



China 2019 Crime & Safety Report: Shanghai



This is an annual report produced in conjunction with the Regional Security Office at the U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai, China.

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#) at the date of this report's publication assesses China at Level 2, indicating travelers should exercise increased caution due to arbitrary enforcement of local laws as well as special restrictions on dual U.S.-Chinese nationals.

Overall Crime and Safety Situation

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Review OSAC's [China-specific webpage](#) for proprietary analytic reports, Consular Messages, and contact information.

The Shanghai Consular District serves East China, covering Shanghai and the provinces of Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and Anhui.

Crime Threats

There is minimal risk from crime in Shanghai. Shanghai is generally safe relative to other metropolitan cities of comparable size. China's high conviction rate, use of modern technology in policing, and extensive law enforcement presence throughout the city serve to deter most criminal activity. Violent crimes like homicide, burglary, and robbery do occur, but the rate of these crimes is relatively low.

Although some U.S. citizens visiting Shanghai reported being victims of crime in 2018, in most instances, criminals do not appear to target foreigners. The majority of crime is financial in nature; foreigners may occasionally be the targets of crime due to perceived affluence.

Violent crime affecting the expatriate community most often occurs at bars, clubs, and restaurants in Shanghai's vibrant nightlife districts. While the legal age for consuming alcohol in China is 18, most establishments in Shanghai do not require identification. Some bars are overcrowded, and seldom enforce safety standards. Prostitutes and drug dealers are present in some clubs, though these activities are illegal in China.

Pickpocketing is occurs on public transportation, at shopping areas, and at tourist sites. Small pickpocketing groups commonly work in concert when targeting their victims. At tourist sites, thieves are generally more interested in cash, and will immediately abandon credit cards; in shopping areas, they may seek cash and credit cards.

Sexual assaults have occurred, although reported incidents remain relatively rare. Most instances involve the consumption of alcoholic beverages in bars, nightclubs, and massage parlors. Other factors potentially contributing to sexual assault include the use of unlicensed taxis, undertaking high-risk activities, or failing to follow best security practices.

Petty crime, including pickpocketing, credit card fraud, and various financial scams occur at rates consistent with previous years; these occasionally target foreigners. Several scams are prevalent in this region.

- While there have been instances of robbery by force, many cases appear to have involved a variation of the same scam. Typically, scammers invite a victim to a specific location for a massage, tea, drinks, or music. While in the establishment, criminals confront the victim and force them to turn over a credit card under the threat of violence. The criminals then charge the credit cards with thousands of dollars in purchases, for which the victim must sign the receipt. In most cases, criminals release the victims unharmed, though distraught or embarrassed, with further threats of violence should they notify the police. Although this trend has occurred for several years, it appears to be continuing unabated. Local police are willing to engage, but often seem unwilling to investigate the crimes if the complainant is no longer present in China. In instances where the victim reported the crime to the police immediately, there has been limited success in recovering lost money or valuables, but evidence of prosecutions is scarce.
- Individuals posing as plainclothes police officers may threaten to levy fake criminal charges against an often-nervous victim. They will suggest a financial solution to the problem; if accepted, the charges will disappear and they will “release” the victim.
- Two or more Chinese scammers (most often attractive females) will ask a foreigner to take a picture of them or with them. Conversation develops, at which point they invite the foreigners to practice English over a drink at either a teashop or bar. The bill is overpriced, and the hosts threaten the foreigners that the local police will arrest them if it is not settled.
- Beggars will often approach foreigners on the street with a disabled child. Sometimes these beggars will kneel down and ask for money. They may also approach their victims while singing sad Chinese songs out of sound amplifiers strapped to their upper bodies, appealing to the victim’s sympathy. Some of these beggars are part of a larger network of criminals using children and handicapped persons in their criminal enterprise.
- Foreigners have reported sexual assault, stolen luggage, or exorbitant fares when using unregistered taxis. Luggage theft typically involves a taxi transporting individuals to or from the airport and the driver intentionally leaving the scene before bags have been unloaded. Other examples of problems with taxis include rigged taximeters that can charge up to double the going rate. Use only official taxis.
- Counterfeit currency remains a concern, as evidenced by the scrutiny storeowners exercise when receiving payment in cash, and the use of a money-counting machine prior to acceptance to ensure validity. Understand the signatures of authentic currency and do not change money with individuals on the street. Moneychangers offering unrealistic exchange rates often use counterfeit currency.

Cybersecurity and Cybercrime

Within China, cyber threat actors target foreign governments and members of the private sector. Foreign individuals and organizations in Shanghai should remain vigilant against potential intrusions to their proprietary networks and information technology systems.

Transportation-Safety Situation

Road Safety and Road Conditions

The physical road conditions in metropolitan Shanghai are generally good. There is a significant volume of vehicle traffic on the roads which results in frequent congestion and delays. Driving conditions in rural areas within the Shanghai consular district can be poor. Similarly, while modern and convenient conveyances, such as English-language drivers, directions, or maps, may be available in developed areas, more remote locations may not offer the same services.

The greatest road hazard is from local drivers. Many have limited experience operating motor vehicles, and can be either overly cautious or overly aggressive, frequently leading to traffic accidents. Traffic police are often at heavily congested intersections; however, drivers often ignore traffic laws and police enforce laws remotely by video cameras, primarily through speed traps. Drivers often disregard road signs and traffic signals, and frequently fail to signal or yield to oncoming traffic and pedestrians, even in crosswalks.

Pedestrians share the sidewalks with motor bikes and bicycles. Many traffic-related injuries involve motor bikes and bicycle operators struck by motor vehicles. In traffic accidents involving vehicles operated by foreigners, the foreigner is often at fault, irrespective of the actual cause of the accident. Those involved in collisions should not argue with the other party involved in a traffic accident, regardless of responsibility.

In the event of an accident, cooperate with the police and show ID, driver's license, and proof of insurance. In the interest of promoting social stability, traffic police are empowered at a low level to facilitate the settlement of minor disputes. It is common for the party who is at fault to pay money at the accident scene to settle a dispute. Do not react to aggressive driving by local nationals, and attempt to defuse situations in a safe manner.

Public Transportation Conditions

Public transportation in Shanghai is generally safe and, other than petty theft, crime is relatively uncommon. Shanghai has a sixteen-line subway system, which is generally reliable and punctual. Closed-circuit television and guards monitor access to the subway system, and police officers deploy throughout. Guard-operated X-ray machines are in most subway stations; passengers must submit to inspection prior to entering some of the lines, but levels of enforcement may at times appear inconsistent. Most stations feature safety devices that prevent individuals from falling on the tracks. Buses are generally modern and in good working order. Many locations in China lack equipment to support disabled persons on public transportation systems.

Use only official taxis (for example, two-tone sedans in Shanghai) that employ meters. If a driver refuses to use a meter, exit the vehicle and use another taxi. Since the majority of taxi drivers have limited English proficiency, obtain the address in Chinese characters prior to entering a taxi.

Aviation/Airport Conditions

Shanghai has two international airports, Hongqiao (SHA) and Pudong (PVG). The Hongqiao transportation hub brings SHA together with interprovincial and local metro trains, local and interprovincial buses, and other for-hire vehicles.

Terrorism Threat

There is minimal risk from terrorism in Shanghai. China's domestic counterterrorism efforts remain primarily focused against the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), aka the East Turkestan Islamic Party (ETIP), a Pakistan-based group that seeks independence for the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in northwestern China.

In public statements, government officials have singled out the "Three Evils" of extremism, separatism, and terrorism in Xinjiang as the main terrorist threat to the nation, and have characterized Uighur discontent as terrorist activity. Human rights organizations maintain that China uses counterterrorism as a pretext to suppress Uighurs, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group that comprises a large percentage of the XUAR population.

Shanghai experienced no incidents related to terrorism in 2018. There is no significant transnational terrorist presence known in China.

Anti-U.S./Anti-Western Sentiment

Shanghai is an international city with a large expatriate population. Most Chinese citizens in the Shanghai area regard Westerners in a positive manner and are friendly to foreigners.

Political, Economic, Religious, and Ethnic Violence

Civil Unrest

There is minimal risk from civil unrest in Shanghai. There are occasional demonstrations and protests in Shanghai and other East China cities, often in connection with labor, environmental, and education issues.

Shanghai had one small 20-person protest in 2018 related to a Chinese national accused of absconding to the U.S. with money scammed from local Chinese citizens. Protests against U.S. facilities in Shanghai are uncommon; those that occur typically involve lone protesters. In these instances, Chinese security officials quickly remove individuals.

Post-specific Concerns

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs): In 2017, China implemented a law regulating the operations of foreign NGOs in China. This law requires foreign NGOs to obtain sponsorship from a Chinese government body as part of the registration process administered by the Ministry of Public Security (MPS), and may limit the scope of foreign NGO activities and sources of funding. The law also states that foreign NGOs must not undermine or damage China's national interests. The MPS has published foreign NGO registration guidelines on its [website](#), although some requirements and procedures remain unclear. Employees of foreign NGOs in China should be aware that the Chinese government's application, interpretation, and implementation of these guidelines could vary widely by location and case. Any entity that the government might characterize as a foreign NGO, particularly those working in sensitive areas or fields, should consult with a local lawyer regarding the law's requirements and procedures for registration.

Foreigners working for NGOs in China have recently faced additional scrutiny. They should ensure proper visa status to conduct activities in China. In one instance, authorities arrested and imprisoned a Canadian working for an NGO in Beijing because the NGO was not properly registered.

Special Scrutiny of Foreign Citizens: In recent years, authorities have interrogated or detained citizens of the United States and other countries visiting or resident in China for reasons said to be relate to “state security.” In such circumstances, they could face arrest, detention, or an exit ban prohibiting their departure from China for a prolonged period. Dual U.S.-Chinese nationals and U.S. citizens of Chinese heritage may be at a higher risk of facing such special scrutiny.

Environmental Hazards

Due to its location along a number of fault lines, earthquakes are common in China. The natural disasters included rainstorms, floods, hail, drought, and earthquakes. Southern and Eastern parts of China are prone to flooding, strong winds, and landslides during the typhoon season.

Shanghai does not experience significant snowfall, but even small amounts of snow can bring parts of the city to a standstill.

Critical Infrastructure Concerns

Accidents and fatalities continue to plague China’s heavy industries. Worker safety and quality assurance are lacking. Commercial transportation accidents are common. Trucks are often overloaded, and drivers lack proper training.

Economic Espionage/Intellectual Property Threats

Maintain no expectation of privacy in public or private locations. The Consulate regularly receives reports of human and technical monitoring of U.S. businesspersons and other visiting U.S. citizens. The areas around U.S. and other foreign diplomatic facilities and residences are under overt physical and video surveillance; security personnel are posted outside facilities and around residences; and CCTV cameras are visible throughout Shanghai. Overt microphones and video cameras are common in Chinese taxis.

Activities and conversations in hotel rooms (including meeting rooms), offices, cars, and taxis are subject to onsite or remote monitoring. Authorities may access hotel rooms, residences, and offices at any time without the occupants’ consent/knowledge. Authorities may search personal possessions, including computers, in hotel rooms without the knowledge/consent of the owner. Elevators and public areas of housing compounds are under continuous surveillance.

Chinese authorities monitor all means of communication (e.g. telephones, mobile phones, faxes, emails, text messages). The Chinese government has publicly declared that it regularly monitors private email and Internet browsing through cooperation with the limited number of internet service providers (ISPs) and wireless providers operating in China. Wireless access to the Internet in major metropolitan areas is becoming more common, so Chinese authorities can access official and personal computers more easily. U.S. government employees have reported seeing unknown computers and devices accessing their home networks; these intrusions likely required advanced computer knowledge and network password hacking.

China blocks many popular services and websites (e.g. Google, Twitter, and Facebook). WeChat and other alternative Chinese applications are nearly ubiquitous; however, they have built-in features that allow the Chinese government to monitor and censor messages, access the device's address book and photos, track the user's location, or even activate the microphone/camera. Bloggers are subject to particular scrutiny, and may have content blocked depending on the profile, following, and content.

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

Personal Identity Concerns

Reports of discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, race, nationality, disability, etc. are relatively uncommon.

Drug-related Crimes

Drug consumption exists in China, but drug-related crimes do not appear to be a significant issue affecting the U.S. private sector. The Chinese government is concerned about domestic drug use and enforcement efforts are widespread, with severe punishment for violators. However, illicit drugs are available in Shanghai to both Chinese citizens and foreigners.

Kidnapping Threat

Kidnappings are not common in China; however, there are accounts of businesspeople held against their will in a hotel room while forced to pay a debt or settle a labor-related dispute. There have also been reports of taxi drivers transporting passengers to remote locations and forcing them to pay a fee under threat of injury. Such reports are relatively rare, and are often secondhand, circular accounts.

One distinction worth noting is that Chinese law does not view preventing a person from leaving a location due to a commercial or business dispute as kidnapping. In some cases, labor disputes have resulted not only in protracted stoppages, but also in temporary detention of expatriate managers by workers demanding continued employment or enhanced severance packages.

Police Response

How to Handle Incidents of Police Detention or Harassment

In the event of arrest, U.S. citizens should contact the U.S. Consulate for guidance. Arguments concerning the U.S. judicial system are largely ineffective; the U.S. Government and its laws do not have jurisdiction in China.

Crime/Victim Assistance

Urban forces receive good training and equipment, especially in Shanghai and other first-tier cities, where authorities spend millions of dollars on security-related infrastructure. Local police are somewhat effective at deterring crime. Police response to foreign victims of crime depends upon the type of infraction, where it transpired, and the social status of the victim (e.g. private citizen, diplomat, VIP). Most responses to alarms and emergency calls are sufficiently prompt if the police know that the victim is a Westerner or a person of importance. 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.

Investigative training techniques and forensic equipment continue to improve, but are not at the same levels in comparison with those of developed countries.

U.S. citizen victims of crime anywhere in China should contact the police by dialing 110. Those who do not speak Mandarin can ask to speak to an English-speaking officer. Visitors to China must report any criminal victimization to the police while in China; Chinese authorities will ignore any attempt to do so while outside of China.

U.S. citizens may also contact American Citizen Services (ACS) at the 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.

Policing in China is different from U.S. policing; preserving social harmony is a large component of the Chinese policing doctrine. Depending on the crime, police may ask to negotiate for monetary damages with the alleged victim. If everyone is in agreement with a monetary arrangement, no further legal issue exists. The Chinese police training system has not yet evolved into one sympathetic to victims. Regardless of the crime, the victim has to visit the nearest police station to report it. The victim must have the evidence to support his or her claims, and could likely have the assailant present in the same room while he/she narrates the incident to the police. The role of the police at that time is to assist in negotiating a financial solution to the problem. The victim should not expect expressions of sympathy or support.

Police/Security Agencies

The Shanghai Police fall under control of the Ministry of Public Security (MPS). The Shanghai Police enforce laws enacted by the National People's Congress and any local municipal laws passed by the Shanghai municipal government. The Shanghai Police have uniformed officers and specialized investigative units.

The People's Armed Police (PAP) do not perform traditional law enforcement responsibilities, but do provide static protection of Chinese government buildings, ministries, foreign missions and public transportation centers such as airports and train stations.

Although police officers in some Chinese cities, including Shanghai, have begun carrying firearms, the majority of officers on the street remain unarmed. Armed specialized units (SWAT) sometimes augment patrol officers. SWAT officers occasionally deploy during special events, at air and railway stations, and in response to protests or demonstrations. Police in Shanghai are increasingly using body cameras to record their interactions with the public.

Medical Emergencies

Western style medical facilities with international staff are available in Shanghai and a few other large cities. Many other hospitals in major Chinese cities have so-called VIP wards or Special Needs (*te xu*) wards with reasonably up-to-date medical technology and skilled physicians who typically speak English.

Ambulances do not carry sophisticated medical equipment, and ambulance personnel generally have little or no medical training. Therefore, injured or seriously ill patients may need 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, have little medical equipment or availability to medications. Rural clinics are often reluctant to accept responsibility for treating foreigners, even in emergencies.

Air pollution is a significant problem. Pollutants such as particle pollution exacerbate a number of significant health effects; those effects are likely to be more severe for sensitive populations, including people with heart or lung disease, children, and older adults. The Consulate has an air quality monitor to measure PM 2.5 particulates as an indication of the air quality on the Consulate compound located on Huai Hai Middle Road. The monitor's measurements, expressed in the form of PM 2.5 concentration (micrograms per cubic meter, $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$) and corresponding AQI, are available on [Twitter](#).

Contact information for available medical services is available on the consulate [website](#).

Available Air Ambulance Services: International SOS, Tel: +86 21 6295 0099

Country-specific Vaccination and Health Guidance

The CDC offers additional information on vaccines and health guidance for [China](#).

OSAC Country Council

Shanghai has an active OSAC Country Council that meets every other month. To reach OSAC's Asia/Pacific team, please email OSACEAP@state.gov.

U.S. Consulate General Shanghai Location and Contact Information

Consulate Address and Hours of Operation

U.S. Consulate General Shanghai, 1469 Huaihai Zhonglu, Shanghai 2000031

Telephone: +86-21-8011-2200

Website: <http://shanghai.usembassy-china.org.cn/>

Consular Section, 8th floor of the Westgate Mall, 1038 Nanjing Xi Lu, Shanghai 200041

Telephone (24 hrs): +86-21-8011-2600; +86-010-8531-3000

Email: ShanghaiACS@state.gov

Hours: 0800-1700, Monday through Friday. Closed for U.S. federal and Chinese holidays

Nearby Posts: [Embassy Beijing](#), [Consulate Chengdu](#), [Consulate Guangzhou](#), [Consulate Shenyang](#), [Consulate Wuhan](#)

U.S. citizens residing or traveling in China should register in the Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program ([STEP](#)). In case of difficulties registering online, contact the closest U.S. embassy or consulate for assistance.

Additional Resource: [China](#) Country Information Sheet