

Security Message for U.S. Citizens
Crime and Safety Situation in Paraguay
28 January 2016

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

This message is to remind U.S. citizens traveling and residing in Paraguay that crime continues to be a serious concern. Crime is generally non-violent, but the common use of knives and firearms in muggings and street crime creates the possibility for serious harm. Recent statistics and high profile incidents indicate a growing willingness by criminals to use firearms. Street crime, including pickpocketing and mugging, is common in downtown Asunción, at the bus terminal, and on public buses. Armed robbery, car theft, burglaries, and occasionally home invasions are a problem in both urban and rural areas. Street crime, including pick pocketing and mugging, is prevalent on public buses and in urban areas. The Paraguayan National Police (PNP) acknowledges that many crimes go unreported due to lack of confidence in the judicial process.

Both daytime and night time incidents of armed muggers using motorcycles (motochorros) to approach their victims have also been reported. In a few instances they have wounded and killed victims who attempted to flee or refused to turn over valuables. Although men have been victims, more often the victims tend to be women walking alone or in a small group.

There have been instances of bank employees working with organized criminal groups to identify and rob individuals after they withdraw large amounts of cash. In addition, organized criminal groups have also targeted armored bank cars in transit or while conducting money pickups at banks.

Virtual kidnappings have also been reported in Paraguay. Virtual kidnapping schemes typically involve an individual or criminal organization who contacts a victim via telephone and demands payment for the return of a “kidnapped” family member or friend. While no actual kidnapping has taken place, the callers often use co-conspirators to convince their victims of the legitimacy of the threat. Most schemes use various techniques to instill a sense of fear, panic, and urgency in an effort to rush the victim into making a hasty decision. Over the past several years, the region, including Paraguay, has seen an increase in virtual kidnappings reports.

Paraguayans are generally pro-American. Criminals do target those believed to be wealthy, including expatriates.

Areas of Concern

Within Asunción, the PNP continues to report a higher level of crime in the central downtown area, including property crimes and assaults. The majority of the crimes committed in downtown Asunción take place at night. The Chacarita area located in downtown Asunción along the river is a known high crime area which even local police refrain from entering.

It is recommended that U.S. citizen visitors to the Tri-Border Area (TBA) including Ciudad del Este remain especially vigilant. The population centers of the TBA include the cities of Ciudad del Este (Paraguay); Puerto Iguazú (Argentina) and Foz do Iguazú (Brazil).

The Embassy requires employees to obtain permission to travel to the departments of Alto Parana, Amambay, Canindeyu, San Pedro, and Concepcion, due to high crime levels in these areas.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Some roads in Asunción and other large cities are paved; however, these roads often flood during heavy rains, making them impassable. Potholes appear suddenly and often remain unrepaired for several months.

Defensive driving is a requirement, as traffic is extremely congested and unpredictable. Only minimal standards are required to obtain a driver's license, and driver's education prior to licensing is uncommon. Drivers routinely ignore traffic regulations, and many drive without insurance coverage. Many traffic lights are inoperable or difficult to see. In 2015, there were approximately 939 deaths attributed to traffic accidents in Paraguay.

Paraguay has seen a marked increase in the prevalence of motorcycles. Paraguayans can obtain motorcycles for very little money and with no formal training. Motorcycles pass on both sides of vehicles - often in a very dangerous manner and sometimes on sidewalks. Due in large part to a lack of enforceable traffic and safety regulations, a majority of traffic deaths occur in accidents between a vehicle and motorcycle.

Nearly all rural roads are unpaved and can be impassable during the rainy season (November-April). Road signs indicating hazards are lacking in many areas. Driving or traveling at night on highways outside urban areas is not recommended due to the number of vehicles without proper lights.

We strongly recommend that U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Paraguay enroll in the [State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#). STEP enrollment gives you the latest security updates and makes it easier for the U.S. embassy or nearest U.S. consulate to contact you in an emergency. If you don't have internet access, enroll directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Regularly monitor the State Department's [website](#), where you can find current Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and the Worldwide Caution. Read the [Country Specific Information for Paraguay](#). For additional information, refer to the [Traveler's Checklist](#) on the State Department's website.

Contact the [U.S. Embassy](#) or consulate for up-to-date information on travel restrictions. You can also call [1-888-407-4747](#) toll-free from within the United States and Canada, or [1-202-501-4444](#) from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#), and download our free Smart Traveler App, available through [iTunes](#) and the [Android market](#), to have travel information at your fingertips.

The U.S. Embassy in Asuncion is located at 1776 Mariscal Lopez Avenue.

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