

TURKEY RISK ASSESSMENT



City & Country

TURKEY, Istanbul

Prepared by

Sussex Abroad Office

Before you go -

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office provides travel advice by country. It covers safety and security, local laws and customs, entry requirements, health and natural disasters along with a host of other useful information. We strongly recommend that students read the section related to their destination prior to departure and before undertaking any trip to another part of the county/region.

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/>

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advise against all travel to areas within 10 km of the border with Syria, except the city of Kilis (see below).

The FCO advise against all but essential travel to:

- all other areas of Sirnak, Mardin, Kilis (including Kilis city) and Hatay provinces
- the provinces of Diyarbakir, Tunceli and Hakkari



VISA REGULATIONS

British nationals need a visa to enter Turkey. If you hold a different type of British nationality (BN(O), British Overseas Citizen, British Protected Person or British Subject), or another nationality altogether, check visa requirements with the Turkish Embassy before you travel. Arranging your visa before you travel will avoid possible problems or delays at the Turkish border, or when boarding your flight in the UK.

Make sure your passport has a blank page for the visa stamp. If it does not, the Turkish authorities will issue an 'Entry-Exit form' and put your entry-exit stamp on there. You should carry this form with you in Turkey and present it to the border officers when you leave. Your passport should be valid for a minimum period of 6 months from the date of entry into Turkey and have at least 3 months validity from the date you are leaving Turkey.

PASSPORT VALIDITY

Make sure your passport satisfies all of the following criteria:

- valid for a minimum of 6 months from the date of entry into Turkey
- valid for at least 3 months from the date you leave Turkey
- valid for at least 60 days beyond the expiry date of your visa, e-visa or residence permit (visas and e-visas are often issued with 6 months validity so your passport may need to have 8 months validity at the time your visa is issued).

The Turkish authorities have confirmed they will accept British passports extended by 12 months by British Embassies and Consulates under additional measures put in place in mid-2014.

TERRORISM

Terrorists are very likely to try to carry out attacks in Turkey.

Most terrorist attacks have taken place in the south and east of the country and in Ankara and Istanbul. While there is a potential that citizens from western countries may be targets or caught up in attacks, particularly in the major cities, attacks are most likely to target the Turkish state, civilians and demonstrations.

Attacks could be indiscriminate, affecting public buildings, major events or large public gatherings. Be vigilant around significant religious occasions and public holidays; terrorist groups sometimes call for attacks around these times.

Previous methods of attack have included armed assaults, suicide bombings, car bombings and rocket attacks and improvised explosive devices left in refuse bins, crowded areas and on public transport. Be vigilant, monitor media reports and keep up to date with this travel advice.

The Turkish authorities have successfully disrupted attack planning in the recent past and have said that security has been tightened in response to recent attacks.

There is a heightened risk of terrorist attack against the aviation industry in Turkey. You should co-operate fully with security officials at airports.

It's illegal to be a member or supporter of a terrorist organisation in Turkey. Some organisations in the region though not proscribed in the UK, such as the YPG and the Gülen Movement are illegal in Turkey.

A number of terrorist groups are active in Turkey:

Daesh

The last major attack attributed to Daesh occurred on 1 January 2017 at the Reina nightclub in Ortakoy, Istanbul; 39 people were killed and 69 injured. Extremist groups based in Syria including Daesh and ANF (Al Nusra Front) have the capacity to carry out attacks in neighbouring countries, including Turkey. Daesh has previously targeted border crossings and nearby locations on the Syrian side of the border.

PKK

There's a domestic terrorist presence in the south east of the country including in Van, Bitlis, Bingol, Elazig, Mus, Batman, Erzincan, Diyarbakir and Agri provinces. In December 2012, talks began between the Turkish Government and the Kurdish aligned PKK (proscribed as a terrorist group in the UK), during which the PKK observed a ceasefire. However, following the Suruc bombing on 20 July 2015, the ceasefire ended when the PKK killed 2 Turkish police officers.

15 August is the anniversary of the first PKK attack against Turkish government installations. Historically, this anniversary date has prompted an escalation of violence by the PKK and other splinter groups.

From the end of July 2015 there was an intensive period of violent incidents in Turkey's south-east and other provinces, although the pace of these has now decreased. The vast majority of these incidents have been PKK attacks on Turkish security forces, their premises and vehicles, with many members of the armed forces and police killed and injured. There have also been attacks on infrastructure (eg oil pipelines, dams) and incidents in which civilians have been affected. The government has responded with arrests of PKK suspects in Turkey and sustained military pressure on PKK positions in northern Iraq.

TAK (Kurdistan Freedom Hawks)

TAK have previously carried out attacks in Turkey, and have publically threatened to attack tourist sites. TAK are a proscribed group under UK law.

Far Left groups – DHKP-C and THKP-C

The anti-western, far left, proscribed terrorist group, THKP/C-Acilciler (Turkish People's Liberation Party/Front) and the linked DHKP/C (Revolutionary People's Liberation Front) remain active, and launched a series of attacks in Istanbul in 2015 targeting the Turkish police and judiciary. The DHKP/C attacks have mainly targeted the Turkish authorities and US diplomatic missions.

Between approximately 30 March and 20 April, there are several dates significant to the DHKP/C, starting with the 30 March anniversary of their founding which may have been linked to previous attacks. 19 December is also recognised as an important date around which the DHKP/C may be active.

Global threat

There's a heightened threat of terrorist attack globally against UK interests and British nationals, from groups or individuals motivated by the conflict in Iraq and Syria. You should be vigilant at this time.

Find out more about the [global threat from terrorism](#), how to minimise your risk and what to do in the event of a terrorist attack.

HEALTH

The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), is NOT valid in Turkey. Make sure you have comprehensive travel and health insurance and accessible funds to cover the cost of any medical treatment abroad and repatriation.

Type	Nature of the Hazard	Procedures to Minimise Risk
TERRORISM	<p>On 24 August 2016, the Turkish military started operations across the Turkey-Syria border near Karkamis and declared special security zones in villages along the Turkey-Syria border in Gaziantep Province.</p> <p>Fighting in Syria continues in areas close to the Turkish border and there remains a heightened risk of terrorism in the region. Mortar rounds are occasionally fired from Syria into Turkey. As a result of heavy fighting in northern Syria, there has been a mass influx of refugees into southern Turkey over the past 3 years.</p> <p>Due to the ongoing conflict in Syria, roads in Hatay province leading towards the border may be subject to closure.</p>	<p>You should be aware of the global risk of indiscriminate terrorist attacks. We advise you to remain vigilant in all public areas across the country and report anything suspicious to the authorities. Attend security briefings at your host university and follow local guidance.</p> <p>The main provinces affected by PKK attacks are Hakkari, Sirnak, Siirt and Tunceli. There is a high level of security activity in these provinces and you risk arrest if you fail to comply with restrictions. We advise against all but essential travel to these areas.</p>

POLITICAL SITUATION	<p>Sporadic demonstrations take place in cities across Turkey, some of which have, in the past, become violent. In Istanbul previous demonstrations have centered on the area around Taksim Square, on Istiklal Street and in the Besiktas and Kadikoy districts and more recently in Okmeydani. In Ankara, the protests have mainly taken place in the central Kizilay district around the Prime Minister's office. In Izmir the focus has been in the town centre, near the water front.</p>	<p>You should avoid all demonstrations and leave the area if one develops. Police have used tear gas and water cannon extensively to disperse protests. The effects of tear gas can be felt several hundred metres beyond the immediate site of demonstrations. Local transport routes may be disrupted.</p>
	<p>The situation in Turkey has calmed following an attempted coup on 15-16 July 2016. The security environment, however, remains potentially volatile. A two-year state of emergency ended in July 2018. However, some additional security measures and restrictions remain in place.</p>	
CRIME	<p>Generally crime levels are low, but street robbery and pick-pocketing are common in the major tourist areas of Istanbul.</p>	<p>You should maintain at least the same level of personal security awareness as in the UK. Alcohol and drugs can make you less alert, less in control and less aware of your environment. If you are</p>

		going to drink, know your limit. Drinks served in bars overseas are often stronger than those in the UK. Buy your own drinks and keep sight of them at all times so they are not spiked. Be wary of strangers approaching you offering food and drink (which may be drugged), to change money or to take you to a restaurant or nightclub.
	In 2018, 32 cases of sexual assault, including rape, were reported to British consular staff in Turkey. Most of these cases occurred during the summer holiday period in coastal tourist areas. Many were committed late at night by someone the victim met during the evening. There have also been sexual attacks on minors visiting toilet facilities alone.	You should be extra vigilant in these situations. Never accept lifts from strangers. Find a registered yellow taxi and make a note of the registration number before getting in.
DRUGS	Turkey has strict laws against the use, possession or trafficking of illegal drugs. If you are convicted of any of these offences, you can expect to receive a heavy fine or a prison sentence of 4 to 24 years.	Don't get involved with drugs of any kind.

EXTREME SPORTS	British nationals have been injured and in some cases killed participating in extreme sports.	If you participate in extreme sports (including paragliding, parasailing, white-water rafting, off-road driving and hot air ballooning), satisfy yourself that adequate safety precautions are in place. Only use reputable operators and insist on training before use. Make sure your travel insurance covers you for all the activities you want to undertake.
STRAY DOGS	Most towns and cities have stray dogs. Local authorities take action to control and manage numbers but packs congregate in parks and wastelands and can be aggressive.	Take care, remain calm, and avoid approaching stray dogs. If you're bitten, seek medical advice as rabies and other animal borne diseases are present in Turkey.
NATURAL DISASTERS	Many parts of Turkey are subject to earthquakes and tremors.	You should familiarise yourself with safety procedures in the event of an earthquake and follow any advice given by the local authorities. The US Federal Emergency Management Agency has information about what to do <u>before, during and after an earthquake.</u>

Please also note and be sensitive to the following:

It is illegal not to carry some form of photographic ID in Turkey. It is therefore advisable to carry a photocopy of your passport with you at all times.

- Dress modestly if visiting a mosque or a religious shrine.
- Smoking is prohibited on public transport and in other public areas like stadiums, playgrounds, cafes, bars, and restaurants. You can be fined if you are caught smoking in a designated smoke-free area.
- Do not take photographs near military or official installations. You should seek permission before photographing individuals.
- Homosexuality is not illegal but is not widely tolerated: public displays of affection could result in prosecution for public order offences.
- It is an offence to insult the Turkish nation or the national flag, or to deface or tear up currency.