



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

SUPPORT FOR BRITISH NATIONALS ABROAD



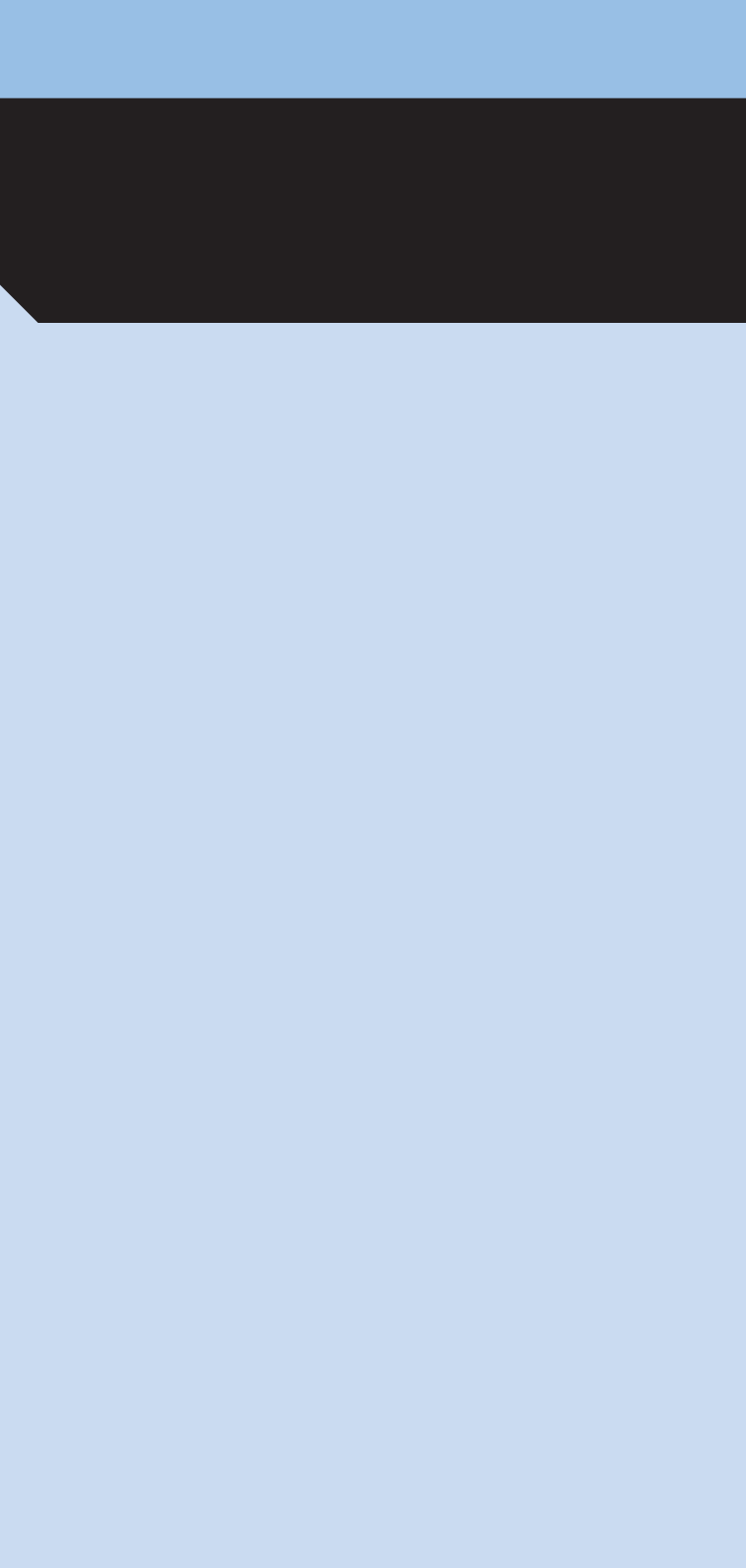
BRITISH EMBASSY
CONSULAR SERVICES

CONSULAR SERVICES - OPENING HOURS - SEE NOTICE INSIDE
SERVICES CONSULAIRES - HORAIRES - VOIR A L'INTERIEUR

case of emergency outside office hours
01 44 51 31 00

www.fco.gov.uk/travel





SUPPORT FOR BRITISH NATIONALS ABROAD

Falling sick, being a victim of crime or facing an emergency are traumatic events under any circumstances. When these problems happen abroad they can be even more difficult. This document summarises some of the main ways in which you can help yourself to stay safe abroad, and make sure that you are covered in case things go wrong. There is a lot that you can do.

However, if you do get into difficulty, it is important to know what help we, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, can provide and how you can get it.

CONSULAR SUPPORT

WHAT KIND OF HELP WE CAN PROVIDE

We can:

- issue replacement passports;
- provide information about transferring funds;
- provide appropriate help if you have suffered rape or serious assault, are a victim of other crime, or are in hospital;
- help people with mental illness;
- provide details of local lawyers, interpreters, doctors and funeral directors (see note 1 below);
- do all we properly can to contact you within 24 hours of being told that you have been detained;
- offer support and help in a range of other cases, such as child abductions, death of relatives overseas, missing people and kidnapping;
- contact friends and family for you, if you want; and
- make special arrangements in cases of terrorism, civil disturbances or natural disasters.

Note 1:

Neither the Government nor the relevant British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate can make any guarantee in relation to the professional ability or character of any person or company on the list, nor can they be held responsible in any way for you relying on any advice you are given.

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We cannot:

- get you out of prison, prevent the local authorities from deporting you after your prison sentence, or interfere in criminal or civil court proceedings;
- help you enter a country, for example, if you do not have a visa or your passport is not valid, as we cannot interfere in another country's immigration policy or procedures;
- give you legal advice, investigate crimes or carry out searches for missing people, although we can give you details of people who may be able to help you in these cases, such as English-speaking lawyers;
- get you better treatment in hospital or prison than is given to local people;
- pay any bills or give you money (in very exceptional circumstances we may lend you some money, from public funds, which you will have to pay back);
- make travel arrangements for you, or find you work or accommodation; or
- make business arrangements on your behalf.

MAJOR CATASTROPHES

Some major catastrophes involving British nationals abroad may need exceptional levels of response beyond what we have described before. It is not easy to define every possible circumstance, but these events may be the result of natural disasters or large-scale accidents, or of terrorism or conflict. **No one set of responses will meet all circumstances.** If the Foreign Secretary considers an

CONSULAR SUPPORT

event to be a major catastrophe affecting significant numbers of people we can help, we will:

- consider very early on whether exceptional help should be provided from public funds;
- set up public helplines;
- provide information if we have it, and if we believe it to be reliable, to people who have been affected and their family members who we are in contact with; and
- consider sending appropriate extra staff to the country involved.

WHO WE CAN HELP

We can provide support to people outside the UK who are:

- British nationals (whether or not they normally live in the UK);
- in certain limited circumstances, British nationals with another nationality ('dual nationals'); and
- European Union or Commonwealth nationals whose country does not have a local diplomatic or consular office, in circumstances where we have agreed to help their nationals.

We cannot provide this support to other countries' nationals, even if they may have been lawfully living in the UK.

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WHERE YOU CAN FIND US

Support is provided by **British diplomatic and consular missions overseas** and by the **Consular Directorate** of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London. British diplomatic missions overseas are the British Government's main offices in other countries, usually in capital cities. These take the form of **British High Commissions** or **Deputy High Commissions** in Commonwealth countries and **British Embassies** in other countries. You may also find **British Consulates General** or **Consulates** in capital cities or regional centres. In some places where there is no British diplomatic or consular office, we have **Honorary Consuls** who can offer some limited help or put you in touch with the nearest office.

WHEN OFFERING YOU SUPPORT, WE WILL:

- be polite and professional;
- treat your information in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 (see note 2 below);
- answer enquiries and requests for help in person, on the phone or in writing as soon as possible;
- explain clearly, from the start, how we can help you;
- provide appropriate cover so that someone can deal with genuine emergencies outside of normal office hours; and

Note 2:

We keep and use information in line with this Act, and may release this personal information to other UK government departments and public authorities.

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- make sure our help is accessible and equal to everyone no matter what their sex, race, age, colour, sexuality, disability or religion.

YOU SHOULD:

- treat our staff with respect (if you are physically or verbally abusive, we may refuse to continue to help you);
- have full travel insurance, or healthcare and any other appropriate cover if you live abroad;
- have made preparations before travelling, for example, packing medicine, having any necessary vaccinations, and leaving details of your itinerary with family or friends;
- have researched your destination, including checking our travel website;
- follow local laws;
- take local advice about what is safe or unsafe and follow this advice;
- avoid unnecessary risks and take care of your travel documents and money; and
- be prepared to pay for some types of consular support, for example issuing an emergency passport (we do not make a profit from these charges but instead use the funds to be able to help British nationals).

STAYING SAFE OVERSEAS

British nationals take millions of trips overseas every year, most of which pass without any kind of incident. And many British people enjoy living overseas. However, to stay safe and secure abroad, and to prepare in case things go wrong, it is important to take a few simple precautions:

BEFORE YOU GO

- **Check our travel website** at www.fco.gov.uk/travel or call 0845 850 2829 to help you make informed decisions about your safety abroad. It includes information on threats to personal safety arising from political unrest, conflicts, terrorist activities, anti-British demonstrations, lawlessness, violence, natural disasters, epidemics, and aircraft and shipping safety (see note 3 below). The website also contains important general information on safety abroad, under the heading 'Know before you go'. Keep an eye on news reports of any problems in places you plan to visit.

Note 3:

While we take particular care in preparing our travel information, that information is general and may change. Neither the UK Government nor any government official can accept liability for injury, loss or damage arising from any statement contained in it.

STAYING SAFE OVERSEAS

- If you are visiting overseas, **get full travel insurance**. Anyone travelling within the European Economic Area (see note 4 below) or Switzerland, should get a **free European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)** for reduced or free emergency care - but you will still need travel insurance. You can get an EHIC by calling 0845 606 2030, visiting www.ehic.org.uk or www.dh.gov.uk/travellers, or going to a post office. If you are going to live abroad, make sure you have good healthcare cover and also find out whether the UK has a social security agreement with that country and what services are covered. If you do not take out proper insurance, you will normally have to pay the costs of any emergency yourself, including medical bills.
- **Make sure your insurance is up to date, valid for the entire trip, and covers everyone** who is travelling and all the activities you want to do, including any dangerous sports, all your luggage and equipment, personal injury as a result of terrorist activity, and legal costs. Be sure to tell your insurer about **any pre-existing medical conditions**, including psychiatric illness. Read the **exemptions** (things you are not covered for) including those about using alcohol and drugs. Take the policy number and the 24-hour emergency number with you.

Note 4:

The European Economic Area is made up of all 25 members of the European Union plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

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- At least six weeks before you go, check with your doctor **what vaccinations and other health precautions** you may need to take. **Pack enough supplies of any medication** that you are taking in your hand luggage. Keep your medication in its original packaging and take any prescription documents with you. Check with the nearest embassy of the country you are going to that your medication will be legal in that country, and find out whether you will need to take a doctor's letter with you. For longer trips, visit your dentist and optician before travelling.
- Get a **good guidebook** and get to know your destination. Find out **about local laws and customs**. Talk to your travel agent or tour operator about possible risks.
- Make sure your **passport** is valid and in good condition. Fill in the 'next of kin' details. Find out about the **immigration and customs controls** of the country you are travelling to and get the necessary visas.
- **Leave copies** of your passport, insurance policy (plus the insurer's 24-hour emergency number), ticket details, itinerary and contact details with your family and friends. Take a second copy of your passport and insurance policy with you, as well as another form of identification (preferably one with a photograph, such as a driving licence). It is useful to have some form of identity, or a photocopy, on you at all times.

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- **Take enough money** for your trip and some back-up funds such as traveller's cheques, some cash (sterling or US dollars), or valid credit cards. Before you leave, find out how you can replace them if they are lost or stolen. Keep a note of their numbers and of the number you need to ring to cancel them if necessary.
- If you are planning to drive, make sure your **UK driving licence is current and valid**. Make sure you know the driving laws, licence requirements and driving conditions in the country you are visiting. In some countries you will also need an international driving permit. Never drink and drive. Be aware that many countries have on-the-spot fines for traffic offences.
- If you are travelling in uncertain local conditions or remote areas, you should consider contacting the local British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate to see if you need to **register** with them. In some countries, our travel website may recommend that all British nationals register in this way.

WHEN YOU ARE THERE

- **Be aware of security and take sensible precautions.** Take note of what is going on around you and keep away from situations where you do not feel comfortable. Keep up to date with local and regional events in the media. Leave your jewellery and valuables at home if you can. Only carry as much money as you need for the day.

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Leave the rest, and at least one credit card, in the hotel safe if there is one. Keep copies of your passport, insurance details and other important documents separate from the originals. Note down the British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate and local emergency services numbers in case you need them.

- **Stay in touch** with family and friends in the UK, especially if you are travelling alone or in a remote area, or you are aware of a terrorist attack or other catastrophe in the region where you are travelling. You may feel perfectly safe, but people at home may worry and report you missing.
- **Keep to local laws.** There may be very serious penalties for breaking a law which might seem trivial to you, or for doing something which may not be illegal in the UK. Do not overstay your visa or work illegally - you may be fined or sent to prison. Hobbies that involve using cameras and binoculars, such as bird-watching or plane spotting, may be misunderstood (particularly near military sites). If in doubt, don't do it.
- **Respect local customs** and behave and dress appropriately, particularly when visiting religious sites, markets and rural communities. If in doubt, take extra care. Behaviour that would be acceptable elsewhere can lead to serious trouble in some places.

STAYING SAFE OVERSEAS

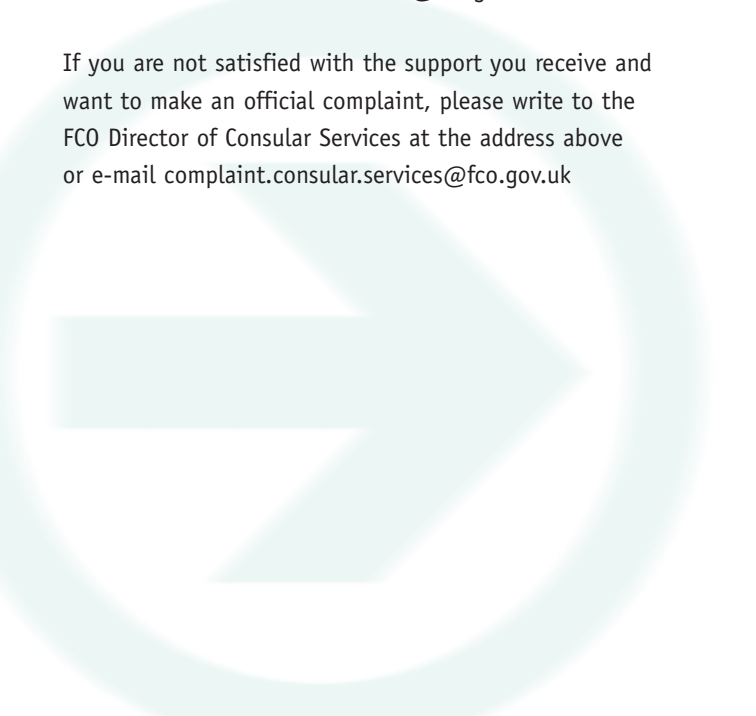
- Help **protect local wildlife and habitats** by respecting rules and regulations (including how to get rid of rubbish properly). Be aware that buying any wildlife products is risky. Customs departments throughout the world confiscate illegal souvenirs, and in the UK you could face a criminal prosecution and fines. To find out whether **what you are bringing back to the UK is legal**, check www.defra.gov.uk (phone 08459 335577) and www.hmrc.gov.uk (phone 0845 010 9000).
- **Be aware of local attitudes to alcohol and know your own limit** - drinks served overseas are often stronger than those in the UK. Keep your drinks with you at all times as they can be spiked with drugs to make you more vulnerable to assault or rape. Accidents are more likely to happen after drinking alcohol or taking drugs. Avoid swimming, or fooling around on balconies or other high places.
- **Be aware of what may happen if you become involved with drugs overseas.** Never carry packages through customs for other people or go through customs with people you don't know. If you are driving, do not lend your vehicle to other people and do not sit in someone else's vehicle when crossing borders - get out and walk. Pack your own baggage and do not leave it unattended.

FEEDBACK

If you need to get in touch with a British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate when overseas, we would **welcome any comments** on the support you receive. Please write to the Policy, Communications and Training Group at:

Consular Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Old Admiralty Building
Spring Gardens
London
SW1A 2PA
E-mail: feedback.consular.services@fco.gov.uk

If you are not satisfied with the support you receive and want to make an official complaint, please write to the FCO Director of Consular Services at the address above or e-mail complaint.consular.services@fco.gov.uk





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GIVING US FEEDBACK

Please email the following address:
feedback.consular.services@fco.gov.uk



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