



Portugal 2014 Crime and Safety Report: Lisbon

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Drug Trafficking; Burglary; Extortion; Human Trafficking; Fraud; Separatist violence; Riots/Civil Unrest; Earthquakes; Floods; Wildfires

Europe > Portugal; Europe > Portugal > Lisbon

3/20/2014

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Crime Threats

Each spring, the Ministry of Internal Administration publishes a comprehensive security report that contains detailed information on the state of law enforcement along with criminal analysis and statistics. The current report (2012) is on the Ministry's webpage: <http://www.portugal.gov.pt/pt/os-ministerios/ministerio-da-administracao-interna/documentos-oficiais/20130327-rasi-2012.aspx>. Based on that report, Portugal continued to see a gradual rise in a majority of its crime categories, including violent offenses. Anecdotally, increased unemployment along with decreased social benefits, as a result of the government's response to an ongoing economic crisis, are viewed as contributing factors to the rise. Attributable in part to population density, Lisbon, Porto, Setúbal, Coimbra, and Faro comprise over 70 percent of overall criminal incidents in Portugal (to include the Azores and Madeira).

Pickpocketing is very common, particularly in tourist areas and along trains, trams, and buses.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Vice activities -- gambling, prostitution, and narcotics -- exist, but for those who take basic security precautions, Portugal is a moderate threat country. Petty thefts, such as pickpockets, smash-and-grab (for example with vehicles), residential and business burglaries, and drug offenses -- are more prevalent in the larger urban areas.

Overall organized crime is not a major issue, but smaller groups do operate in Portugal. Eastern European criminal organizations are present and predominantly engaged in racketeering, extortion, and vice-related criminal activity. For example, this past summer, authorities arrested a transnational criminal organization from the Caucasuses that facilitated illegal immigration, falsification of documents, and residential thefts.

Gang activities are generally limited to immigrant ethnic groups and focused on narcotics, petty crimes, and turf protection. The authorities also conducted sweeps of brothels and other locations (e.g. striptease and massage parlors) in an attempt to crackdown on trafficking of persons.

Overall Road Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Highways are exceptional, and secondary roads are generally of good quality and well maintained. Traffic enforcement, however, is limited. As such, motorists often drive excessively fast and violate traffic codes. Particularly problematic especially in urban areas are failures to merge properly, yield, change lanes safely, and obey traffic control lights. Incidents of serious traffic accidents in the Azores and Madeira are rare. High speed, bad weather, and unskilled drivers contribute to accidents, including rollovers and multiple vehicles, that often result in serious injuries or fatalities.

Lower speed accidents predominantly occur in cities and urban areas, and particular caution should be exercised when traversing intersections, as motorists often accelerate in an attempt to beat the traffic lights or become impatient sitting in a line and disregard the traffic light altogether. While traffic congestion is notable and predominantly in Lisbon, Porto, and surrounding metropolitan areas, long queues during rush hours are commonplace; yet incidences of road rage are rare. Drivers are required to wear seatbelts and encouraged to drive defensively.

Portugal recently passed new traffic laws available through the Autoridade Nacional Segurança Rodoviaria website:
<http://www.ansr.pt/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=989qAAcJYM0%3d&tabid=36&language=en-US>.

Political, Economic, Religious and Ethnic Violence

Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Portugal has no indigenous terrorist groups. However, occasionally members of the Basque Homeland and Freedom separatist group (ETA) hid in Portugal.

Portuguese authorities also remain alert to recruitment and radicalization of religious converts and work closely with U.S. and European partners to counter associated risks.

Civil Unrest

Portugal has experienced a notable period of political and social tranquility; however, recent economic uncertainties have resulted in civil discontent manifesting in generally peaceful protests. On average, about eight protests occurred a day in 2012, according to government statistics.

Implemented austerity measures, low economic growth forecast, reduction in social benefits, and increased unemployment have resulted in numerous demonstrations. While demonstrations have generally been peaceful, isolated incidents of rock throwing and petrol bombs have spurred police intervention. Additional protests will likely continue as a result of ongoing deficit reduction measures.

Religious or Ethnic Violence

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Portugal is a multi-ethnic/religious country, and a harmonious relationship generally exists between all groups. Occasionally, inter-ethnic disputes arise in depressed neighborhoods, owing more to socio-economic pressures rather than an outright ethnic conflict or clash of political or religious ideologies.

Post-specific Concerns

Environmental Hazards

Portugal experienced an estimated 8.7 magnitude earthquake in 1755 accompanied by a large tsunami that killed thousands of people and left the city in ruins. A 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck the Azores in 1980 and caused property damage and loss of life. In recent years, quakes measuring 3.5 to 6.7 in magnitude have been recorded on land and in Portugal's territorial waters of the Atlantic Ocean; a M4.6 occurred 107km east of Santa Cruz das Flores, Azores, Portugal on October 18, 2012.

The implementation of improved modern construction techniques in accordance with contemporary EU seismic protocols for large multi-storied structures are noteworthy; however, many smaller buildings and dated residential dwellings do not incorporate such features and are more susceptible to collapse in the event of a sizeable earthquake.

Consult with the U.S Geological Survey (USGS) websites for additional information on earthquakes including preparedness at:

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



<http://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/world/index.php?regionID=63> and
<http://earthquake.usgs.gov/prepare/links.php>.

Mainland Portugal and its outlying islands of the Azores and Madeira are prone to occasional storms. Storms in the islands have created flash floods that caused several deaths, significant damage, and considerable erosion. For updated local weather, consult the Portuguese Institute for Sea and Atmosphere (IPMA) at: <http://www.ipma.pt/en/index.html> (English page).

Fires in north were particularly devastating, resulting in an increase in training exercises and reinforcing control over areas of operation. The Portuguese government also upgraded its communications and civil protection equipment, to include additional air assets.

Industrial and Transportation Accidents

Portugal is a major international shipping destination. Lisbon has a large port along the Tagus (Tejo) River supported by train and commercial trucking; materials and products vary and include petrochemicals. The port services cruise ships and military naval vessels conducting routine ports of call. A larger, more modern port is approximately 100km south at Sines. Portugal is an active participant in the U.S. government's National Nuclear Security Administrations (NNSA) Megaports Initiative, and the Port of Lisbon has enhanced capabilities for the detection of special nuclear and other radioactive materials in containerized cargo transiting the maritime network.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



There have been no recent, large-scale industrial or transportation accidents in Portugal. Transportation, including civil aviation, complies with applicable European Union standards.

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

Portugal is not a significant center for economic espionage or intellectual property theft. That said, the U.S. Embassy advocates to strengthen economic rules and norms in Portugal, increase U.S. business and private sector growth and investment, and to highlight the integral role of intellectual property rights (IPR) protection in supporting global economic stability.

Travelers are encouraged to consult with the Embassy's Foreign Commercial Section by visiting their website located at <http://Export.Gov/Portugal>. Commercial Specialists can help identify trade opportunities, find local business partners, launch your company, promote your products and services, obtain valuable market research reports and protect your Intellectual Property Rights. Services also include due diligence, market research, matchmaking, promotion of U.S. products and services at trade events, and more.

Privacy Concerns

Portugal has extensive provisions on protecting privacy, secrecy of communications, and data protection. Portugal is a member of the Council of Europe and recently signed and ratified the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with Regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (ETS No. 108). It has signed and ratified the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Portugal is a member of the Organization for

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and has adopted the OECD Guidelines on the Protection of Privacy and Transborder Flows of Personal Data.

Drug-related Crimes

Although neither a center of drug production nor a significant source of drugs destined for the United States, Portugal is a gateway for drugs entering Europe, particularly from South America and western Africa. In addition to direct shipments from South America, traffickers use former Portuguese colonies Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde as transshipment, refueling, and storage points for cocaine-laden vessels from South America en route to Europe through the Iberian Peninsula. While cocaine is the most significant drug threat, ecstasy, hashish, and heroin are readily available.

Portugal's law enforcement cooperation on trafficking is outstanding. The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the Portuguese Judicial Police (PJ) conducted multiple, highly successful joint investigations that, throughout 2013, resulted in significant seizures of narcotics in Portugal and elsewhere in Europe.

The government passed legislation in 2013 criminalizing the possession and sale of certain analogue chemicals used to produce psychoactive chemicals, commonly referred to as "bath salts." A customs mutual assistance agreement is in force between Portugal and the United States, as are protocols to the 2003 U.S.-EU extradition and mutual legal assistance agreements. Portugal is also a member country of the Maritime Analysis and Operations Center-Narcotics (MAOC-N), headquartered in Lisbon. The U.S. is a permanent observer to MAOC-N.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Portugal focuses much of its counternarcotic efforts on treatment and prevention. Drug use remains stable and below the EU average, despite decriminalization of personal drug use in 2001. "Problem" drug use and HIV cases are referred to the Drug Addiction Dissuasion Commission, consisting of multi-disciplinary teams that assess users and decide the appropriate sanction and referral to educational or treatment programs. The Ministry of Health's Institute on Drugs and Drug Addiction (IDT) operates numerous drug treatment centers nationwide. The IDT also has prevention programs that include training sessions, awareness-raising activities, and dissemination of informational pamphlets. Universal drug prevention is part of the school curriculum. In addition, in the "Safe Schools" program, law enforcement patrols the areas surrounding schools to prevent and protect students from criminal activities, such as drug trafficking in the surrounding area. Law enforcement also actively participates in awareness and training activities.

Kidnapping Threats

Kidnappings are uncommon and normally associated with robberies and domestic violence situations.

Police Response

Law enforcement is divided among several policing organizations and government ministries; each is competent, its staff generally well trained, and units reasonably equipped. However,

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



each organization is challenged financially and often struggle with competing needs. Criminal investigations are prioritized and often subject to availability of resources.

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

The authorities are professional, and Portugal places a premium on privacy rights and individual freedoms. Reports of unlawful detention, intimidation, harassment, and graft, etc. are rare. If encountered, seek legal counsel for appropriate assistance and report incidents to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Where to Turn to for Assistance if you Become a Victim of Crime

The emergency number is 112. (English speaking operators are available on request).

The government takes crime against tourists/visitors seriously and overall attempted to reinforce the presence and visibility of all law enforcement entities in the streets/within the communities.

Various Police/Security Agencies

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Polícia de Segurança Pública (PSP) - Public Security Police. This is a civilian police force who work in larger urban areas and have tourist units to provide additional assistance. PSP is tasked with safeguarding internal security and the rights of citizens. The PSP is the leading agency responsible for maintaining public order, countering violent acts, and performing tactical intervention.

Guarda Nacional Republicana - National Republican Guard. This is a military police officer agency with civilian policing responsibilities, i.e. gendarmerie that work predominantly in rural areas too small to warrant the PSP, and they provide a national highway patrol.

Polícia Judiciária (PJ) - Judicial Police. This is overseen by the Public Ministry, the PJ's mandate focuses on prevention, detection, and investigation of violent, organized, and financial crime.

Medical Emergencies

Calls to 112 are free from any phone. The operator will put you in contact with the emergency service that you require.

Medical emergency (ambulances): 112

National Police/Security Police/Fire Service: 112

Sea Rescue: 214 401 919

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Maritime Police (plus pick-up boat service): 210 911 100

Maritime Police (24hrs emergency): 210 911 155/49

Pan-European emergency number: 112

Contact Information for Recommended Local Hospitals and Clinics

Hospital de Santa Maria

AV. Professor Egas Moniz

1649-035 Lisboa

21 780 5000

*Designated Level 1 Trauma Center Hospital

**Accredited by the American Association of Blood Banks (AABB)

Hospital de S. Jose

Rua José A Serrano

1500-199 Lisboa

21 884 1000

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Hospital de S. Francisco Xavier

Estrada do Forte do Alto do Duque

1495-005 Lisboa

21 043 1000

*Designated Level 1 Trauma Center Hospital

Hospital da CUF

Rua Mário Botas, Parque das Nações

1998-018 Lisboa

21 002 5200

Hospital da Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa

Rua Duarte Galvão, 54

1549 Lisboa

21 771 4000

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Recommended Air Ambulance Services

Helicopters and Airplanes

National Authority for Civil Protection (ANPC)

Portugal under the Ministry of Interior

Av. do Forte de Carnaxide 2794-120

Carnaxide

21 416 5100

CDC Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

Travelers should consult information contained on the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website at: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/portugal.htm>.

Consult with a doctor or health-care provider to determine what vaccinations and medications may be required, factoring health and immunization history, areas of the country you will be visiting, and planned activities.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim

Crimes/Scams

Thieves tend to “rush” the entrances to the buses or trams (public transportation), and can work in pairs or groups to offer distractions while the real individual steals your belonging.

When returning to a parked vehicle, if a traveler observes a flat tire and someone volunteering to assist with the repairs, use caution. While the “helpful citizen” distracts the traveler, an accomplice will steal unattended items.

Small groups of adolescents/young adults occasionally (as a group) commit petty thefts and vehicle burglaries around common tourist spots (plazas, beaches, cafes, etc.).

Areas to be Avoided

For Lisbon and the surrounding area, avoid parks during the late evening/early morning hours due mainly to vice activities. Travelers should also exercise care along select streets in the Bairro Alto, Intendente, Martim Moniz, Chelas, and Olaias neighborhoods.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



In addition, problem areas include some resettlement neighborhoods in Amadora, such as Cova Da Moura, Seis De Maio, and Quinta de Fonte, where inter-ethnic violence, gangs, and vice activities occur.

Criminal incidents occur with less frequency in the Azores and Madeira than in mainland Portugal; however, travelers should continue to remain alert in the tourist areas, to include safeguarding your belongings at the beaches.

Best Situational Awareness Practices

While Portugal is generally tranquil, travelers should exercise appropriate care. The best defense for pickpocketing is to limit exposure to wallets, purses, backpacks etc., and above all avoid unnecessary distractions. Travelers should exercise common sense; stay in familiar surroundings and well-lit areas, never leave drinks unattended, only use official ATMs in well-lit areas, and carry copies of identity documents (i.e. passport).

Refrain from carrying (or displaying) large amounts of money, flashy jewelry, or expensive electronics. Carry a cell phone and notify someone who is not accompanying you of your intended travel plans, to include a detailed itinerary.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



If driving, store valuables and merchandise out of sight i.e. inside the trunk, and park in well-lit areas preferably in public areas.

Use hotel safety deposit boxes usually kept behind the hotel front desk – hotel room safes offer marginal levels of protection. Do not open your hotel door to anyone you do not know; check with the front desk for verification if someone claims to be hotel staff.

Portugal is in the midst of an economic crisis that has led to reductions in public benefits, increased unemployment, and protests/strikes. Remaining alert to your surroundings and avoid demonstrations and protests.

People taking children to beaches in the summer can register their children in a program called “Estou Aqui! (I am here)” via the web: <https://estouaqui.mai.gov.pt/Pages/default.aspx> . Children will be issued a bracelet free of charge to wear while at the beach, and if a child gets separated from his/her parent, the child can go to any PSP officer or police station and obtain assistance in finding his/her parent and vice versa.

U.S. Embassy Location and Contact Information

Embassy Address and Hours of Operation

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



Avenida das Forças Armadas

1600-081 Lisboa

Or

Apartado 43033

1601-301 Lisboa

Hours of Operation: Monday thru Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., (except for American and Portuguese holidays)

Embassy Contact Numbers

Embassy contact numbers: Country code 351

Regional Security Officer (RSO): 21 770 2514/46/47

Marine Security Guard (MSG/Post 1): 21 770 2222

Embassy Operator: 21 727 3300

*Consular Affairs: 21 727 2499

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.



*Consular information can be found at:
<http://portugal.usembassy.gov/service/emergencycontact.html>

Further Information: Embassy webpage: <http://portugal.usembassy.gov/index.html>

OSAC Country Council Information

Lisbon has started an OSAC Country Council. Please contact RSOLisbon@state.gov if interested in becoming a member.

The contents of this (U) presentation in no way represent the policies, views, or attitudes of the United States Department of State, or the United States Government, except as otherwise noted (e.g., travel advisories, public statements). The presentation was compiled from various open sources and (U) embassy reporting. Please note that all OSAC products are for internal U.S. private sector security purposes only. Publishing or otherwise distributing OSAC-derived information in a manner inconsistent with this policy may result in the discontinuation of OSAC support.