



BURUNDI

Capital: Bujumbura

Dialing code: +257

Capital and largest city: Bujumbura; 3°30' S 30°00' E / 3.500°S 30.000°E

President: Pierre Nkurunziza

Currency: Burundian franc

Official languages: French, Kirundi

SAFETY & SECURITY

The overall security situation remains unpredictable since the ongoing political crisis was precipitated by election-related violence and a failed coup d'état in May 2015.

Violent incidents have occurred throughout the country, but primarily concentrated in Bujumbura, including:

- grenade attacks in residential neighbourhoods
 - targeted political and military assassinations
 - armed clashes between political opposition and security forces, resulting in death or injury
 - extrajudicial killings
- International borders may close without notice.

Burundi-DRC border:

- Cibitoke and Bubanza provinces are vulnerable to cross-border attacks by armed groups from the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).
- Areas bordering Lake Tanganyika are a potential haven for smugglers; people walking alone on roads around the lake have been assaulted.

Burundi-Rwanda border:

- There is a high risk of banditry, cross-border incursions, and armed clashes. Regional terror groups have threatened U.S. and other Western and Burundian interests and are capable of crossing borders to carry out attacks.

Precautions:

- Avoid demonstrations and use vigilance around city centers. Even events intended to be peaceful can become violent.
- Maintain caution at public gatherings and areas frequented by foreigners.
- Be wary when traveling outside of cities and along border areas.
- Monitor news and consular messages.

Searches: Security forces have subjected foreigners (including U.S. citizens) to home and car searches. Uniformed police are authorized to conduct home searches between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. only, and must present identification and a warrant.

Roadblocks: Police conduct vehicle searches and check identity papers at checkpoints throughout the country. Travelers report harassment, bribe solicitation, intimidation and physical violence, particularly at checkpoints leaving Bujumbura towards the Rwandan border.

- Comply with the officers' requests. Remain courteous and calm.
- Stay inside your vehicle with doors locked and open the window slightly to communicate. Turn on your interior vehicle light at night.
- Tell the officer you are a U.S. citizen and display color copies of your documents through the window.
- Do not leave until instructed to do so.
- Report harassment to your Embassy.

Crime: Most crimes are committed at night outside city centers. Armed robberies resulting in fatalities or serious injuries occur daily, although the vast majority do not involve foreigners. Petty theft is also common.

- Avoid walking alone, especially after dark.
- Do not display cash and valuables.
- Dress conservatively.
- Carry your U.S. passport and visa - and photocopies - with you at all times.

HEALTH

Medical facilities and ambulance service are severely limited throughout the country. In the capital, Hopital *Bumerec* offers medical and emergency care, including referrals and medical evacuation. Medicines are in short supply and may be counterfeit.

You are responsible for all medical costs. Most care providers expect payment in U.S. dollars/Burundian franc before treatment is performed.

Medical Insurance: If your health insurance plan does not provide coverage overseas, we strongly recommend supplemental medical insurance and medical evacuation plans. Carry medication in its original packaging with your doctor's prescription.

Malaria is endemic. Use CDC recommended mosquito repellents containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus or IR-3535. Sleep under insecticide-impregnated mosquito nets. Chemoprophylaxis is strongly recommended for all travelers, even for short stays. Food-borne and water-borne illnesses are common.

The following diseases are prevalent:

- chikungunya
- hepatitis A
- malaria
- schistosomiasis
- typhoid
- yellow fever

Vaccinations: Be up-to-date on all vaccinations recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Yellow fever vaccination is required for entry.

TRAVEL & TRANSPORTATION

Road Conditions and Safety: National highways are in fair to good condition, though large holes are common. During the rainy season, February to May, many roads become impassable. Flooding and landslides also destroy bridges and block routes. Most roads in the interior are in disrepair.

There is a Lack of:

- lighting
- functioning traffic signals

- road signs
- shoulders make driving dangerous, particularly outside of towns and especially at night. Poor driving standards and wayward pedestrians, cyclists, and livestock create further hazards.

Rural areas: Be aware of increased risk of ambush and highway robbery. Service stations are scarce and fuel shortages are common. Professional roadside assistance is not available outside the capital.

Carry:

- spare tires
- food and water
- satellite phone
- maps and navigation equipment
- first aid kit

Traffic Laws: An international driving permit and third-party insurance is required. Long term residents can apply for a Burundi driver's license. Use of cell phones while driving is illegal.

Give buses and taxis a wide berth as they start and stop abruptly, often without pulling to the side of the road.

Accidents: Call and attempt to have police respond. If a hostile mob forms or you feel your safety is in danger, leave the scene and proceed to the nearest police station or gendarmerie to report the incident. Do not stop at the scene of an accident.

Public Transportation: Public transit is unregulated, unreliable, and generally unsafe due to overloading, reckless driving, inadequate maintenance, and the risk of petty crime. Fatal collisions occur frequently. Hire private transport from a reliable source.

Taxis: If you are forced to use a taxi, negotiate the fare before beginning your journey. Taxis are not metered, so confirm with your hotel about fares you should expect on trips.

Hiring a vehicle: Reputable car rental firms will include the services of a driver. Be particularly vigilant at airports, where criminals use luggage tag information in order to present themselves as pre-arranged drivers.

LAW & SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Criminal Penalties: You are subject to local laws. If you violate local laws, even unknowingly, you may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Convictions for possessing, using, or trafficking in illegal drugs are severe, and result in long jail sentences and heavy fines. You may be taken in for questioning by the police if unable to produce an acceptable form of identification.

Arrest Notification: If you are arrested or detained, ask police or prison officials to notify the U.S. Embassy immediately.

Power Outages: Power outages occur frequently, and may affect public services such as access to potable water.

Photography: It is illegal to take pictures of government buildings, military installations, and key infrastructure such as airports and border controls. You could be detained or arrested, fined, and have your equipment confiscated. Do not take photos of Burundians without their permission.

Phone Service: Cell phones are used extensively. SIM cards can be purchased locally and used with a compatible cell phone. Providers include Leo U-com, Econet, and Onamob.

Currency: The Burundian franc (BIF) is the official currency. U.S. dollars and euros are accepted in urban areas. Most transactions are conducted in cash; credit cards are rarely accepted outside of Bujumbura. Most vendor and banking institutions will take only bills in near-mint condition, printed after 2009. Examine U.S. bills to ensure they are legitimate. Exchange currency only at reputable banks. ATMs are available at the international airport and in Bujumbura, but they dispense only Burundian francs.

Information on Burundi is limited – contact our office for any information not supplied above



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