



## Guatemala 2014 Crime and Safety Report

Anti-American sentiment; Cargo Security; Crime; Cyber; Disease Outbreak; Information Security; Natural Disasters; Political Violence; Religious Violence; Terrorism; Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security

Western Hemisphere > Guatemala > Guatemala City

5/14/2014

### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Guatemala is a developing country with wide income disparities. Violent crime is a serious concern due to endemic poverty, an abundance of weapons, a legacy of societal violence, and weak law enforcement and judicial systems.

Guatemala has one of the highest violent crime rates in Central America. The violent crime rate is considered "Critical" by the U.S. Department of State. In 2013, Guatemala reported an average of 101 murders per week. While the vast majority of murders do not involve foreigners, the sheer volume means that local officials, who are often inexperienced and underpaid, are unable to cope with the problem. The number of violent crimes reported by U.S. citizens and other foreigners has remained high, and incidents have included, but are not limited to, assault, theft, armed robbery, carjacking, rape, kidnapping, and murder, even in areas of Guatemala City widely considered as safe, such as Zones 10, 14, and 15.

The Government of Guatemala reported a drop in the homicide rate from a peak of 6,498 in 2009 to 5,155 in 2012. While this decrease is worth noting, the homicide rate increased by 2 percent in 2013, which translates to 5,253 murders and gives Guatemala one of the highest homicide rates in Latin America.

The statistics provided by the Guatemalan National Police (Policia Nacional Civil, or PNC), are the ones most commonly used by the Government of Guatemala and international organizations for reporting purposes. The PNC does not count homicides if the victim left the crime scene alive and subsequently died as a result of his/her injuries. INACIF (Instituto Nacional de Ciencias Forenses de Guatemala), the Government of Guatemala agency responsible for tracking all deaths in country, shows homicide rates 8-16 percent higher than PNC homicide rates for the time periods indicated above, with 2012 and 2013 being the years with the biggest discrepancy in homicide reports (16 percent).

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Guatemala's worrisome murder rate is driven by four key factors: an increase in narco-trafficking activity, growing gang-related violence, a heavily-armed population (upwards of 60 percent possess a firearm) and a police/judicial system that remains either unable and or unwilling to hold many criminals accountable. Well-armed criminals know there is little chance they will be caught or punished, further driving criminal impunity.

Theft and armed robbery are the most common problems encountered by American citizens. No area is immune to daytime assaults, including the upscale shopping, tourist, and residential areas of zones 10, 14, 15, and 16 in Guatemala City. There have been numerous reported incidents of bank patrons being robbed outside banks after withdrawing large sums of money, suggesting possible complicity of bank personnel on the inside. A particularly troubling trend is the use of motorcycles for armed robbery. Typically, two men on a motorcycle accost the driver of a car and demand the driver's cell phone. In some cases, armed robberies to steal cell phones have turned violent. In May 2009, a new law mandated that only the operator is allowed on the motorcycle. The law also states that the motorcycle license plate number must be printed on a sticker on the back of the motorcycle driver's helmet. This law was used effectively in Colombia in the late 1990s. However, criminals in Guatemala have adapted tactics to include two men on two or more motorcycles. In 2013, the Guatemalan government modified the law requiring motorcycle riders to wear orange vests and display the license plate numbers on those vests. The modified law also requires motorcycle riders to drive on the right-hand side of the road only. However, enforcement has lagged.

The embassy has no reason to believe that U.S. citizens are being targeted specifically, other than the suspicion that U.S. citizens and their relatives have more money than average Guatemalans. Longer-term residents and dual nationals are more likely to become victims of serious crimes, as they tend to be integrated into local society and may not reside in the safest areas. Tourists seem to be largely shielded from the worst of the violence, instead succumbing principally to pick-pockets and purse-snatchers. That said, U.S. tourists have also occasionally been victims of rapes, sexual and physical assaults, and murders.

Pick-pockets and purse-snatchers are prevalent in major cities and tourist sites. Those who offer no resistance when confronted by armed thieves are usually not hurt. According to recent reporting, robberies of cell phones increased 40 percent from 2011 to 2012, with most by force or threat of force. That translates into 142,745 cell phones in 2012, up from 101,664 in 2011, or one cell phone every four minutes.

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Home invasions by armed groups occur from time to time in upscale neighborhoods. Thieves gain access by enticing a resident to open the door for a delivery or rushing in when family or staff open the door. While residential crime rates increased by 24 percent during the 12-month period of 2012, the rate decreased by 4 percent during the 12-month period of 2013.

Kidnapping gangs, often connected to narcotraffickers, are a concern in both Guatemala City and rural Guatemala. Gang members are often well armed with sophisticated weaponry, and they sometimes use massive amounts of force to extort, kidnap, and kill. There have been "express" kidnappings in recent years, primarily in Guatemala City, in which kidnappers demand a relatively small ransom that they believe can be gathered quickly. Some kidnapping gangs are known to kill their victims whether or not the ransom is paid.

From 2009 to 2013, the number of missing persons cases reported to the government increased 207 percent. While migration could account for some of that increase, it is unlikely that family and friends would undergo the cumbersome process of filing a *denuncia* (complaint) if they knew or suspected the persons had disappeared voluntarily. The U.S. Embassy is aware of the disappearances of several U.S. citizens, all of which remain unsolved.

According to government crime statistics, sexual assault rates were 70 percent higher in 2013 than in 2009. In most known cases, women traveling/driving alone were specifically targeted.

### **Road Safety**

Safety of public transportation: Poor

Urban road conditions/maintenance: Fair

Rural road conditions/maintenance: Fair to Poor

Availability of roadside/ambulance assistance: Fair

Overall Road Safety Assessment: Fair

U.S. citizens will encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. Most city streets are lit, but secondary and rural roads have little to no illumination.

Driving demands one's full attention, requiring that safe drivers be defensive to avoid dangerous situations. Cars and trucks are often stalled or parked in the middle of the road.

Tree branches are sometimes placed in the road a hundred meters or so before the stalled vehicle to warn approaching traffic of a hazard. While driving in or near large cities, be vigilant of pedestrians who unexpectedly dart across roads, even in heavy traffic, due to the lack of cross walks. Speed limits, lane markings, and stop signs are often ignored. Drivers often drive at the absolute maximum speed their vehicle can handle. These drivers share the road with slow vehicles, some barely able to manage 20 miles per hour, creating a hazardous mix of

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velocities. Winding and/or steep mountain roads, poorly designed surfaces, randomly placed speed bumps, unmarked hazards, and buses that are poorly operated and maintained present additional risks to motorists.

Traffic rules are only casually observed. Many drivers do not use their turn signals to alert other drivers. Instead, a common custom is for a driver or passenger to stick a hand out the window and wave it to indicate that they will be taking an unspecified action. Passing blindly on winding and/or steep mountain roads, poorly designed surfaces, and unmarked hazards, including landslides and precarious temporary highway repairs, present additional risks to motorists. Lethal head-on collisions are common.

Drivers are supposed to use the right-hand side of the road, and speed limits are posted depending on the condition of the road. Turning right on red is not permitted unless otherwise posted, and drivers must yield when entering a traffic circle. Seat belts must be worn, but there are no laws regarding the use of child safety seats. It is against the law for drivers to operate cellular phones while driving, although this is not widely enforced. People found driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs are arrested and may serve jail time. There are no roadside assistance clubs; however, a roadside assistance force (PROVIAL) patrols most of the major highways. PROVIAL can be contacted by calling 1520. Their vehicles are equipped with basic tools and first aid supplies, and their services are free. Common public transportation is by local brightly-painted recycled U.S. school buses, which serve almost every town. Criminal activity and frequent fatal accidents, however, make these low-priced buses particularly dangerous. Modern inter-city buses offer some security from highway violence, but armed attacks are increasing, indicating that all buses are vulnerable. Several travelers have been attacked on first-class buses on highway CA-2 near the border areas with both Mexico and El Salvador, and on highways CA-1 and CA-9 near the border with El Salvador, and in the highlands between Quetzaltenango and Sololá.

Taxi Seguro (secure taxi) can be reached at 2312-4243, and may not always be available, especially late at night. Taxi Amarillo Express is a radio-dispatch taxi service, and can be reached by dialing 1766. The Guatemalan tourist assistance agency, PROATUR, may be able to provide additional transportation-related information, and can be reached by dialing 1500. Police patrol the major roadways and may assist travelers, but the patrols are sporadic and may be suspended due to budget constraints. For roadside assistance, travelers may call the police by dialing 110 or 120 or the fire department by dialing 122 or 123. Cellular telephone service covers most areas frequented by tourists. Some recent reports of highway robberies

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include accusations that police, or assailants dressed as police, have been involved. A few have included sexual assaults of victims.

Driving outside of urban areas at night is dangerous and not recommended. The Inter-American Highway (CA-1) and the road from Guatemala City to the Caribbean coast (CA-9) are especially dangerous due to heavy traffic, including large trucks and trailers, and poorly maintained vehicles that oftentimes lack properly functioning lights.

The main road to Lake Atitlán via the Inter-American Highway (CA-1) and Sololá is safer than the alternative secondary roads near the lake. Specifically, the main road is preferable to the alternative road through Las Trampas and Godinez to Panajachel (RN-11) where robbery, rape, and assault are known to have occurred. Armed attacks have occurred on roads between Guatemala City and Petén, as well as between Tikal and the Belize border.

Visitors to the Mayan ruins at Tikal are urged to fly to Flores and then travel by bus or tour van. Violent attacks have occurred in the Mayan ruins in Petén, including in the Cerro Cahui Conservation Park, Yaxhá, the road to and inside Tikal Park, and in the Tikal ruins, particularly during sunrise tours. However, tourist police (DISETUR) patrols have significantly reduced the incidence of violent crime inside the park, and there have been no reports of armed assaults on tourists there in the past year. Travelers should remain in groups, stay on the principal trails leading to the Central Plaza and the Temple IV complex, and avoid remote areas of the park.

Minor traffic incidents can quickly escalate to violence when one or both parties are carrying firearms that they are not hesitant to use. All drivers involved in accidents resulting in injury may be detained and held in protective custody pending investigation. In several instances, police officers have been posted outside hospital rooms of drivers who were injured, and they were not allowed to depart the country without judicial intervention. Such cases require the assistance of private local attorneys.

Vehicle thefts continue to be a serious problem. Cargo and transportation theft is a major problem for companies operating in Guatemala. Particularly attractive to thieves are trucks carrying shipments of electronics or gasoline. Theft of items from occupied vehicles is becoming more common. Often assailants are on motorcycles and pull up alongside a car stopped at a traffic light. The passenger on the motorcycle is armed, and the assailants are able to flee the scene quickly. In some cases, the vehicle occupants were visibly using their cell phones or other handheld devices prior to the theft. Leaving cars unattended in many parking lots can also invite break-ins despite the presence of armed guards, who often times will not intervene.

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A number of travelers have experienced armed robberies after just having arrived on international flights, most frequently in the evening. In the most common scenario, tourists or business travelers who land after dark are held up by armed men as their vehicle departs the airport, but similar incidents have occurred at other times of the day. Private vehicles, taxis, and shuttle buses have all been targeted. Typically, assailants steal money, passports, and luggage, and in some cases, the vehicle as well. In other cases, assailants have been wearing full or partial police uniforms and have used vehicles that resemble police vehicles, indicating that some elements of the police might be involved. Armed robberies have occurred within minutes of a tourist's vehicle having been stopped by the police. Recently, many of these attacks have taken place far from the airport, just as travelers were arriving at their homes, or in less busy areas of the city. Victims who did not resist the attackers were not physically injured.

Emboldened armed robbers have attacked vehicles on main roads in broad daylight. Travel on rural roads increases the risk of being stopped by a criminal roadblock or ambush. Widespread narcotics and alien-smuggling activities make remote areas especially dangerous because criminals look for any opportunity to strike.

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

#### International Terrorism or Transnational Terrorism

There are no known terrorist organizations in Guatemala. Narco-trafficking and transnational organized crime groups and gangs pose a real and dangerous threat to local, regional, and international interests.

#### Civil Unrest

Large demonstrations occur, often with little or no notice, and can cause serious traffic disruptions. Although most demonstrations are peaceful, they can turn violent. The use of roadblocks and/or blocking of public facilities, including the international airport, may delay or prevent tourists from reaching their destination.

In the past several years, Guatemalan citizens' frustration with crime has led to violent incidents of vigilantism, including stoning, lynching, and burning, especially in isolated rural areas.

Guatemala has many different and firmly held local beliefs and customs. Particularly in small villages, residents are often wary and suspicious of outsiders. Guatemalan citizens have been lynched for suspicion of child abduction.

### **Post-specific Concerns**

#### Environmental Hazards

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Guatemala is a geologically active country. Visitors should be aware of the possibility of earthquakes and volcano eruptions at any time, which underscores the importance of contingency planning for natural disasters.

Guatemala has four very active volcanoes, Pacaya, Santiaguito, Fuego and Tecuamburro, whose activity has forced evacuations of nearby villages throughout the years. In August 2013, Pacaya registered increased activity and it was necessary to evacuate 32 people from a nearby village to an emergency shelter. After field assessments, no personal or material damages were reported. During 2013, Fuego, Pacaya, and Santiaguito volcanos periodically displayed increased volcanic activity that included lava flow and ash dispersion in their surroundings. The May 2010 eruption of Pacaya Volcano near Guatemala City briefly closed Guatemala City's international airport. Tourists planning to climb Pacaya and Agua volcanoes during Guatemala's rainy season should plan their climb for the morning hours when thunderstorms are less likely to occur. Climbers should monitor the weather situation and return to the base of the volcano as quickly and safely as possible if thunderstorms gather. INGUAT (the Guatemalan Tourism Institute) has organized an active community-based tourism program in San Vicente Pacaya to minimize the risk of armed robbery on Pacaya. Climbing volcanoes in groups is still highly advisable to reduce the risk of assault.

Both the Caribbean and Pacific coasts are vulnerable to hurricanes and tropical storms from mid-May through November. Mudslides and flooding during the rainy season often kill dozens of people and close roads. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available locally from the National Disaster Reduction Coordination Office (CONRED) and from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Please consult CONRED for updates on natural disasters or tropical storms and hurricanes.

Beware of strong currents, riptides, and undertow along the Pacific coast beaches. They pose a serious threat to even the strongest swimmers. In 2012, two U.S. citizens drowned as a result of the undertow in this area, and one U.S. citizen drowned in the same area in 2013. Signs warning of treacherous surf are rare and confined mostly to private beaches owned by hotels. Lifeguards are rarely present. For specific information regarding current conditions, go to Guatemala's national weather and geographical authority at: <http://www.insivumeh.gob.gt/>.  
Emergency Preparedness Best Practices

General information about natural disaster preparedness is available from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at <http://www.fema.gov/>.

Additional References:

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FEMA Earthquake page: <http://www.fema.gov/earthquake>

Drop Cover Hold On: <http://www.dropcoverholdon.org/>

Terremotos: A California-specific site containing useful guidance in Spanish for earthquake preparedness: <http://www.terremotos.org/>

Red Cross – Earthquake Preparedness:

<http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/earthquake>

Red Cross – Earthquake Preparedness (Spanish):

<http://www.redcross.org/cruz-roja/prepare/terremotos>

#### Industrial and Transportation Accidents

Safe storage of seized drug precursor chemicals is a challenge. The capacity to transport, treat, store, or dispose of such chemicals safely does not now exist within the government, though the government has tried to develop expertise, albeit with little progress. The Department of State is funding an Organization of American States (OAS) initiative to provide training and equipment to the government to address the safe storage, handling, and destruction of precursor chemicals.

The capacity of the government to respond to chemical or industrial accidents is extremely limited, and small incidents typically go unreported. The government is also very limited in its technical ability to monitor watershed runoff or air pollution from industrial processes, the most controversial being mining.

#### Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

The U.S.-Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement provides for improved standards for the protection and enforcement of a broad range of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) that are consistent with U.S. standards of protection and enforcement as well as emerging international standards. Enforcement of IPR laws, however, has been inconsistent. A number of raids, cases, and prosecutions have been pursued; however, resource constraints and lack of coordinated government action impede efficient enforcement efforts. Piracy of works protected by copyright and infringement of other forms of intellectual property,

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such as trademarks including those of some major U.S. food and pharmaceutical brands, remains problematic. However, economic espionage does not appear to be a major problem.

### Regional Travel Concerns & Restricted Travel Areas/Zones

Due to uncontrolled drug and alien smuggling, the border with Mexico (and in particular the northwestern corner of Petén) is a high-risk area. The border areas including the Sierra de Lacandon and Laguna del Tigre National Parks are among the most dangerous areas in Guatemala due to drug trafficking activity. The U.S. Embassy takes extra precautions when U.S. government personnel travel to the region.

### Drug-related Crimes

Narcotics-related crimes certainly factor into the precarious security environment, but polls have shown that average Guatemalans are more concerned about general criminal violence, which is also what most directly affects U.S. citizens. Certain neighborhoods of Guatemala City are essentially controlled by criminal gangs who have walled off their territories with concrete barriers and whose permission is required to enter. In spite of regional initiatives to combat drug trafficking and gangs, they continue to be a concern in Guatemala City and rural areas, though they have a far greater impact on Guatemalans than on foreigners.

Narco-traffickers and gang members are very well armed. Emboldened armed robbers have attacked vehicles on main roads in broad daylight. Travel on rural roads increases the risk of a criminal roadblock or ambush. Widespread narcotics and alien smuggling activities can make remote areas especially dangerous.

### Police Response

The Policia Nacional Civil (PNC) lack sufficient personnel and training to accomplish their mission. In addition, the PNC suffers from a lack of logistical supplies (vehicles, fuel, ammunition, etc.) with little improvement from year-to-year. However, what the PNC lacks most is manpower.

More often than not a police investigation fails to result in an arrest, much less a conviction. Apart from impunity, a principal reason that the government is unable to respond to the needs of crime victims of all nationalities, or to prevent them from becoming victims in the first place, is that the PNC is significantly under-trained and under-funded. The average PNC officer should have at least a high school degree but often times has much less education, is often equipped with as little as six months of police training before being sent out on the streets, and receives only \$570 per month as salary. Moreover, the PNC's annual budget of 2.5 billion quetzales (approx. U.S. \$312 million) is nowhere near adequate to support its personnel, vehicles, training and other infrastructure needs.

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Last year the government announced a reduction in the impunity rate for homicides in Guatemala City from 97 percent in 2010 to 70 percent in 2012. While that is a tremendous improvement, it still means that 70 percent of murders in Guatemala City go unpunished. Security escorts for tourist groups and security information are available from the Tourist Assistance Office (PROATUR) of INGUAT (the Guatemalan Tourism Institute) at 7a Avenida 1-17, Zona 4, Centro Cívico, Guatemala City. INGUAT's PROATUR division has 24-hour/seven days per week direct telephone numbers for tourist assistance and emergencies. You may call them at (502) 2421-2810, fax them at (502) 2421-2891, or simply dial 1500 in Guatemala to reach INGUAT Tourist Assistance. You can also contact INGUAT by email at [operacionesproatur@inguat.gob.gt](mailto:operacionesproatur@inguat.gob.gt). PROATUR also maintains regional offices in all major domestic tourist destinations, and the regional delegates provide rapid and appropriate assistance to crime and accident victims. Travelers may also wish to visit INGUAT's website at: <http://www.inguat.gob.gt/> (Spanish only).

Tourist groups are advised to request security escorts from INGUAT. There have been no incidents of armed robbery of groups escorted through the Tourist Protection Program. The request should be submitted by mail, fax, or e-mail ([info@inguat.gob.gt](mailto:info@inguat.gob.gt)) and should arrive at INGUAT at least three business days in advance of the proposed travel. Requests should be directed to the attention of the Coordinator of the National Tourist Assistance Program and should provide the itinerary, names of travelers, and model and color of the vehicle in which they will be traveling. Travelers should be aware that INGUAT might not be able to accommodate all requests.

#### How To Handle Police Detention Or Harassment

Some PNC members have been involved in criminal activities. There have also been several recent incidents where individuals dressed in police uniforms have been implicated in robberies.

U.S. citizens detained by the police can contact the embassy for assistance at (502) 2326-4000; after working hours the Embassy's Duty Officer is available via the 24 hour emergency number - (502) 2331 2354.

#### Where to Turn for Assistance if You Become a Victim of a Crime

Crime victims are often asked to pay for gas so that the police - if they have a vehicle available to them - may visit the crime scene. Victims of crime should contact the following phone numbers for assistance:

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Police (911 equivalent): 110 or 120

Fire Department: 122 or 123

Tourist emergency assistance: 502 2421-2810

Tourist Assistance (PROATUR): 1500

PROATUR is a joint national police/INGUAT initiative and is present in all major tourist destinations.

### **Medical Emergencies**

A wide range of medical care is available in Guatemala City, but medical care outside the city is limited. Public hospitals frequently experience serious shortages of basic medicines and equipment. Care in private hospitals is generally adequate for most common illnesses and injuries, and many of the medical specialists working in them are U.S.-trained and -certified. There are some aerial medevac services; however these services are extremely expensive and frequently require payment before the service is rendered. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can be costly. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services, although most private hospitals accept major U.S. credit cards. They do not typically enter into payment plan agreements. Travelers should be aware that they may have to pay in advance and seek reimbursement. It is very important to find out BEFORE you travel whether your medical insurance will cover you overseas.

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Neither the embassy nor the Department of State can assume any responsibility for the accuracy of any of the data provided, the integrity, or the professional ability of any of the hospitals listed (source: U.S. Embassy Guatemala Consular Website).

Private Hospitals in Guatemala City Metropolitan Area

Hospital de las Americas

10a. Calle 2-31, Zona 14

Phone: 2384-3535 Fax: 2384-3535 Ext. 1028

info@hospitalesdeguatemala.com

Hospital Herrera Llerandi

6a. Avenida 8-71, Zona 10

Phone: 2384-5959 Emergency: 2334-5955

<http://www.amedesgua.com/> (Spanish)

[http://www.amedesgua.com/index\\_eng.asp](http://www.amedesgua.com/index_eng.asp) (English)

Healthinfo@herrerallerandi.com

Cedros del Libano

8a. Avenida 2-48, Zona 1

Phone: 2230-6274/6/8, 2220-1356/2230-6274

Fax: 2253-6879

[www.hospitalesdeguatemala.com](http://www.hospitalesdeguatemala.com)

info@hospitalesdeguatemala.com

Centro Medico

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6a. Avenida 3-47, Zona 10  
Phone: 2279-4949 Fax: 2331-7533  
[www.centromedico.com.gt](http://www.centromedico.com.gt)  
[info@centromedico.com.gt](mailto:info@centromedico.com.gt)

## Public Hospitals in Guatemala City Metropolitan Area

Hospital Universitario Esperanza  
6a. Avenida 7-49, Zona 10  
Phone: 2362-8626 Fax: 2362-8657  
<http://hospitalesperanza.com/>  
[cesazo@hospitalesperanza.com](mailto:cesazo@hospitalesperanza.com)  
Private foundation, affiliated with Francisco Marroquin University School of Medicine

Hospital General San Juan de Dios  
1a. Avenida 10-50, Zona 1  
Phone: 2321-9191 / 2253-0423  
<http://www.hospitalsanjuandediosguatemala.com/>  
Affiliated with University San Carlos School of Medicine IGSS

Instituto Guatemalteco de Seguridad Social  
9a. Calle 7-55, Zona 9  
Phone: 2332-1009, 2332-4031, 2332-1278, 2332-3252, 2332-1312, 2332-0063.  
<http://www.igssgt.org/>  
Use of IGSS services requires registration

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Nuestra Senora del Pilar  
3a. Calle 10-71, Zona 15  
Colonia Tecún Umán  
Phone: 2420-0000  
[www.sanatorioelpilar.com](http://www.sanatorioelpilar.com)  
Private, run by Asociacion Española de Beneficiencia by nuns of the Anunciata.

Roosevelt Hospital  
Calzada Roosevelt, Zona 11  
Phone: 2321-7400  
<http://www.hospitalroosevelt.gob.gt>  
[Hosproos@terra.com.gt](mailto:Hosproos@terra.com.gt)  
Affiliated with University San Carlos School of Medicine

Hospital General de Accidentes - IGSS  
13 Avenida 1-51 Col. Monte Real, Zona 4, Mixco  
Phone: 2437-9625-29  
[www.hgadirec@itelgua.com](http://www.hgadirec@itelgua.com)  
Membership required to use services

Ambulance Services  
Alerta Medica  
Direct: 502-2332-9422  
Work: 502-2327-7171  
After Hours: 502-2327-7100  
<http://www.alertamedica.com.gt/>  
Description: EMT and paramedic on board at all times. All ambulances are fully equipped to respond to cardiac, respiratory, and trauma events. Typical response time can vary from 5-15 minutes, and all vehicles can access any private and/or public hospital.

Asistencia Medica, S.A.  
Direct: 502-5203-0525  
Work: 502-2332-1506

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Work: 502-2332-6485

asmesa@c.net.gt

Description: EMT on board at all times. Paramedic on board if requested. All ambulances equipped to respond to cardiac, respiratory, and trauma emergencies. Typical response time has been reported to be a minimum of 15 minutes. All vehicles have access to all public and private hospitals.

Rescate 911

Direct: 502-2361-4041

Work: 502-2362-5157

Work: 502-2362-5167

<http://www.rescate911.com.gt/>

[info@rescate911.com.gt](mailto:info@rescate911.com.gt)

Description: EMT and paramedic on board at all times. All medical providers are trained in Guatemala. Ambulances can provide intensive care quality transportation with equipment including continuous cardiac monitor, oxygen, infusion pump, incubator, and other medical supplies. Typical response time varies from 7-10 minutes, and all vehicles can access all private and public hospitals.

Air Ambulance Services

American

American Aerovac Air Ambulance

Direct: 001-800-423-5993

Other: 001-954-252-2744

[rskuf@bellsouth.net](mailto:rskuf@bellsouth.net)

<http://americanaerovac.com/info.htm>

P.O. Box 291033 Davie, FL 333329-1033

Air Ambulance Network

Direct: 001-800-880-9451

Other: 001-727-934-3999

<http://www.airambulancenetwork.com/>

3607 Alt 19 N., Suite A, Palm Harbor, FL 34683

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## Guatemalen

### Aerotaxis Air Ambulance Service

Direct: 502-5709-7922, 502-2331-3073 or 502-2360-4074

aerotaxis@hotmail.com

Avenida Hincapie y 18 Calle, Zona 13, Interior Aeropuerto, Hangar J-12

### Aero Ruta Maya, S.A. Air Ambulance Service

Work: 502-2418-2727

Work: 502-2418-2700

Work: 502-2418-2710

armsa1@intelnett.com

Avenida Hincapie y 18 Calle Final, Hangar L-16, Interior Aeropuerto La Aurora, Zona 13.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/guatemala>

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the infectious diseases section of the World Health Organization (WHO) website at <http://www.who.int>. The WHO website also contains additional health information for travelers, including detailed country-specific health information.

### **Tips on How to Avoid Becoming a Victim**

Extortion calls are commonplace, and many times originate within prisons. In recent years, the number of extortions has risen dramatically. In most cases, changing the phone number and not responding to the threats will resolve the matter. However, cases involving gang members must be taken seriously, as they will not hesitate to back up their threats with violence.

In mid-2012, the U.S. Embassy received several dozen reports of cases in which people in the United States received calls allegedly from young relatives traveling in Guatemala and in urgent need of financial assistance. The scam victims collectively sent thousands of dollars before this trend diminished in August.

In another popular scam, robbers place a nail in a parked vehicle's tire. Robbers who pose as "good Samaritans" then follow the vehicle until the tire becomes flat and the victims pull over. While "help" is being rendered, the contents of the car are stolen, often without the knowledge

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of the victims. However, in some cases, the robbers have threatened the tourists with weapons. Parking areas in and around the Guatemala City International Airport are particularly prone to this crime.

In another scam, victims are approached in a hotel, restaurant, or other public place by an individual who claims that there is some sort of problem with his or the would-be victim's automobile in the parking lot. On the way to investigate the "problem," usually in a remote or concealed area near the parking lot, the robber pulls a gun on the victim and demands cash, credit cards, and other valuables.

### **Areas to be Avoided and Best Security Practices**

The Department of State urges U.S. citizens to take responsibility for their own personal security while traveling overseas.

Some best practices for travel safety include: ensure that someone not traveling with you is aware of your itinerary. Coordinate arrival times with those picking up passengers, minimize time spent standing outside in the airport passenger pick-up area, and do not walk out of the airport with valuables in plain sight. Carry laptops inconspicuously in a backpack or other carry-on luggage. Avoid using electronic devices in traffic or leaving purses on seats in plain sight.

Rather than traveling alone, use a reputable tour organization. Stay in groups and stay on the main roads. Do not travel after dark outside of Guatemala City. Intercity travel after dark is extremely dangerous and should be avoided altogether. It is highly recommended to caravan with at least two cars when traveling outside of Guatemala City. It is preferable to stay in the main tourist destinations.

Pay close attention to your surroundings, especially when walking or driving in Guatemala City. Travelers should be aware of their surroundings and watch for suspicious activity. Pick-pockets and purse-snatchers are active in all major cities and tourist sites, especially the central market and other parts of Zone 1 in Guatemala City. In a common scenario, an accomplice distracts the victim while an assailant slashes or simply steals a bag or backpack. In recent months, U.S. citizens have increasingly reported to the embassy information about armed robberies in Antigua, mostly at night but with some occurring in plain daylight, targeting pedestrians on less frequented roads. The embassy advises tourists and residents to be very vigilant of their surroundings and report any crime incidents promptly to the police.

Tourists should carry money in a front pocket or put it in a zippered or buttoned back pocket. They should not display money, jewelry, a cell phone or other perceived valuables, and never leave a backpack or fanny pack unattended. Do not display items of value, such as laptops,

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iPods, cameras, and jewelry and refrain from using a cell phone on the street. Limit the number of credit cards and other high-value items you bring with you. Carry a photocopy of your passport when out and about to avoid losing it to a robbery. Avoid carrying large sums of money. Do not resist if you are being robbed. Victims have been killed when they resisted or refused to give up their money or other valuables. Assailants are often armed with guns and do not hesitate to use them if you resist.

Persons carrying laptop computers and expensive cell phones are often targets for armed robberies. Visitors should avoid using a laptop in a public place, such as a cafe or in wireless zones. Areas that offer wi-fi computer services have been targeted. Several individuals have been killed and their laptops taken upon departure from these establishments after they were seen using their computers in public. Avoid carrying laptop cases or anything that resembles one, even if they do not contain laptops.

There have been a number of incidents in which foreigners have been robbed immediately after making a large withdrawal from local banks. Complicity by bank employees is strongly suspected in these crimes. There have also been incidents where persons are targeted for robbery after using ATMs.

Avoid hotels that do not have adequate security. Visitors should never give out their hotel key or tell strangers what hotel they are staying in. They should lock their valuables in the hotel safety deposit box; watch for suspicious activity as they enter the hotel and their room.

Travelers should make sure to lock the door and do not open it for unknown people.

Drivers should lock their doors; leave their windows rolled up, and leave at least half a car length of space after the car in front of them to maneuver if something happens. If a driver has to pull over on the highway, he should do it in a well-lit area with high visibility or a public place (preferably within view of a police officer). It is also highly recommended that if individuals are driving, that they use a car with slightly tinted windows and not talk on their cell phones.

Women should be especially careful when traveling alone and avoid staying out late without an escort. Support for victims of sexual assault is lacking outside of major cities, and there are not enough trained personnel who can help victims either in the capital or outlying areas.

Arrest and prosecution of assailants in sexual assault cases is uncommon at best and can be more difficult without private legal assistance.

Travelers should be aware that basic safety precautions commonly required in the United States for swimming, boating, and other outdoor activities may not be observed. Multiple

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boaters in the Rio Dulce area of the Department of Izabal have been victimized in violent armed attacks.

Indigenous activists have taken foreign tourists hostage in the Rio Dulce and Livingston areas. Although all hostages have been released unharmed, tensions between indigenous activists and authorities remain. In January 2012, a group of National Geographic explorers, including U.S. citizens, were detained in Quiché department by local residents when they jumped into a pond considered sacred in the Mayan tradition. The incident serves as a warning to be mindful of local traditional practices when visiting indigenous Mayan communities.

Hailing taxis on the street in Guatemala City is discouraged. Travelers need to exercise caution with personal items such as backpacks, fanny packs, and passports while riding buses, as tourists' possessions are a favorite target of thieves.

Travelers should avoid areas where demonstrations are taking place. It is wise to avoid any public gathering of agitated citizens; persons attempting to intervene have been attacked by mobs. Keep informed of possible demonstrations by following the local news and consulting hotel personnel and tour guides. Confer with trusted local staff or associates, or check the mass media, before venturing out on trips within the country.

The embassy recommends that U.S. citizens keep their distance from local children and refrain from actions that could fuel suspicions of child abductions. U.S. citizens are advised to be aware of and avoid activities that might unintentionally violate a cultural or religious belief. Avoid close contact with local children, including taking photographs, especially in rural areas. Such contact can be viewed with deep suspicion and may provoke panic and violence.

#### **U.S. Embassy Location & Contact Numbers**

Embassy of the United States of America in Guatemala

Avenida Reforma 7-01, Zona 10, Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala

Telephone: (502)2326-4000 during embassy business hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Mon-Thu and 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Fridays).

Emergency after-hours telephone: (502)2331-2354

Fax: (502)2331-3804

Website: <http://guatemala.usembassy.gov>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/usembassyguate>

The Consular section is open for citizen services, including registration, from 7:30a.m. to noon and 1:00 to 3:30p.m. Monday-Thursday; and 7:30a.m. - 11:30 on Fridays, excluding U.S. and

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Guatemalan holidays. The second and last Fridays of each month, American Citizen Services is open only for emergency services.

U.S. citizens living in or visiting Guatemala are encouraged to register at the consular section of the U.S. Embassy Guatemala City and obtain updated information on travel and security in Guatemala. American citizens may also want to enroll in the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program online travel system at <https://step.state.gov/step/>.

### **OSAC Country Council Information**

The U.S. Embassy has an active Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) Country Council that meets monthly at the American Chamber of Commerce's Guatemala City office. Typically, the OSAC Country Council will meet for a larger Annual Regional Security Conference in Antigua, Guatemala, once a year in the spring. Information on the Guatemala OSAC Country Council can be found at <http://guatemalacity.osac.gov/>. Please e-mail the Country Council at [OSAC\\_Guatemala@state.gov](mailto:OSAC_Guatemala@state.gov) or call at 502-2326-4281.

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