

# Netherlands - OVERVIEW

Updated: March 4, 2014



**Country Name Long Form:** Kingdom of Netherlands

**Government Type:** Constitutional Monarchy

**Languages Spoken:** Dutch, Frisian, English

**National Flag**



**Netherlands is a Tier III Country. Significant security measures are necessary.**

	Overall Assessment	Political Violence	Crime	Terrorism	Travel Safety
Netherlands					
Key: (L) Low – (M) Medium – (H) High – (C)Critical					

## POLITICAL CONDITIONS

### Political Violence is rated at LOW in Netherlands

Despite considerable activity and politically-motivated demonstrations in 2013 and 2012, there have been no reported incidents of political violence directed at U.S. citizens or U.S. private industry entities in recent years. The last violent demonstration directed against U.S. government facilities occurred in The Hague and in Amsterdam in 1998.

Civil demonstrations, which range from small groups to thousands of participants, are primarily directed at the Dutch government and often focused on matters involving foreign relations, domestic policy, or economic developments. This is particularly true with protests held in The Hague, the political center of the Netherlands. In 2013, protests were generally peaceful and concluded without incident. Reports of violence are rare. Nonetheless, situations may develop that could post a threat to public safety.

Although demonstrations may occur anywhere, in The Hague most protests are held at the Malieveld, a grassy field adjacent to Centraal Station, and less than a kilometer from the U.S. Embassy. Typical

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demonstrations points include embassies (including the U.S. Embassy) in the city center area, Parliament, Foreign Ministry, and the Peace Palace.

Dutch civil society remains tolerant of ethnic minorities and religious preferences. Organized or significant violence for ethnic or religious reasons are rare and not condoned by the Dutch government or general public. No such significant demonstrations or incidents occurred in 2013.

## TERRORISM

### **Terrorism is assessed as MEDIUM**

In February 2013, the Dutch National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV) increased the national threat level from “limited”, meaning chances of an attack in the Netherlands or against Dutch interests were relatively small but could not be ruled out entirely, to “substantial,” which indicates a realistic possibility that an attack could occur. This change underscores growing concern about current terrorist capabilities in the Netherlands. The NCTV has observed a sharp upturn in the number of individuals travelling from the Netherlands to conflict zones in the Middle East and North Africa, most notably Syria, to join terrorist organizations. In these conflict zones, individuals gain combat experience. The NCTV believe there is a possibility and risk that some will return highly radicalized, traumatized, and eager to commit violent acts. Dutch police and security services have observed this among small numbers of young people in the Netherlands. Finally, in many countries in the Middle East and North Africa, terrorist networks operated more freely in 2013, and the NCTV believes that these networks pose a threat to the Netherlands and Europe.

## RULE OF LAW / CORRUPTION

The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2013 gave Netherlands a score of 83, indicating that the country has very low levels of corruption. The CPI rates countries by the perceived levels of corruption in the public sector, with the least corrupt receiving a maximum score of 100.

## CRIME

### **Crime is assessed as LOW**

The overall risk of crime directed against U.S. citizens and U.S. private industry remains low throughout the country. Tourists and visitors are most commonly victimized in petty, non-violent street crimes of opportunity such as pick-pocketing, breaking into unattended vehicles, and cell phone theft. Travelers are often targets of pickpockets and thieves who typically operate individually or in small groups. The theft of laptop computers, other electronic devices and valuables occurs most commonly at Schiphol airport or trams and trains and in stations in and around Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague at all hours but particularly at night. Within Amsterdam, thieves are very active in and around Centraal station; Amsterdam Zuid station; tram stops near the red light district, restaurants, and hotels; and on trams between Centraal station and the museum district.

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In 2013, Dutch National Police reported an overall decrease in non-residential and residential criminal activity throughout the Netherlands compared to 2012. For residents, burglaries remain a concern, despite the general decrease in criminal activity in 2013. Police report that many of these crimes involve surveillance of a targeted residence and entry when the residence is unoccupied sometimes through second floor windows or balconies. Small, easy to carry valuables are the primary target, as burglars enter and depart within a few minutes.

Although rare, violent crime involving expatriates does happen, mainly in Amsterdam and Rotterdam. The U.S. Embassy is unaware of U.S. citizens or U.S. commercial entities being specifically targeted for violent criminal activity, including kidnapping by criminals operating individually in small groups or larger organized elements.

## KIDNAPPING

The risk of kidnapping is very low in the Netherlands. Although the country has a history of high-profile kidnappings, these almost exclusively affected very wealthy Dutch citizens and occurred on average only once or twice per decade.

## SEXUAL ASSAULT

The risk of sexual assault is low however there have been reported incidents of harassment to some expatriate women.

## NATURAL DISASTERS

The Netherlands maritime climate is largely influenced by the country's low-lying position in the North Sea and its numerous rivers and canals. Since the country is small there is little change in climate although the marine influences are less inland.

Like most northwest European countries, the weather can change greatly from day to day. The winters tend to be mild but spells of cold weather can occur, lasting from one week to two months or more. The summers are cool with occasional hot weather. Rainfall is well distributed throughout the year with less but heavier rainfall in the summer. The flat countryside makes the Netherlands a rather windy place, with gales being quite frequent on the coast.

The average temperature in July is 18 C (64 F) and 2 C (36 F) in January.

## STANDING TRAVEL ADVICE

- English is widely understood and spoken to a high level of proficiency in the Netherlands, particularly in business circles.
- Maintain a low profile, practice personal security measures.
- Stay in groups, travel in a caravan consisting of two or more vehicles, and stay on the main roads.
- Ensure that someone not traveling with you is aware of your itinerary.
- Avoid hotels that do not have adequate security.

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- It is preferable to stay in the main tourist destinations.
- Pay close attention to your surroundings, especially when walking or driving in Netherlands
- Official taxis are a suitable means of travel in daylight hours in urban areas. It is highly recommended that taxis be arranged through your hotel, or program office. Negotiate the price in advance.
- Women should be especially careful when traveling alone and avoid staying out late without a trusted male escort.
- Make sensible security precautions to mitigate the risk of petty crime, particularly pick pocketing and bag snatching.
- Carry a photocopy of your passport when traveling to avoid losing it in a robbery.
- Do not resist if you are being robbed and avoid eye contact and do not make any sudden movements. Victims have been killed when they resisted attack or refused to give up their money or other valuables.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times and keep a low profile.
- Never leave your belongings unattended.
- Carry bags close to your body and make sure the fasteners are secure.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash or wearing expensive jewelry or valuables.
- Leave all important documents in a safe or safe deposit box at your hotel and only carry certified copies.
- Trust your instincts. If someone or something makes you uneasy, avoid the situation.

### **Important Contact Details:**

**International Dialing Code for the Netherlands: +31**

**International Dialing Code for the Netherlands Antilles: +599**

**International Dialing Prefix for the Netherlands: 00**

**International Dialing Prefix for the Netherlands Antilles: 00**

### **Victims of crime in Netherlands should contact the following phone numbers for assistance:**

**POLICE:** The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in Netherlands is 112

**AMBULANCE:** 112

**FIRE DEPARTMENT:** 112

**Note:** Police, ambulance or fire department response may be unreliable in some parts of the country.

## TRAVEL & ROAD SAFETY

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- The standard of infrastructure in Netherlands is generally excellent.
- The supply of basic amenities, such as power and water are comparable to U.S. standards.
- Driving standards is relatively safe in comparison to some other European countries. The road network is comparable to other Western European countries and the United States.

## RECOMMENDED TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

- No entering into any police vehicle that is not clearly marked.
- No rural travel after dark.
- No deviation from approved travel routes.
- No use of ATMs after dark.

## HEALTH

Medical facilities in Netherlands are of a high standard nationwide, and most medical personnel have a good knowledge of the English language. Please note that medical care in the Netherlands is based on a referral system which requires patients to see a local doctor (called *huisarts*) first; specialists will usually only see patients who have been referred to them by a *huisarts*. Pharmacies (known locally as *apotheek*) are available in all cities and towns, and all basic medical supplies are readily available; however some common medicines are not obtainable in the Netherlands without a doctor's prescription.

- Tap water in Netherlands is safe to drink.
- Unpasteurized milk should be boiled before consumption, or powdered or tinned milk should be used as an alternative.

The following vaccinations are recommended or required if travelling to Netherlands:

- Hepatitis B (recommended)
- Rabies (recommended for travelers planning activities that might put them at risk of bat bites)

It is also important to ensure that routine vaccinations are up to date for diseases including influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), polio, measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus.

### Significant Diseases –

- Rabies – A viral infection that can affect animals and humans; it is occasionally reported among bats countrywide.

### HOSPITALS – Netherlands

Boven Ziekenhuis  
Statenjachtstraat 1  
1034 CS Amsterdam  
Tel: +31 20 634 6346

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Vu University Medical Center  
De Boelelaan 1117  
1007 MB Amsterdam  
Tel: +31 20 444 4444

Lucas Andreas Ziekenhuis  
Jan Tooropstraat 164  
1061 AE Amsterdam  
Tel: +31 20 5108 911

### US EMBASSY – CONSULATE LOCATIONS

#### The US Embassy in Netherlands

Lange Voorhout 102  
The Hague  
Tel: +31 70 310-2209  
Fax: +31 70 310-2207  
Email: [USCitizenServicesAms@state.gov](mailto:USCitizenServicesAms@state.gov)

### USF INTERNATIONAL HOTLINE

USF 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 813-317-5815

AXA Assistance 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 1-877-577-9504 / +1-203-399-5130 (Call collect from abroad)

ASSIST ID #: GLMN 04983932. <http://www.culturalinsurance.com/resources/>

\* Information derived from CIA World Fact Book, US Department of State, OSAC, and Travel Guard. This travel overview summarizes some of the most important concerns; however, it does not negate the need for detailed trip planning.