



## China 2015 Crime and Safety Report: Guangzhou

Travel Health and Safety; Transportation Security; Stolen items; Theft; Financial Security; Fraud; Burglary; Counterfeiting; Cyber; Religious Terrorism; Separatist violence; Anti-American sentiment; Riots/Civil Unrest; Religious Violence; Racial Violence/Xenophobia; Surveillance; Earthquakes; Hurricanes; Employee Health Safety; Drug Trafficking; Kidnapping; Intellectual Property Rights Infringement

East Asia & Pacific > China; East Asia & Pacific > China > Guangzhou

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### Overall Crime and Safety Situation

Guangzhou, while one of the largest cities in the world, is generally safe when compared with other urban areas of similar size; however, petty crimes do occur with some regularity. The income disparity that exists in Chinese society has been a source of social friction and has been identified as a root cause of much of the economic crime experienced in Guangzhou.

Crime Rating: Low

### Crime Threats

The most common criminal incidents are economic in nature. Economic crime includes pickpocketing, bag snatching, credit card fraud, and various financial scams, often targeting foreigners because of their perceived wealth. Pickpocketing on public transportation (the subway and on buses, in shopping areas, and at tourist sites) is quite common. At tourist sites, thieves are generally more interested in cash and will immediately abandon credit cards. In shopping areas, both cash and credit cards are sought. Cell phones, cameras, and other electronics have also been the targets of thieves.

Confidence schemes are common, and criminals often view foreigners as wealthy and gullible targets for crime.

Violent crime is less common, but does occur. There was an attempted burglary of a consulate residence in 2013; the burglar was armed with a club. Violent crime affecting the expatriate community most often occurs in bars and night clubs. While the legal age for consuming alcohol is 18, most establishments do not require identification. Some bars are



overcrowded, and safety standards are not routinely enforced. Prostitutes and drugs are known to be present in some clubs and Karaoke bars.

The distribution of counterfeit Chinese currency continues to be an issue. Unsuspecting Americans are sometimes passed fraudulent notes at restaurants, stores and in taxi cabs. Large numbers of 100 RMB and 50 RMB counterfeit notes continue to circulate, and even fake 20 RMB and 10 RMB (roughly 3 and 2 dollars respectively) denominations are encountered as well.

## Cyber

China is known for having sophisticated capabilities to target Westerners using methods such as spear phishing, targeting of mobile devices, and social networking manipulation.

## Areas of Concern

### **Transportation-Safety Situation**

#### Road Safety and Road Conditions

The physical road conditions in larger cities are generally good to excellent. Driving conditions in rural areas are usually poor. The roads in Guangzhou are extremely crowded, and many drivers are new to operating a motor vehicle. They are often either overly cautious or aggressive, resulting in numerous accidents every day. Traffic laws are rarely adhered to, and policing is done remotely by video camera (mainly speed traps). Yielding to oncoming traffic or pedestrians is virtually unheard of, as is signaling one's intentions in advance. Traffic signals are absent at key locations, stop signs are non-existent, and road closures are either poorly marked or not marked at all.

Most accidents, however, are minor and are resolved on the scene. Cars must remain at the scene of the accident; do not pull off to the side of the road. In traffic accidents involving foreigners, the foreigner is often ruled at fault, regardless of the actual cause of the accident. The police should always be called, and persons involved in accidents should not try to make unofficial agreements or argue with the other party involved in a traffic accident regardless of who is responsible. If an accident involves a vehicle (or bicycle) and a pedestrian, the driver is assumed at fault. An ambulance responding to the scene will not take a pedestrian to the hospital unless the driver rides along to ensure payment for treatment.



One must obtain a Chinese driver's license before driving in China.

### Public Transportation Conditions

Public transportation in major metropolitan areas is comparatively modern. Buses, subways, and taxis are of relatively new design. However, buses and trains are often crowded, with individuals employed specifically to "wedge" additional passengers into conveyances that are already loaded well beyond recommended capacity. Bus accidents are common. Poor driver training, overloaded buses, and the lack of safety checks are major contributors to accidents.

Commercial transportation accidents involving motorized vehicles are not uncommon. Trucks are often overloaded, and drivers are poorly trained.

Marked taxi cabs are generally safe. Taxis are inexpensive and relatively reliable. Personnel are encouraged to use the "two tone" cabs and not unofficial cabs. Personnel should not have to negotiate the price of a trip. If the taxi driver refuses to use the meter, take a different taxi. While taxi cabs come in a variety of colors, they are easily identifiable. Passengers should always insist that the cab driver use the meter. In a limited number of cases, Americans have reported having their luggage stolen, and some have reported being charged exorbitant fares. Luggage theft typically involves a taxi transporting individuals to/from the airport and the driver intentionally leaving the scene before bags have been unloaded.

### Aviation/Airport Conditions

There are numerous domestic and international flights out of Guangzhou's Baiyun International Airport. In addition, there are two direct flights to the U.S. operated by China Southern Airlines (one to Los Angeles and one to New York). Like much of mainland China, flight delays are common at Guangzhou's Baiyun International Airport.

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

Political Violence Rating: Low

### Local, Regional, and International Terrorism Threats/Concerns

China's domestic counterterrorism efforts remain primarily focused against the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM, East Turkestan Islamic Party (ETIP)), a Pakistan-based terrorist group that seeks independence for the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of northwest China. In public statements, government officials singled out the "Three Evils" of



extremism, separatism, and terrorism in Xinjiang as the main terrorist threat to the nation and characterized Uighur discontent as terrorist activity. Human rights organizations maintain that China used counterterrorism as a pretext to suppress Uighurs, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group that comprises a large percentage of the population of the XUAR.

On May 22, two sport utility vehicles with five assailants drove into a busy market in Urumqi, the capital of XUAR, and threw explosives at shoppers. The vehicles crashed into shoppers, collided with each other, and exploded. The attack resulted in 43 dead, including 4 of the assailants, and wounded more than 90 people. One attacker was arrested. Official media labeled it a terrorist attack.

On May 6, a knife-wielding man wounded six, including one Westerner, at a train station in Guangzhou. However, the Communist Party did not label this a terrorist event.

On May 1, two assailants set off explosives and stabbed passersby outside Urumqi's largest train station, killing themselves and one other person and injuring 79. Official media labeled it a terrorist attack by religious extremists.

On March 1, eight attackers armed with knives killed 29 people and wounded 143 at a train station in Kunming. The Communist Party labeled the incident a terrorist act and blamed Islamic extremists from Xinjiang for the assault. Four of the attackers were shot and killed at the scene; three were sentenced to death; and one was sentenced to life in prison.

Terrorism Rating: Low

#### Anti-American/Anti-Western Sentiment

Protests outside of official U.S. facilities occasionally occur, but gatherings are small, very often a single individual, are relatively peaceful, and are generally focused against the Chinese government. Geopolitical events often influence the occurrence of political demonstrations, but such demonstrations are rarely out of the control of Chinese security services.

#### Civil Unrest

While Chinese society overall remains stable, there has been a noticeable uptick in civil unrest over certain issues. In 2012, Guangzhou and Shenzhen saw thousands participate in anti-Japanese demonstrations due to territorial disputes in the Pacific Ocean and on the anniversary of the Japanese invasion of China in 1938. With this year marking the 70th



anniversary of the end of World War II, the potential for increased anti-Japanese sentiment is high. In 2014, the “Occupy Central” protests disrupted business and traffic in Hong Kong but had limited impact on Guangzhou. Western media sources were frequently blocked or censored during their coverage.

Large-scale protests relating to environmental concerns are increasingly common and unpredictable. 2014 saw several days of rioting in Maoming (Guangdong Province), attracting thousands. Several hundred protested outside a trash incinerator an hour outside of Guangzhou. Environmental pollution protests were also held in Beibu and Guangxi. In addition, a riot occurred in Hainan over the location of a disability school.

#### Religious/Ethnic Violence

The government remains focused on maintaining social stability and preventing civil unrest over economic and social grievances. In recent years, the largest, most violent incidents have taken place in ethnic minority areas such as Tibet and Xinjiang where grievances over human rights abuses and discriminatory policies have resulted in spontaneous outbursts of violence targeted at government and Han Chinese interests. The frequency of large-scale violent incidents in Xinjiang has increased significantly over the past year. While the majority of violent incidents occur in Tibet and Xinjiang, the knife attack in Kunming illustrates that other areas of China are not immune to religious/ethnic violence. The government has been preventing people from crossing the border in Guangxi, and Vietnam has been increasingly remanding primarily Uighur border hoppers to Chinese custody.

#### Post-specific Concerns

##### Environmental Hazards

Natural disasters are not uncommon. A 7.9 magnitude earthquake struck Sichuan Province in May 2008, killing more than 69,000 people and leaving nearly five million people homeless. China’s southern coast is subject to heavy rainfall, flooding, and monsoons, usually July-September. Southern China experienced massive mudslides in 2010, causing significant property damage.

Super Typhoon Rammasun struck Hainan Island and Xuwen county in Guangdong Province in July 2014, resulting in 14 deaths. Thousands were evacuated and widespread property damage and power outage was reported on Hainan Island. Super Typhoon Rammasun was the strongest storm to hit Hainan since 1973.



## Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Accidents and fatalities continue to plague China's heavy industries. Worker safety and quality assurance are lacking.

## Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Thefts

Business travelers should be particularly mindful that trade secrets, negotiating positions, and other business sensitive information may be taken and shared with competitors, counterparts, and/or Chinese regulatory and legal entities. Embassy employees are warned not to discuss sensitive information in their homes, vehicles, or offices. The Consulate strongly encourages members of the private sector to take similar precautions to safeguard sensitive, personal, and/or proprietary information.

Additionally, counterfeit products are readily available, but it is illegal to import them into the U.S. U.S. Customs officials have the authority to seize suspect goods and impose fines on travelers caught attempting to enter the U.S. with counterfeit items.

## Privacy Concerns

All visitors should be aware that they have no expectation of privacy in public or private locations. Security personnel carefully watch foreign visitors and may place you under surveillance. Hotel rooms (including meeting rooms), offices, cars, taxis, telephones, Internet usage, and fax machines may be monitored onsite or remotely, and personal possessions, including computers, in hotel rooms may be searched without your consent or knowledge. The Consulate regularly receives reports of human and technical monitoring of U.S. private businessmen and visiting U.S. citizens. The areas around U.S. and other foreign diplomatic facilities and residences are under overt physical and video surveillance -- dozens of security personnel are posted outside of facilities and around residences, while video cameras are visible throughout diplomatic quarters (offices and residential neighborhoods) of Beijing. Overt microphones and video cameras are common in Chinese taxis.

All hotel rooms and offices are considered to be subject to on-site or remote technical monitoring at all times. Hotel rooms, residences, and offices may be accessed at any time without the occupants' consent or knowledge. Elevators and public areas of housing compounds are also under continuous surveillance.



All means of communication are likely monitored. The Chinese has access to the infrastructure operated by the limited number of Internet service providers (ISPs) and wireless providers. Wireless access to the Internet in major metropolitan areas is becoming more common. As such, the Chinese can more easily access official and personal computers. The government has publicly declared that it regularly monitors private e-mail and Internet browsing through cooperation with local ISPs. Some bloggers are subject to particular scrutiny; their activity is often carefully monitored and in some cases, depending upon the subject matter, blocked. Some blocked Western social media websites include You Tube, Facebook, and Twitter.

### Drug-related Crimes

Narco-terrorism has not been an issue. The government is concerned about domestic drug use, and enforcement efforts are widespread. The government has been active in conducting drug busts over the last year and seized an unprecedented amount of drugs. The government is also making examples of high-profile people ensnared in drug busts. Jackie Chan's son was arrested in a drug bust in Beijing in the summer of 2014 and was sentenced to jail time. Even so, drugs (marijuana and stimulants) are easily accessible to foreigners, especially around bars and night clubs frequented by expatriates.

### Kidnapping Threat

Kidnappings occur mostly over business disputes and might better be categorized as "unlawful detentions," often in the office or hotel room of the victim. Victims are generally allowed to use their mobile phones (in order to arrange the resolution of the dispute) and should immediately call the police for assistance. Some businesspeople who feel that they have been wronged by a foreign business partner may hire "debt collectors" to harass and intimidate the foreigner in hopes of collecting the debt. Foreign managers or company owners have been physically "held hostage" as leverage during dispute negotiations. In addition, travel bans have been placed on foreigners involved in business disputes, preventing them from leaving the country. The Embassy and Consulates General have no legal or law enforcement authority and cannot get involved in private disputes nor give legal advice.

### Police Response

Police, security services, and private security guards are heavily present and serve to deter most serious crime. Police response for foreign victims of crime depends upon the type of infraction, where it transpired, and the social status of the victim (i.e. private citizen, diplomat, VIP, etc.). Most responses to alarms and emergency calls are sufficiently prompt if the police



are informed that the victim is a Westerner or person of importance. Urban forces are better trained and equipped, especially in Guangzhou and other first-tier cities, where authorities spend millions of dollars on security-related infrastructure. Local police are somewhat effective at deterring crime. In many cases, local police authorities will serve as a mediator between the victim and criminal to agree upon financial compensation; sometimes in lieu of jail time.

### How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

China gives the police the authority to detain and deport foreigners for a wide variety of reasons. Travelers who do not have their passport with them may be taken in for questioning. If an American is arrested, Chinese authorities are required to notify the U.S. Embassy or nearest Consulate General of the arrest within four days. If a traveler holds the citizenship of another country, including China, and entered China using a passport of that country, authorities are not required to notify the U.S. Embassy or a U.S. consulate of the arrest. Typically, the police will not allow anyone other than a consular officer, to include family members or even an attorney, to visit the traveler during the initial detention period. Bail is rarely granted, and persons can be subject to detention for many months before being granted a trial.

Police officers have the right to assess fines on the scene of an incident. This is sometimes perceived as soliciting a bribe, but it is not.

### Crime Victim Assistance

If U.S. citizens become the victim of a crime, they should contact the police by dialing 110 regardless of location (English-language capabilities will vary significantly). They may also contact American Citizen Services (ACS) at the Embassy or nearest Consulate for assistance. ACS officers can recommend appropriate medical facilities, provide contact information for local attorneys, notify family members, and explain how to transfer funds to China.

### Medical Emergencies

There are some Western-style medical facilities with international staff in Guangzhou, including a large modern hospital in Panyu. While the quality of care is improving, many prefer to travel to Hong Kong, which is only two hours by train from Guangzhou, for even routine medical care.



Ambulances generally do not carry sophisticated medical equipment, and ambulance personnel may have little or no medical training. Traffic congestion can be severe, with no tradition of yielding to emergency vehicles. Therefore, injured/seriously ill Americans may be required to take taxis or other immediately available vehicles to the nearest major hospital rather than waiting for ambulances to arrive.

In rural areas, only rudimentary medical facilities are generally available. Medical personnel in rural areas are often poorly trained and have little medical equipment or availability to medications. Rural clinics are often reluctant to accept responsibility for treating foreigners, even in emergency situations.

#### Contact Information for Recommended Hospitals/Clinics

International SOS maintains a 24-hour alarm center. SOS representatives will advise on the availability of care in most urban areas. Collect calls are accepted.

Beijing: 86-10-6462-9000  
Hong Kong: 852-2528-9900  
USA: 215-942-8226

#### Recommended Air Ambulance Services

Air ambulance service varies by city. International SOS is the main Western air ambulance provider along China's east coast.

MEDEX also provides regional air ambulance services; its representatives can be contacted via the Internet at <http://www.medexassist.com/>.

#### Recommended Insurance Posture

Payment of hospital and other expenses is the patient's responsibility. Before you go abroad, learn what medical services your health insurance will cover overseas. If your health insurance policy provides coverage outside the U.S., carry both your insurance policy identity card as proof of such insurance and a claim form. Although many health insurance companies will pay "customary and reasonable" hospital costs abroad, very few will pay for your medical evacuation to the U.S. Medical evacuation can easily cost \$10,000 and up, depending on your location and medical condition. Medical evacuation by air is expensive: \$60,000 - \$100,000 per flight depending upon the patient's condition and final medevac destination. Visitors are



strongly encouraged to purchase medical evacuation insurance prior to traveling to China.

### CDC Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

For additional information on vaccines and health guidance, please visit the CDC at: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/china>.

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

#### Scams

Crimes and scams most prevalent in Guangzhou involve street crime and counterfeit currency.

#### Situational Awareness Best Practices

Travelers are strongly encouraged to be aware of their surroundings. Continued vigilance is necessary to reduce the likelihood of becoming a victim of crime. As a general rule, lesser developed areas in major cities have a higher rate of crime. Statistically, more crimes of opportunity transpire during early morning hours; for example, individuals who frequent bars, nightclubs and similar establishments are more likely to be involved in physical altercations after midnight.

The Consulate recommends that visitors disperse money in more than one location on their person, taking care to separate small and large denominations. Men should place their wallets in front pockets, while women should drape the shoulder straps of purses across their body, keeping them in view and under positive control at all times. Travelers with backpacks should maintain positive control and avoid placing expensive or hard to replace items in their bag.

Public payphones are becoming less common in urban areas. The Consulate recommends that long-term visitors purchase cellular telephones and that short-term travelers contact their cellular phone provider to determine if it provides coverage in both mainland China and Hong Kong.

Travelers are encouraged to make copies of their passport photo page, visa, and credit card numbers (to include telephone contact information in the event the card is stolen); these copies should be stored in their hotel or residence in the event the actual items are stolen.



Americans who are approached on the street or contacted by email should remember that offers that sound too good to be true, often are.

## **U.S. Consulate Location and Contact Information**

### Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Consulate Guangzhou  
43 Hua Jiu Lu, Zhujiang New Town, Guangzhou 510623

Business hours: Monday-Friday 0800-1700. The Consulate is normally closed for U.S. Federal and Chinese holidays.

### Consulate Contact Numbers

Consulate Operator: 86-20-3814-5000  
Regional Security Officer, Julia Sweeney: 86-20-3814-5006  
Medical Unit: 86-20-3814-5884  
Consular Affairs: 86-20-3814-5775  
After hours emergencies, please call 86-139-2223-8711  
Marine Post One: 3814-5444  
Email: [GuangzhouACS@state.gov](mailto:GuangzhouACS@state.gov)  
Website: <http://guangzhou.usembassy-china.org.cn/>

### Nearby Posts

Embassy Beijing: <http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/>  
Consulate Chengdu: <http://chengdu.usembassy-china.org.cn/>  
Consulate Shanghai: <http://shanghai.usconsulate.gov/>  
Consulate Shengyan: <http://shenyang.usembassy-china.org.cn/>  
Consulate Wuhan: <http://wuhan.usembassy-china.org.cn/>  
Consulate Hong Kong: <http://hongkong.usconsulate.gov>

### Consulate Guidance

For the latest security and other information, Americans living and traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet web site at <http://travel.state.gov>, where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Alerts, and Travel Warnings can be found, as well as important information for Americans who face emergencies



abroad. U.S. citizens residing or traveling in China are reminded to register with the U.S. Embassy or closest U.S. Consulate by entering their travel itinerary and contact information at: <https://step.state.gov/step/>. In case of difficulties registering online, please contact the closest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance.

### **OSAC Country Council Information**

Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai all have active OSAC Councils. The initial point of contact for each Council is the Regional Security Officer at each Post who can be reached via the numbers listed above. E-mail addresses for each RSO are as follows:

RSO Greg Levin (Beijing): [LevinGJ@state.gov](mailto:LevinGJ@state.gov)  
RSO Julia Sweeney (Guangzhou): [SweeneyJP@state.gov](mailto:SweeneyJP@state.gov)  
Miguel Eversley (Shanghai): [EversleyMA@state.gov](mailto:EversleyMA@state.gov)

Questions should be directed to the Guangzhou Regional Security Office at 86-20-3814-5070. To reach the OSAC East Asia Pacific team, please email [OSACEAP@state.gov](mailto:OSACEAP@state.gov).