. This becomes impossible for many visitors on short stays. Even in cases when a denuncia is properly filed and ratified, police rarely investigate non-violent or minor property crimes. Major crimes are investigated and often resolved. Crimes against foreigners are likely to get more attention from the authorities than crimes against Mexican citizens. Despite the substantial obstacles to reporting a crime, the U.S. Consulate encourages all U.S. citizen victims of crime to report the crime to the Ministerio Publico and the American Citizen Services office of the Consulate.

*Ministerio Publico*
Jalisco: (33) 3837-6000
Aguascalientes: http://www.aguascalientes.gob.mx/pgj/(449) 910-2800
Colima: (312) 314-2356
Nayarit: (311) 129-6000

Police/Security Agencies

The purpose of uniformed police (preventatives) is to patrol and prevent crimes. In cases where businesses report specific concerns/threats, these preventatives are often deployed to protect the threatened interests. Due to Mexican law, these preventatives are not permitted to take denuncias, and they do not perform any investigative functions.

The State Police maintain a uniformed police, who serve protective and crime prevention functions. Each state maintains a force of investigative police, overseen by the Attorney General. State Transit Police are generally professional and adequately equipped for their task of road safety and enforcing traffic laws. Municipal governments may also have transit police.

Tourism Police in Puerto Vallarta are specifically assigned to work in tourist areas and are commonly the only unit that speaks English. Their main purpose is to enhance the safety of tourist areas by deterring crime and responding to any accident. Tourist police are not able to take denuncias but can assist travelers in contacting the authorities who can.

In many rural areas in Nayarit, Jalisco, and Colima, the municipal police are understaffed and underresourced. Many enforcement officers on the municipal, state, and federal levels have been removed from their job for failing the vetting process (the control de confianza).

Medical Emergencies

There are two medical systems in Mexico: public and private. Mexican citizens receive free emergency and non-emergency medical care through the public system. Public emergency medical service can be contacted by dialing 911. In major cities, ambulance response time is typically 10-15 minutes, depending on the location. In rural areas, public health facilities are often the only option, and the level of care can be substantially lower than that in major cities.

Most visitors and relatively wealthy Mexicans choose to use private health care services. All major cities have private hospitals and private ambulance services. Most private hospitals and emergency services require payment or adequate guarantee of payment before services will be provided.

Contact Information for Available Medical Services

Private hospitals

Hospital San Javier
Avenida Pablo Casals 640, Guadalajara, Jalisco
Telephone: 3669-0222
Emergency: 3641-4832
http://www.sanjavier.com.mx/

Hospital Angeles del Carmen
Tarascos 3435, Guadalajara, Jalisco
Telephone: 3813-0042
Emergency: 3813-1224
http://www.hospitalangelesdelcarmen.com

Hospital Puerta de Hierro
Puerta de Hierro 150, Puerta de Hierro
45116 Zapopan, Jalisco
Telephone: 3848-4000
http://www.cmpdh.com
Available Air Ambulance Services
Medical Mobil Ambulance
3827-2087

Airlink Ambulance
3629-8700 (in Puerta de Hierro)
01 800 024-8600
http://www.airlinkambulance.com

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance
The CDC offers additional information on vaccines and health guidance for Mexico.

OSAC Country Council Information
The Guadalajara Country Council currently meets quarterly during the year and has approximately 200 members. Please contact OSAC’s Western Hemisphere team with any questions or to join.

U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information
Consulate Address and Hours of Operation
The U.S. Consulate is located at Progreso 175, Colonia Americana, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico.
Consulate Contact Numbers

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To contact the Department of State in the U.S. call 1-888-407-4747 during business hours, and 202-647-5225 after hours.
Consulate main number: (33) 3268-2100 or (33) 3268-2200
American Citizen Services: (33) 3268-2173 or (33) 3268-2273
Consulate after-hours: (33) 3137-2833
Consular officers are available for emergency assistance 24 hours/day, 7 days/week.
Regional Security Office: 52-33-3268-2208
Regional Security Office Duty Agent: (33) 31895-7414
Website: http://guadalajara.usconsulate.gov/
Nearby Posts

Embassy: http://mexico.usembassy.gov/
Consulate Ciudad Juarez: http://ciudadjuarez.usconsulate.gov/
Consulate Hermosillo: http://hermosillo.usconsulate.gov/
Consulate Matamoros: http://matamoros.usconsulate.gov/
Consulate Merida: http://merida.usconsulate.gov/
Consulate Monterrey: http://monterrey.usconsulate.gov/
Consulate Nogales: http://nogales.usconsulate.gov/
Consulate Nuevo Laredo: http://nuevolaredo.usconsulate.gov/
Consulate Tijuana: http://tijuana.usconsulate.gov/
Consulate Guidance
All U.S. Citizen travelers should also register with the nearest U.S. Consulate through the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP).
Additional Resources
Mexico Country Information Sheet