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Guinea-Bissau

Official Name: Republic of Guinea-Bissau

LAST UPDATED: JANUARY 5, 2015

Embassy Messages

Dakar

Quick Facts

PASSPORT VALIDITY:

Must be valid at time of entry

BLANK PASSPORT PAGES:

One page required for entry stamp

TOURIST VISA REQUIRED:

Yes

VACCINATIONS:

Yellow Fever vaccination certificate is required for all travelers over one year of age

CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR ENTRY:

None

CURRENCY RESTRICTIONS FOR EXIT:

None

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Embassies and Consulates

[U.S. Embassy Dakar](#)

Route des Almadies

Dakar, Senegal

Telephone: + (221) 33-879-4000**Emergency After-Hours Telephone:** + (221) 33-879-4444

The U.S. Embassy in Dakar has jurisdiction over Guinea-Bissau. U.S. citizens travelling or residing in Guinea-Bissau are encouraged to enroll online through [STEP](#) with the U.S. Embassy in Dakar.

[✉ DakarACS@state.gov](mailto:DakarACS@state.gov)

Assistance for U.S. Citizens

**U.S. Embassy Dakar
Route des Almadies
Dakar, Senegal**

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**Email**DakarACS@state.gov**U.S. Embassy Dakar**[VIEW MORE LOCATIONS](#)

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CONSULATES

U.S. Bissau Liaison Office

Edificio SITEC

Rua José Carlos Schwarz 245, Bairro d'Ajuda
Bissau, Guinea-Bissau

Telephone: +(245) 325-6382

Emergency After-Hours Telephone: Please contact the U.S.

Embassy in Dakar, Senegal: +(221) 33-879-4444

Fax: +(245) 325-6382

The Office in Bissau does not offer consular services. Consular services are provided by the Embassy in Dakar, Senegal.

Destination Description

The U.S. Liaison Office in Bissau cannot provide consular services to U.S. citizens in Guinea-Bissau. Guinea-Bissau currently falls under the consular jurisdiction of the U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal.

The Republic of Guinea-Bissau, a small country in western Africa, is one of the world's poorest nations. The capital city is Bissau and the official language is Portuguese. Many people outside of Bissau speak only an indigenous language or Creole. English is not widely used. The country's 1998-99 civil war devastated the economy.

Tourist facilities and infrastructure in general are very limited and not up to U.S. standards. Please read the Department of State's [Fact Sheet on Guinea-Bissau for additional information](#).

Entry, Exit & Visa Requirements

A valid passport, visa, and proof of onward/return ticket are required for U.S. citizens to enter Guinea-Bissau. The Bissau-Guinean Embassy in Washington, DC, suspended operations in January 2007. The Embassy of Guinea-Bissau does not have a website.

Due to Guinea-Bissau's lack of consular representation in the United States, it can be difficult for U.S. citizens to obtain the required visa for entry into Guinea-Bissau. Since most flights destined for Guinea-Bissau must pass through Dakar, Senegal, or Lisbon, Portugal, most travelers are able to apply for visas at the Bissau-Guinean embassies in those countries. Although it is possible to obtain a visa upon arrival in Bissau if arrangements are made in advance, there are no clear instructions for how to make those arrangements. On December 9, 2014, Guinea-Bissau reopened its border with Guinea after having closed it on August 12.

To date there have been no confirmed cases of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in Guinea-Bissau.

Guinea-Bissau remains an unstable threat environment for which additional security precautions are required. The U.S. State Department rates Guinea-Bissau as a critical threat country for political violence and crime. All official U.S. government travelers (including personnel assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Dakar), must have Regional Security Office (RSO) approval and are required to receive an RSO country-specific security briefing prior to travel.



Enroll in STEP

Enrolling in this free service will allow us to better assist you in case of an emergency while you are abroad.

ENROLL

The U.S. Department of State is unaware of any HIV/AIDS entry restrictions for visitors to or foreign residents of Guinea-Bissau.

Information about [dual nationality](#) or the [prevention of international child abduction](#) can be found on our website. For further information about customs regulations, please read our [Customs Information page](#).

Safety and Security

Guinea-Bissau is one of the poorest countries in West Africa and lacks sufficient resources and infrastructure to insure a stable security environment. Since Guinea-Bissau gained independence from Portugal in 1974, the country has been plagued by coups, political assassinations, and a civil war. The country's fragile political system and weak governance allows for widespread corruption directly influenced by illicit activity. Criminals, corrupt officials, and drug cartels continue to undermine the rule of law and utilize the country for criminal activity, including using Guinea-Bissau as a major transit-point for cocaine and light-arms trafficking, and for illegal immigration. Guinea-Bissau's unprotected coastline and archipelago, with 88 islands, many un-policed, and remote airstrips, are a haven for narcotics trafficking and other criminal activity. Due to the current political, economic, and security situation in Guinea-Bissau, all U.S. citizens and organizations should exercise heightened personal security awareness.

Guinea-Bissau held free, fair and peaceful presidential and legislative elections in 2014 following a transitional government in place since a coup d'état on April 12, 2012, that interrupted elections to replace President Malam Bacai, who had died from natural causes.

Visitors should monitor the political situation and avoid large gatherings and street demonstrations. Demonstrations typically begin or end in front of the former Presidential Palace in "Praca dos Herois Nacionais." While most demonstrations in Bissau are non-violent, the imbalance of power in the country can lead to violent demonstrations.

Unexploded military ordnance and land mines remain scattered throughout the country. Although the capital city of Bissau was declared "mine-free" in June 2006 by the national de-mining center (CAAMI), there have been occasional findings or unintentional mine explosions. In September 2014, a mine killed 24 in a collective taxi on a rural road near Encheia, prompting the government to acknowledge the problem and ask for international de-mining assistance. Avoid driving in rural areas at night and remain on well-traveled roads at all times to minimize the risks posed by land mines.

The U.S. Embassy in Bissau suspended operations on June 14, 1998, at the outbreak of a violent civil war. There is currently no permanent U.S. diplomatic or consular presence in Guinea-Bissau. The U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, is accredited for all diplomatic and security concerns to the Government of Guinea-Bissau. In

2007, the U.S. government opened a U.S. Liaison Office in Bissau (BLO), staffed by locally employed personnel who provide support to visitors from the U.S. Embassy in Dakar and report on political, economic, and related issues. All security and consular services should be coordinated through the American Citizens Services Section and the Regional Security Office at the U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal.

To stay connected:

- Enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) so we can keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements.
- Follow the Bureau of Consular Affairs on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).
- Bookmark the [Bureau of Consular Affairs website](#), which contains the current [Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts](#) as well as the [Worldwide Caution](#).
- In the event of an emergency, contact us at 1-888-407-4747 toll-free within the United States and Canada, or via a regular toll line, 1-202-501-4444, from other countries.
- Take some time before traveling to consider your personal security and checking for useful tips for [traveling safely abroad](#).

CRIME: Guinea-Bissau is rated critical for crime due to the frequency of crimes committed and lack of law enforcement resources and capabilities. Foreigners are primarily the targets of crimes of opportunity to include, petty-theft, pick-pocketing, theft of valuables from vehicles, and minor assaults. In particular, low-level criminal activity occurs in crowded areas such as the Bandim Market and port in central Bissau. Criminals take advantage of foreigners attempting to navigate through the crowded markets. Exercise good personal security practices to reduce the risk of being victimized. Keep a low profile, remain vigilant, and avoid potential conflict situations. Do not wear flashy clothing or jewelry, and be cautious about displaying currency in public.

To avoid theft do not walk alone in isolated areas, particularly at night, and lock all doors and close all windows when driving. Do not walk on dark streets at night, even in groups. Arrange for transportation and limit walking around Bissau at night to reduce the risk of being a victim of a crime. To minimize inconvenience in the event of theft, carry copies, rather than originals, of your passport and other identification documents. While some of the larger hotels may accept credit cards, Bissau is largely a cash based economy and it is therefore recommended that travelers plan for and bring appropriate amounts of currency. Valuables should be stored in hotel safes.

The unstable security environment and high rates of unemployment strongly influence criminals to go to extreme measures to achieve their goals. While most criminals in Guinea-Bissau seek crimes of opportunity with low risk of confrontation, they are not afraid to exert violence. In many cases, criminal elements in Bissau operate

in small, loosely affiliated groups to perpetrate a crime. Criminals use one or two individuals to cause a distraction or remain on lookout, while the others commit the crime.

While violent crime towards foreigners is not common in Guinea-Bissau, the increase in narcotics trafficking has contributed to an increase in criminal activity and aggressive assaults among the local population in more rural areas of Guinea-Bissau.

The Bandim market and other vendors in Bissau offer a wide variety of illicit and counterfeit goods. While the items are widely available, all travelers are urged to not purchase any illicit items to prevent breaking local laws and U.S. laws if brought back to the United States.

The U.S. Embassy recommends that overland travel outside of Bissau be limited to daylight hours. This advisory is due to the fact that emergency response time is very slow.

VICTIMS OF CRIME: Police and emergency personnel in Guinea-Bissau lack the basic resources necessary to effectively respond to crime and emergency situations. Due to the deficiency in resources, responses to emergency situations may not be timely or may be non-existent.

If you or someone you know becomes the victim of a crime abroad, you should contact the local police and the U.S. Embassy in Dakar. In Dakar we can:

- Replace a stolen passport.
- Help you find appropriate medical care if you are the victim of violent crimes such as assault or rape.
- Put you in contact with the appropriate police authorities, and if you want us to, contact family members or friends.
- Help you understand the local criminal justice process and direct you to local attorneys, although it is important to remember that local authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting the crime.

There is no local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Guinea-Bissau.

Please see our [information for victims of crime](#), including possible victim compensation programs in the United States.

Local Laws & Special Circumstances

CRIMINAL PENALTIES: While you are traveling in Guinea-Bissau, you are subject to its laws even if you are a U.S. citizen. Foreign laws and legal systems can be vastly different than our own. In some places, you may be taken in for questioning if you don't have your passport with you. In some places, it is illegal to take pictures of certain buildings. In some places, driving under the influence could land you immediately in jail. These criminal penalties will vary

from country to country.

Persons violating Bissau-Guinean laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possessing, using, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Guinea-Bissau are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Drug trafficking is endemic in Guinea-Bissau.

There are also some things that might be legal in the country you visit, but still illegal in the United States. You can be [prosecuted in the United States](#) for engaging in sexual conduct with children or for using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country regardless of the legality of these activities under that country's laws. Counterfeit and pirated goods are illegal in the United States and if you purchase them in a foreign country, you may be breaking local law as well.

Arrest notifications in host country: While some countries will automatically notify the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate if a U.S. citizen is detained or arrested in that country, others may not. The United States does not have an agreement with Guinea-Bissau requiring notification of the U.S. Embassy of your arrest. To ensure that the United States is aware of your circumstances, request that the police and prison officials notify U.S. Embassy Dakar as soon as you are arrested or detained while in Guinea-Bissau.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: Guinea-Bissau's customs authorities may enforce strict regulations concerning the temporary import or export of items such as firearms, antiquities, medications, and business equipment.

Currency: International banking and finance is problematic due to a limited formal banking sector. ATMs are not available, credit cards are not accepted, but currency exchange exists at banks and hotels and is available on the street. Wire transfer possibilities, while limited, are available and repatriation of funds is problematic. Purchases of goods and services are possible only in cash and in the local currency, the Franc of the West African Economic and Monetary Zone (CFA). It is recommended that travelers secure more than adequate sums of CFA before arriving in Guinea-Bissau.

WOMEN TRAVELER INFORMATION: If you are a woman traveling abroad, please review our travel tips for [Women Travelers](#).

LGBT RIGHTS: In December 2008, Guinea-Bissau became one of 66 nations to sign the "United Nations Statement on Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity," which supports decriminalization of homosexuality and transgender identity.

For more detailed information about Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) rights in Guinea-Bissau, you may review the State Department's annual [Country Reports on Human Rights](#)

Practices. For further information on LGBT travel, please read our [LGBT Travel Information](#) page.

ACCESSIBILITY: While in Guinea-Bissau, individuals with disabilities may find accessibility and accommodation very different from what you find in the United States.

Health

Modern medical facilities are virtually nonexistent in Guinea-Bissau, and travelers should not rely on them. More acceptable levels of medical care are available in Dakar, Senegal.

Malaria is a serious and sometimes fatal disease that is prevalent throughout Guinea Bissau in all seasons. Before traveling, you should discuss with your doctor the best antimalarial medication to avoid malaria.

Travelers should carry and use Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommended insect repellents containing either 20 percent DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535. Treating clothing and tents with [permethrin](#) and sleeping in screened or air conditioned rooms under insecticide-impregnated mosquito nets will help diminish bites from mosquitoes as well ticks, fleas, and chiggers, some of which may also carry infections.

All [routinely recommended immunizations](#) for the United States should be up to date. [Measles](#), [mumps](#), [rubella](#), [tetanus](#), [pertussis](#), and [chickenpox](#) are much more common than in the United States, especially among children. Additionally, [hepatitis A](#) and [typhoid](#) immunization is recommended for all travelers. Hepatitis B vaccine is recommended for all those who may have sexual contacts, tattoos or require medical treatment while in Guinea Bissau.

Yellow Fever immunization is required for entry for those greater than one year of age and recommended for those over nine months old.

Rabies immunization is recommended for all travelers staying for more than four weeks or who will have remote, rural travel or expect animal exposure. Even in urban areas dogs may have rabies. Bites and scratches from dogs, bats, or other mammals should be immediately cleaned with soap and water, and medical evaluation sought to determine if additional rabies immunization is warranted.

Meningococcal meningitis is much more common than in the United States and immunization with the quadrivalent meningococcal vaccine should be given to all children and health care workers, especially during the dry season (December through June), it should be considered for all adults.

Diarrheal illness is very common among travelers even in cities and luxury accommodations. Travelers can diminish diarrhea risk through scrupulous washing of hands and use of hand sanitizers,

especially before food preparation and eating. The greatest risk of traveler's diarrhea is from contaminated food. Choose foods and beverages carefully to lower your risk (see [Food & Water Safety](#)). Eat only food that is cooked and served hot; avoid food that has been sitting on a buffet. Eat raw fruits and vegetables only if you have washed them in clean water or peeled them.

Guinea-Bissau has a low HIV/AIDS infection rate, but one that is rising gradually. To date, no confirmed cases of Ebola have appeared..

You can find detailed information on vaccinations and other health precautions on the [CDC website](#). For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the [World Health Organization \(WHO\) website](#), which contains additional health information for travelers, including [detailed country-specific health information](#).

Travel & Transportation

TRAFFIC SAFETY AND ROAD CONDITIONS: While in Guinea-Bissau, you may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Guinea-Bissau is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

The public transportation system, urban and rural road conditions, and availability of roadside assistance are all poor. There is no consistent public electricity in the capital, and the lack of lighting at night makes careful driving essential. Since there are land mines left in place from the civil war and the war of independence, travelers should not leave designated roads and pathways. The land mines are scattered in several areas throughout Guinea-Bissau, including the Bafata, Oio, Biombo, Quinara, and Tombali regions. While there has been significant progress in locating and removing land mines, a substantial number remain. Speak with local authorities first and use caution if leaving a main road or highway to enter a trail network or to make other types of cross-country movement.

Passengers should also exercise caution if choosing to use a taxi for transportation because many are in sub-standard condition. If a taxi is used, it is important for passengers to inform taxi drivers that they do not want additional patrons to be picked up along the route. Taxis in Bissau serve as a bus service, in which each passenger pays for a seat. Furthermore, the Embassy does not recommend that visitors use the unconventional bus system in Bissau, the "Bus Rapides" or "Toca-Tocas."

Please refer to our [Road Safety page](#) for more information.

AVIATION SAFETY OVERSIGHT: As there is no direct commercial air service to the United States by carriers registered in Guinea-Bissau, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has not assessed the government of Guinea-Bissau's Civil Aviation Authority for compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

aviation safety standards. Further information may be found on the [FAA's safety assessment page](#).

Please see [Fact Sheet](#) for this country.

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