

GUIDE TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE TRAVEL ADVISORY SYSTEM

The U.S. Department of State (DOS) issues and maintains [Travel Advisories](#) for countries (and areas within countries) around the world. Travel Advisories provide travel guidance and assessments of health, safety, security, and logistics challenges and risks that may be present at a destination. This information (along with other DOS resources) is publicly available, aiming to make it easier for U.S. travelers to access clear, timely, and reliable information on their destination.

Many U.S. academic institutions, non-profit and non-governmental organizations, and private companies with international operations closely monitor DOS Travel Advisories, as well as other forms of consular announcements, but it is also important for all travelers (not only U.S. citizens) to be aware of these resources and how to make use of the information provided.

About the DOS Travel Advisory System

DOS issues a Travel Advisory for each country in the world. Travel Advisories provide standard advice per level, describe the risks, and provide clear actions for U.S. citizens as it relates to their safety. Travel Advisories are posted and maintained on DOS website on the [Travel Advisory page](#) and can be filtered by country, by level of determined risk, and by date updated.

Advisory Levels

Under the DOS Travel Advisory system, countries are assigned a color-coded risk rating based on one of four risk levels.

Level 1 Exercise Normal Precautions	This is the lowest advisory level for safety and security risk.
Level 2 Exercise Increased Caution	Be aware of heightened risks to safety and security. The Department of State provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory.
Level 3 Reconsider Travel	Avoid travel due to serious risks to safety and security. The Department of State provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory.
Level 4 Do Not Travel	This is the highest advisory level due to the greater likelihood of life-threatening risks. During an emergency, the U.S. Government may have very limited ability to provide assistance. DOS advises that U.S. citizens not travel to the country or leave as soon as it is safe to do so. DOS provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory.

Jurisdictional Advisories

While each country has an overall Travel Advisory level, which appears at the top of each country page, levels of advice may vary for specific regions, border areas, cities, and neighborhoods within a country. These jurisdiction-specific Travel Advisory levels are issued on the basis that the safety and security environment is not always homogenous across a country, particularly in large or less stable countries. For example, Consular Affairs may advise U.S. citizens to “Exercise Increased Caution” in a country (Level 2) but to “Reconsider Travel” to a particular area within that country (Level 3).

What’s Included

Risk Indicators

Travel Advisories at Levels 2, 3, and 4 contain clear reasons for the level assigned, using established risk indicators and specific advice to U.S. citizens who choose to travel there. A risk indicator is a letter that represents a specific reason for the Travel Advisory level issued. A single country can carry more than one risk indicator and different indicators may be issued for different regions.

C	Crime	Widespread violent or organized crime is present in areas of the country. Local law enforcement may have limited ability to respond to serious crimes.
D	Wrongful Detention	The risk of wrongful detention of U.S. nationals by a foreign government exists.
E	Time-limited Event	Short-term events, such as elections, sporting events, or other incidents that may pose safety risks.
H	Health	Health risks, including current disease outbreaks or a crisis that disrupts a country's medical infrastructure, are present. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Travel Health Notices may also be a factor.
K	Kidnap or Hostage	Criminal or terrorist individuals or groups have threatened to and/or have seized or detained and threatened to kill, injure, or continue to detain individuals in order to compel a third party (including a governmental organization) to do or abstain from an action as a condition of release.
N	Natural Disaster	A natural disaster, or its aftermath, poses danger.
O	Other	There are potential risks not covered by previous risk indicators. Read the country's Travel Advisory for details.
T	Terrorism	Terrorist attacks have occurred and/or specific threats against civilians, groups, or other targets may exist.
U	Civil Unrest	Political, economic, religious, and/or ethnic instability exists and may cause violence, major disruptions, and/or safety risks.

The [Travel Advisory for Mexico](#) is an example of a Travel Advisory with both different jurisdictional advisory levels (e.g., each Mexican State is rated separately, and some have cities and areas within states may be rated differently) and risk indicators (e.g., a C for Crime and a K for Kidnap/Hostage).

Mexico
United Mexican States

Travel Advisory
August 22, 2023

See State Summaries

C K

Additional Country Information

Travel Advisories also provide travelers with further country-specific information and advice.

ALL Travel Advisories highlight further resources available to travelers, which may include:

- Contact details for the local U.S. embassy.
- Links to DOS social media pages.
- Links to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website.
- Links to the country information page for more details relating to international travel.

Travel Advisories at Levels 2, 3, and 4 further contain information on the country/location, which may include details on:

- Recommended mitigation measures for U.S. travelers.
- The health, safety, and security environment.
- Specific risks and threats to U.S. nationals.
- Ability to provide consular, diplomatic, or emergency services to U.S. nationals.
- Availability and safety of critical infrastructure, including transportation and healthcare.

How do DOS Travel Advisories inform GS&S Destination Risk Categories?

While DOS country-level and jurisdiction-specific Travel Advisories DOS risk levels serve to advise U.S. travelers on travel, they also support GS&S in making assessments of the scope and extent of risks to travelers in overseas destinations.

GS&S carries out a monthly risk assessment process to review Princeton's destination risk categories. DOS Travel Advisories are factored into this assessment process, alongside over 30 health, safety, and security data indicators that may affect the safety and security of University travelers. The outcome of this assessment process provides each country a risk score, which then are stratified into Princeton's destination risk categories (A, B, C, and X).

While DOS Travel Advisory levels do not directly determine Princeton's destination risk categories, a change in Travel Advisory level *may* result in a change to the destination's overall risk score (as assessed by GS&S), and in turn, this *may* then trigger a change in a destination's risk category.

Princeton's Destination Risk Categories can be found on the GS&S [Destination Guidance](#) page, where travelers can use the search function to find their destination's risk category. Here, Princeton travelers can also find a list of destinations with a Category X designation. This list is republished alongside any risk categorization changes on the 1st of each month.