

WORLDWIDE HOTSPOTS

October 2023



Concentric identified several travel risks in October 2023, including natural disasters in Morocco and Libya, conflict in the Caucasus and Ukraine, and political tensions affecting Senegal, Ecuador, Kosovo, and Niger. We also urge travelers to maintain awareness of weather conditions in Mexico, and protests impacting Paris and London.

UKRAINE

The overall threat to travelers in Ukraine is EXTREME.

The security situation in Ukraine remains unstable as Russian forces continue to launch missile [strikes](#) on Ukraine's River Danube ports, damaging the country's grain export infrastructure. Ukrainian forces began to slowly move past Russian positions in south-east Zaporizhzhia as part of its counter-offensive to reach the Sea of Azov. Ukraine [claims](#) it succeeded in destroying a sophisticated Russian S-400 air defense system and damaging the Russian fleet's dry docks on the Crimea peninsula.



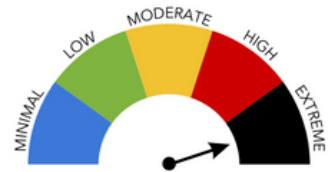
OPERATIONAL RISKS

- *Travelers should monitor local and international news for updates on the developing security situation and other travel disruptions.*
- *Travelers should exercise caution and remain vigilant of their surroundings at all times.*
- *Travelers should be familiar with emergency response and air raid protocols and know where to locate near-by bomb shelter locations.*
- Law enforcement and emergency personnel speak limited English and translators are not readily available.

LIBYA

The overall threat to travelers in Libya is EXTREME.

A Mediterranean storm caused two dams to burst near the Libyan town of Derna in mid-September. At the time of writing nearly 4,000 [died](#) in the flooding and 9,000 remain missing in the wake of the flooding. Libya's poor infrastructure, fractured government, and ailing economy is hampering relief efforts. The United Nations [warns](#) of disease outbreaks as drinking water is contaminated after the floods.



OPERATIONAL RISKS

- The U.S. government is unable to provide emergency or routine assistance to U.S. citizens in Libya, and the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli suspended its operations in July 2014. The U.S. Department of State (DoS) issued a "Level 4: Do Not Travel" advisory due to crime, terrorism, civil unrest, kidnapping, and armed conflict.
- *Travelers should bring bottled water, first aid kits, and medication due to a lack of clean drinking water and medical infrastructure.*

NIGER

The overall threat to travelers in Niger is EXTREME.

The DoS [issued](#) a Level 4: Do Not Travel warning for Niger after the military seized control and overturned civilian rule in late July. The U.S. government ordered the departure of non-emergency U.S. government personnel and eligible family members. France also [ordered](#) the removal of its military personnel and ambassador from the country.



OPERATIONAL RISKS

- *Travelers should reconsider travel to Niger due to anti-Western sentiment and possible terrorist attacks.* Avoid travel to Niger's border regions, particularly the Malian border area, Diffa region, and the Lake Chad region.
- Mali-based extremist groups have crossed the border and conducted multiple lethal attacks on Nigerien security forces. Media reports [note](#) the military government is anti Western and supportive of Russia.
- Protests can erupt spontaneously and often draw a repressive response from state security forces which struggle to contain the ensuing violence. Protests are common in Niamey.
- Medical care across Niger is of a low standard with poor sanitary conditions and limited access to medication, particularly outside of Niamey.

MOROCCO

The overall threat to travelers in Morocco is HIGH.

Upcoming high-level policy meetings and a recent earthquake almost certainly will cause significant travel disruptions. The 2023 Annual Meetings of the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will take place in person from October 9 to 15 in Marrakech. A 6.8 magnitude earthquake [killed](#) nearly 3,000 people 50 miles southwest of Marrakech on September 8. The earthquake impacted critical infrastructure such as hospitals, roads, and power lines.

Significant aftershocks are possible in the weeks and months following an earthquake.



OPERATIONAL RISKS

- *Travelers should avoid staying in old or stone houses.* Older and more traditional homes in Morocco were not built to sustain seismic activity and could collapse if there are aftershocks. Travelers to Morocco should check if their accommodations are earthquake proof and have an emergency evacuation plan.
- *DoS recommends U.S. citizens exercise increased caution in Morocco due to terrorism.* Open source reporting indicates terrorist groups continue to plot potential attacks in the region, including Morocco. Lone wolf attacks are difficult to detect and disrupt and can occur without warning.

SENEGAL

The overall threat to travelers in Senegal is HIGH.

Senegal is witnessing a political crisis as the Senegalese government dissolved the country's main opposition party and sentenced its leader to two years in prison ahead of presidential elections scheduled for February 2024. Sixteen people were [killed](#) during ensuing riots and protests.



OPERATIONAL RISKS

- *Travelers should monitor local news for updates on demonstrations and their locations.* Demonstrations can disrupt travel and access to popular areas.
- Senegalese authorities are [known](#) to employ violent tactics during protests including use of live ammunition and restrictions of social media apps.

CAUCASUS

The overall threat to travelers in the Caucasus is HIGH.

Azerbaijan [seized](#) control of the breakaway republic of Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenia during a military operation after two years of conflict last month.

Thousands of ethnic Karabakh Armenians are currently fleeing over the border to the Republic of Armenia which has [limited](#) capacity for refugees.



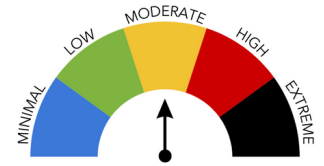
OPERATIONAL RISKS

- *Travelers should avoid all travel to the Nagorno-Karabakh region.* Unverified media reports [note](#) abuses by the Azeri army towards Armenian civilians.
- *Travelers should regularly consult local media for updates on the regional situation and protests in Armenia.* Armenia is [witnessing](#) anti-government demonstrations from nationalists who perceive the current prime minister mishandled the conflict with Azerbaijan.

ECUADOR

The threat to travelers in Ecuador is MODERATE.

Ecuador will have presidential elections on October 15. The first round of voting in August [witnessed](#) violent protests and the assassination of a presidential candidate. Ecuador has been under a nationwide State of Exception, which allows the military to support police operations and limit the freedom of assembly. The State of Exception [remains](#) in force until October 8.



OPERATIONAL RISKS

- *Travelers should monitor local and international news for updates on the developing political situation.* Demonstrations could take place and turn violent before and after the elections.
- *Travelers should reconsider travel to Ecuador's border regions.* Concentric urges visitors to avoid areas within 20km (12.4 miles) of the border with Colombia in Esmeralda, Sucumbios and Carchi provinces and in northern coastal areas of Esmeralda as well as of the border with Peru in Sucumbios, Morona-Santiago, El Oro and Zamora-Chinchiipe due to drug-trafficking, smuggling and other criminal activities.
- *In addition, maintenance work will prompt the partial closure of Quito International Airport on October 14.* Airport authorities indicated Mariscal Sucre International Airport (UIO/SEQM) serving Quito will close from 02:00 to 12:00 local time (07:00-17:00 GMT) on October 14, due to preventive maintenance works on the runway.

KOSOVO

The overall threat to travelers in Kosovo is HIGH.

Tensions continue to [mount](#) in Kosovo between ethnic Serbs and Albanians. Recently, 30 heavily armed Serbs barricaded themselves in an Orthodox monastery in northern Kosovo, setting off a daylong gunbattle with police which left one officer and three attackers dead.

The clash is considered one of the worst since Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008. Earlier this year, 30 NATO peacekeepers and more than 50 Serb protesters were hurt in clashes between both over municipal election results.



OPERATIONAL RISKS

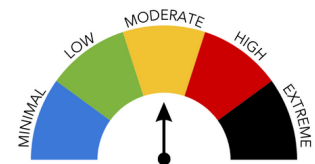
- *Travelers should monitor local media for updates regarding planned or spontaneous demonstrations and modify travel routes to avoid these areas.*
- Demonstrations and protests are common in Kosovo. Protests related to ethnic issues between local Albanian and Serbian communities can turn violent.

OTHER KEY AREAS TO WATCH

MEXICO

The overall threat to travelers in Mexico is MODERATE.

Mexico is [calling](#) for a Latin American meeting on soaring amounts of migrants attempting to cross the U.S.-Mexico border. Mexico border patrol agents reported around 140,000 migrants were apprehended at the U.S.- Mexico border during the first 20 days of this month. Media outlets also [reported](#) clashes between Mexican security forces and drug cartels in the northern state of Nuevo Leon, and Mexican authorities are boosting security at the



Mexican-Guatemalan border to curb crime and drug trafficking. Severe weather conditions are [forecast](#) across much of Mexico through at least September 30 with potential for heavy rainfall in southern and southeastern regions, including the Yucatan Peninsula. Heavy rainfall could trigger flooding in low-lying areas, urban areas, and landslides on unstable slopes.

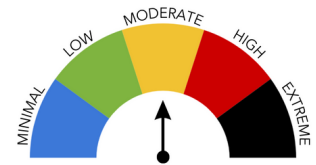
OPERATIONAL RISKS

- *Travelers should stay informed of local weather conditions and avoid areas currently witnessing heavy rain.*
- *Concentric recommends travelers remain in tourist zones, stay in well-lighted pedestrian areas, and avoid downtown areas after dark.* Popular travel destinations in Mexico experience moderate to high crime rates exacerbated by organized gang violence. Though visitors are most likely to encounter petty crime, kidnapping for ransom and virtual kidnappings also pose serious risks to foreign travelers.
- *Travelers should monitor local news for updates on crime, road closures, demonstrations, and other travel disruptions.* Mexican law prohibits foreigners from participating in political activity, and violations may result in detention.
- *Travelers should purchase medication in consultation with a medical professional and only from reputable establishments.* Counterfeit medication is common and may prove to be ineffective, the wrong strength, or contain dangerous ingredients.

PARIS, FRANCE

The overall threat to travelers in Paris is MODERATE.

Paris is witnessing protests against racism and police violence three months after a youth was shot and killed by police in the suburb of Nanterre. Socio economic protest movement Yellow Vests and labor unions also [joined](#) in recent protests, and according to media reports, protesters [damaged](#) cars and property. Concentric did not identify any violent behavior from protesters towards tourists or expats residing in Paris.



OPERATIONAL RISKS

- *Travelers should monitor local media for updates regarding planned or spontaneous demonstrations and modify travel routes to stay away from these areas.* Demonstrations and strikes occur frequently and protests can be unpredictable and have a history of travel delays and turning violent. Protesters may exhibit reckless disregard for public safety and cause property damage in populated tourist areas.
- *Travelers should keep their belongings close to them in crowded areas and stay particularly vigilant around tourist attractions and cash points.* Violent crime significantly increased in recent years, especially in the northern suburbs. Crimes targeting foreigners typically include pickpocketing, break-ins, and other forms of theft.
- Terrorism remains a threat and terrorists may attack with little to no warning, targeting tourist locations, transportation hubs, government facilities, and other public areas.
- Cybercrime is common in France, and hackers often compromise Wi-Fi hotspots to intercept communications or gain control of the connecting device. The U.S. government advises travelers to use secure Wi-Fi connections to access sensitive private information.

LONDON, ENGLAND

The overall threat to travelers in London is LOW.

The U.K. is currently [experiencing](#) a cost of living crisis as inflation strains the average citizens' purchasing power which in turn caused numerous protests in London over the summer. Protests are [scheduled](#) in front of the U.K. Parliament on October 1 to protest recent government comments about multiculturalism in the U.K.



OPERATIONAL RISKS

- *Travelers should monitor local media for updates regarding planned or spontaneous demonstrations and modify travel routes to stay away from these areas.*
- Though demonstrations are common, they rarely result in violence. Protests often occur around the city squares and government buildings.
- Petty crimes, such as pickpocketing, purse snatching are common around tourist sites in major urban areas.
- Cybercrime attacks, especially data theft from high-profile targets such as large companies, continue to increase. Phishing is the most common form of cyber attack against travelers. We recommend travelers avoid public Wi-Fi and use VPNs in London.

For a more detailed travel risk assessment of these locations or any other area of interest, please contact Concentric.

We are tracking these and other global developments across time. This assessment is based on open sources as of September 28, 2023.

Intelligence-led security is essential for effectively managing risk in a complex threat environment. Concentric's background in national security enables us to leverage cutting edge intelligence methodologies to improve our clients' ability to detect threats and manage risk. Concentric's in-house research and analysis team has top-tier analytical capabilities and a robust technical toolkit.

Active Monitoring

Periodic Threat Reporting

Online Sentiment & Exposure Analysis

Deep and Dark Web Report

Red Team Analysis Report

Travel Risk Assessments

Security and Risk Audits

Event Risk Assessments

Risk Intelligence

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www.concentric.io

info@concentric.io

+1 866 828 5855