

Paraguay

Threat Condition: Medium

Risk Factors :

- **Violent crime has been increasing throughout Paraguay therefore, visitors should exercise caution at all times, particularly in cities at night.**
- **The threat from terrorism is low. However, travelers should be aware of the global risk of indiscriminate terrorist attacks which could be against civilian targets, including places frequented by foreigners.**
- **Several high-profile kidnappings for ransom have occurred. Although kidnapping remains rare, the problem appears to be increasing.**
- **Visitors should avoid large gatherings or any other event where crowds have congregated to demonstrate or protest. Violence may occur and such activities have resulted in intermittent road closures including major routes most frequently traveled.**
- **Travelers should be aware that individuals and organizations providing financial support to extremist groups operate in Ciudad del Este and along the tri-border area between Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina making this region a travel risk.**



Outlook

Paraguay is a constitutional democracy with a slow developing economy. The government has embarked on an ambitious reform program but the country continues to experience economic recession and this could give rise to some political instability. Tourist facilities are adequate in the capital city of Asuncion, but they vary greatly in quality and prices.

Travelers outside Asuncion should consider seeking travel agency assistance, as satisfactory or adequate tourist facilities are very limited in other major cities and almost nonexistent in remote areas.



Holidays:

January	Three Kings Day
March	Heroes' Day
March	Good Friday
May	International Labour Day
May	Independence Day
June	Chaco Armistice
August	Founding of Asuncion
September	Boqueron Battle Day
December	Virgin of Caacupe, Immaculate Conception

Contacts:**Embassy of the United States of America**

Street address: Avenida Mariscal López 1776, Asunción, Paraguay

Postal address: Casilla Postal 402, Asunción, Paraguay

Tel: (21) 213 715. Fax: (21) 213 728.

E-mail: paraguayusembassy@state.gov

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

Embassy of the Republic of Paraguay

2400 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20008, USA

Tel: (202) 483 6960. Fax: (202) 234 4508.

E-mail: embapar.usa@verizon.net

Telephone: IDD is available. Country code: 595. Outgoing international code: 002.

Mobile Telephone: GSM 1900 network coverage is limited to main urban areas. The local network providers are *Hutchison Telecommunications Paraguay SA* (website: www.porthable.com.py), *Nucleo SA* (website: www.personal.com.py), *Telefonica Celular Del Paraguay* (website: www.telecel.com.py) and *VOX* (website: www.vox.com.py).

Fax: Some hotels provide facilities.

Internet: ISPs include *Planet* (website: www.pla.net.py). Internet cafes are available in main urban areas.

Crime:

Given a relatively high level of poverty, crime has increased in recent years with criminals often targeting those thought to be wealthy. Most crime is non-violent; however, U.S. citizens have on occasion been the victims of assaults, kidnappings, robberies, and rapes. Those traveling to or residing in Paraguay should be aware of their surroundings and security at all times. Refrain from displaying expensive-looking cameras and jewelry, large amounts of money, or other valuable items. Resistance to armed assailants has often aggravated the situation and therefore is not advised.

Armed robberies, car thefts, and home invasions are common in both urban and rural areas. Street crime, including pick pocketing and mugging, is prevalent in cities, particularly during the evening hours in the vicinity of hotels and airports. Pick-pocketing incidents and armed assaults are increasing on public buses and in the downtown area of Asunción. There have been incidents of pilferage from checked baggage at both airports and bus terminals. Travelers have found it prudent to hide valuables on their person or in carry-on luggage. Unauthorized ticket vendors also reportedly operate at the Asuncion bus terminal, badgering travelers into buying tickets for substandard or non-existent services.

NOTE: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, help you find appropriate medical care, to contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the

responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed.

Entry/Exit Requirements:

A passport and visa are required. U.S. citizens traveling to Paraguay must submit completed visa applications in person or by mail to the Paraguayan Embassy or one of the consulates and pay a fee. Application forms are available from the Paraguayan Embassy or Consulate by email or fax. Tourist visa applicants must present with their application a passport with at least six months validity from the date of the application; two passport photographs; a bank statement or other evidence of financial solvency; and a round-trip ticket or a printed trip itinerary prepared by a travel agency. Persons traveling on business must also submit a company letter. Applicants under 18 years of age traveling alone must appear with both parents or a legal guardian. In case of a guardian, an original and one copy of proof of legal guardianship is required. A document of authorization from parents/guardian will be accepted only if it is notarized and certified by the county clerk and the Paraguayan consul in the U.S. There is an airport international departure tax, payable in either U.S. or local currency (no credit cards or checks accepted). For current information concerning entry and customs requirements for Paraguay, travelers may contact:

Paraguayan Embassy
2400 Massachusetts Avenue N.W.,
Washington, D.C. 20008,
telephone (202) 483-6960
Internet: <http://www.embassy.org/embassies/py.html>

In an effort to prevent international child abduction, many governments have initiated procedures at entry/exit points. These often include requiring documentary evidence of relationship and permission for the child's travel from the parents or legal guardian(s) not present. Having such documentation on hand, even if not required, may facilitate entry/departure.

By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency.

The U.S. Embassy is located at 1776 Mariscal Lopez Avenue; telephone (011-595-21) 213-715, fax (011-595-21) 213-728; Internet: <http://asuncion.usembassy.gov.py>. The Consular Section is open for U.S. citizen services, including registration, Monday through Thursday from 1:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., except for U.S. and Paraguayan holidays.

Health:

Travel to Paraguay requires few special medical considerations. No additional vaccines are required for travel although there are occasional reports of outbreaks of malaria and dengue fever (yellow fever). Travelers should take strict prevention measures against mosquito bites; i.e. the use of repellents and by wearing long sleeved shirts and long trousers.

Good medical facilities, supplies, and services are available only in Asuncion. Elsewhere, these are limited and may not exist.

MEDICAL INSURANCE: Travelers should consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. U.S. medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the U.S. unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Further, U.S. Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the

United States. However, many travel agents and private companies offer insurance plans that will cover health care expenses incurred overseas, including emergency services such as medical evacuations.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, travelers should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the U.S. may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or if you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur. Some insurance policies also include coverage for psychiatric treatment and for disposition of remains in the event of death.

Recent Targets

Bombing Targets

None Recent

Assassination Targets

None Recent

Kidnapping Targets

Economic conditions have increased the prevalence of kidnappings. Foreigners with money or who are believed to be well-off become targets and are vulnerable to kidnappings.

Transportation

The information below concerning Paraguay is provided for general reference only, and it may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance:

Safety of Public Transportation:	Fair
Urban Road Conditions/Maintenance:	Poor
Rural Road Conditions/Maintenance:	Poor
Availability of Roadside Assistance:	Fair

Drivers throughout Paraguay routinely ignore traffic regulations. No vehicle insurance is required, and many Paraguayans drive without any insurance coverage. Persons who drive in Paraguay should be prepared to drive defensively and with their own insurance in both urban and rural areas.

Public transportation is readily available for urban and inter-city travel. Buses vary in maintenance conditions and may not meet U.S. safety standards. Armed robberies occur on buses in cities and rural areas, sometimes with the apparent collusion of the bus driver. Taxis are available and may be called using telephone numbers listed in the newspapers. No

passenger train service exists. Bicycle travel may not be safe due to traffic and other road hazards.

Most urban streets consist of cobblestones over dirt. Some roads in Asuncion and other large cities are paved. However, these roads frequently develop potholes that often remain without repair for several months. Nearly all rural roads are unpaved, and during rainy periods and the rainy season (November-March/April) they may be impassable. Road signs indicating hazards, such as sharp curves or major intersections, are lacking in many areas.

The privately maintained toll road between Caaguazu and Ciudad del Este and the routes between Asuncion and Encarnacion and Asuncion and Pedro Juan Caballero are in good condition. Most other intercity routes are in good to fair condition, with brief stretches in poor condition. The Trans-Chaco route is in poor condition. Driving or traveling at night is not advisable outside Asuncion because animals or vehicles without proper lights are often on the roads. In addition, assaults and other crimes against motorists traveling at night have occurred. Extra precautions should be exercised along infrequently traveled portions of the rural roads.

In Asuncion, the following phone numbers exist for roadside/ambulance assistance:

Emergency Services, including police and ambulances: 911;
Fire Department, including rescue of accident victims: 132.

The Touring and Automobile Club provides some roadside assistance to its members. The Club may be contacted in Asuncion by visiting its offices at 25 de Mayo near Brasil, First Floor, or telephoning 210-550, 210-551, 210-552, 210-553, Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., or Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to noon, except for Paraguayan holidays. The Touring Club also has offices in Ciudad del Este (tel. 061-512-340), Coronel Oviedo (tel. 0521-203-350), Encarnacion (tel. 071-202-203), Pilar (tel. 086-341-099), and Loma Plata (tel. 0918-2610). Towing services are scarce outside of urban areas. Twenty-four-hour tow truck services from Asuncion may be contacted by telephoning (021) 224-366. For an extra fee, these companies may provide service outside of Asuncion, but they typically demand immediate payment and may not accept credit cards.

Travel Precautions:

The government has embarked on an ambitious reform program but the country continues to experience economic recession and this could give rise to some political instability. Paraguay is an isolated, landlocked country that has few of the normal facilities for tourists outside the main towns. It is also a country that is finding its way after many decades of dictatorship.

Most visits to Paraguay are trouble-free. However, violent crime is increasing, so you need to be on your guard and exercise caution at all times, particularly in cities at night.

Instances of serious violent crime, including kidnapping, have increased in recent months. Weapons can easily be obtained in Paraguay and are routinely carried. Although foreigners are not specifically targeted, you are advised to remain alert at all times.

Travelers are advised to take precautions e.g. do not wear expensive jewelry, carry large amounts of cash or carry handbags when out walking or using public transport. Armed assaults and pick pocketing on public transport and in areas frequented by foreigners are increasing. Many foreigners choose to use taxis in preference to public transport for security and convenience.

There are increased military and police checks nationwide, usually to check documents. Be aware that illegal cross border activities, and the violence which sometimes accompanies them, are common in the northeastern provinces of Amambay and Canindeyu. You should be

particularly alert in Ciudad del Este and Pedro Juan Caballero, where it is not advisable to be on foot after dark, due to increasing crime.

Travel Security Risks

As stated in the Department of State's latest Worldwide Caution, U.S. citizens overseas may be targeted by extremist groups and should maintain a high level of vigilance. The U.S. Embassy is not aware of any specific terrorist threat to Americans in Paraguay. However, Individuals and organizations providing financial support to extremist groups operate in Ciudad del Este and along the tri-border area between Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina. Because of concerns about the lack of security in border areas, the U.S. Embassy in Asuncion requires U.S. Government personnel and their family members to provide advance notice and a travel itinerary when traveling to Ciudad del Este or Pedro Juan Caballero. As a general precaution, the Embassy also counsels its employees traveling outside of the capital to provide an itinerary including dates, contact names and telephone numbers where the employee may be reached.

Several high-profile kidnappings for ransom have occurred. Although kidnapping remains rare, the problem appears to be increasing. Targets are usually established members of the Paraguayan business community or their family members.

Travelers should avoid large gatherings or any other event where crowds have congregated to demonstrate or protest. Such activities have resulted in intermittent road closures including major routes traveled by tourists and residents. While generally nonviolent, roadblocks have turned violent in the past. Areas where such closures and barricades exist should be avoided. U.S. citizens who encounter roadblocks should not attempt to continue the planned travel or to confront those at the roadblock. Instead, they should wait for the road to reopen or return to the origin of their trip. Uniformed police often conduct roving checks of vehicles and passengers.