

CRIME AND CREDIT CARDS

Crime, particularly against foreigners, has increased in Russia, and Americans should take the same precautions as in other major cities to carefully safeguard personal belongings, especially in hotel rooms, on trains, and in public places. If you are the victim of a crime, you should report it to the local police (known as militia). The certificate the militia issues usually must be presented to Federal Migration office to replace your Russian visa. You can call the police by dialing 02. We also encourage you to fill out a simple crime report at the American Citizen Services Unit; we use information from these reports to warn Americans about patterns of crime in Russia.

Should your credit cards be lost or stolen, you may cancel them by calling the appropriate credit card company.

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Customer service
1-800-528-4800. Apply by
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<http://usa.visa.com>

1-800-847-2911. Outside the
U.S. call 1-410-581-9994 or
363-2400 (AT&T) ♦866-654-
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[Mastercard](http://www.mastercard.com)
<http://www.mastercard.com>

1-800-MasterCard
(1-800-627-8372).
Outside the U.S. call
1-636-722-7111 (collect)

[Diners Club](https://www.dinersclubus.com)
<https://www.dinersclubus.com>

1-800 2 DINERS
(1-800 234-6377). Outside the
U.S. call 1-702 797-5532
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[Discover](http://www.discovercard.com)
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1-800-DISCOVER (1-800-
347-2683). Outside the U.S.
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1-800-347-7449

PROTECTING YOURSELF AGAINST CRIME IN RUSSIA

The General Consulate has noticed a high rate of crime against tourists from the United States visiting Russia. The American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit at the U.S. Consulate General provides the following information to help inform citizens of the United States about types of crimes our compatriots have reported and, we hope, help others to avoid becoming victims of these types of crimes in the future. We encourage Americans to report all crimes to Russian authorities - i.e., the local militia station - in addition to filling out a crime report form at the ACS Unit. If you cannot come in person, you may call the ACS Unit at (812) 331-2600 during working hours; we will fill out a crime report based on what you

tell us.

AVOIDING CRIME IN RUSSIA

We recommend that all Americans take the same precautions against crime in Russia's cities as they would in any major city in the West. In addition, based on reports of crimes against citizens of the United States, we offer the following comments: for a broader view of crime in Russia, you may also read the crime section of the "Country Specific Information" for Russia, which is available from any of the four U.S. consular operations in Russia or the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs. Country Specific Information and Travel Warnings may also be obtained via the Internet at the Department of State's home page at www.travel.state.gov.

Petty thefts and pickpocketing occur, particularly in crowded markets, major department stores, train stations, metro stations and other public transportation. There have been incidents of theft from checked airline baggage. Travelers may find it prudent to put valuables in their carry-on luggage. Displaying jewelry or large amounts of money in public increases the risk of being attacked by roving bands of juveniles who frequent areas around major hotels and other spots with a high volume of tourist foot-traffic. Violent crimes, like armed robbery or mugging are less common, but have been known to occur both at day and night, and in downtown and remote districts of cities. Gunfire is rare, but innocent bystanders have been injured.

Customers in restaurants are occasionally harassed by thugs and some United States citizens have lost purses and backpacks to theft while eating in restaurants or cafes. Some travelers have reported being robbed after they were drugged in their hotel room by casual acquaintances. Opening hotel or apartment doors to unexpected "guests" is dangerous. Robbers have used this technique, sometimes posing as police officers, to gain access to foreigners and their property. Residents should ensure that the door to their homes are of solid wood or steel and are secured with a strong, properly installed lock against forced entry. Americans should also exercise caution in building lobbies, stairwells and elevators in the evening, especially when alone.

In St. Petersburg, heavy traffic is constant and accidents are common. Travel by public transport as well as by private vehicle can be hazardous as traffic laws are frequently disregarded and drivers tend to be undisciplined. It is risky to drive alone on rural inter-city roads or without spare equipment and supplies since the distance between road service outlets is often great. Unattended vehicles are often broken into. St. Petersburg's Metro (subway) system is relatively reliable and safe during all hours of operation. Travelers, however, should be alert to theft or assault while riding public transportation. Travelers on inter-city trains should exercise caution in making friends with strangers, and are advised to lock their compartments at night to prevent break-ins. Do not accept food or beverages from strangers. Travelers should use marked taxicabs, usually yellow, and should not use unmarked taxi cabs or hail cars from the street. Americans should not get in a taxi that already has other passengers or allow the taxi to stop for other passengers. The passenger should not sit in the front seat and should lock the doors immediately upon entering the car. It can also be dangerous to expose valuables while riding in a taxi or to take a taxi while intoxicated.

Extortion and corruption are common in the business environment. Organized criminal groups target foreign businesses in many cities and have been known to demand protection money under threat of serious violence. Many western firms hire security services, which have improved their overall security, although this is no guarantee. Small businesses are particularly vulnerable. Over the past several years,

several American business people have been attacked, kidnapped, and even killed. We encourage U.S. citizens to report all extortion attempts to the Russian authorities and to inform consular officials at the Consulate General.

Police are usually cooperative, but often ineffective. Many crime victims are frustrated by the lack of responsiveness and enforcement capabilities of the local police and judiciary. This situation is more acute outside Russia's major cities. Nevertheless, it is important to report crimes to the police and a consular office.

The loss or theft of a U.S. passport should be reported to the Consulate General. U.S. citizens should be prepared to present evidence of citizenship and identity. The loss or theft of a Russian visa must be reported to the traveler's sponsor as soon as possible to avoid subsequent delays in departure.