



MASC EXECUTIVE

JOURNEYCALL

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Turkmenistan Risk Rating **2**

(Risk Rating 1-4)

General Information:

Capital: Ashgabat

Language: Turkmen

Religion: Islam is the primary religion of Turkmenistan

Currency: Turkmenistan Manat (TMT)

Turkmenistan remains largely a cash-based society and we advise you to carry cash for your expenses. There are only a handful of international ATMs and you may find it difficult to withdraw cash. Visa and MasterCard are the only cards currently accepted by some larger hotels and restaurants.

US Dollars and Euros can be easily exchanged into the local currency (Manat) at banks and Bureaux de Change. Bring new notes in low denominations as damaged or marked notes are often refused even by official travel exchange offices. Other currencies are difficult to exchange.

New regulations introduced from 1 January 2016 means that US dollars will no longer be accepted at hotels and other tourist facilities as payment. Some outlets might still request dollar payments but caution is recommended as strict controls and harsh penalties are being applied to those who contravene this regulation. Currency regulations are also liable to sudden and unannounced change.

GMT: (+) 5

Country Overview

There is a low threat from terrorism.



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You should carry identification at all times. The police often carry out checks.

Visa requirements are strict. You should contact the Turkmen Embassy in London well in advance of travel. If you are staying for more than 3 days, you will also need to register with the State Migration Service. Don't overstay your visa.

Crime

Incidents of mugging, theft and pick pocketing are rare, but take sensible precautions and keep valuables out of sight. You should avoid going out alone late at night as after midnight, the police and security forces are suspicious of people on the streets. Unaccompanied women in particular may draw their attention.

Take sensible precautions against street and car crime. Don't keep your passport, credit cards and other valuables in the same place; use the inside compartments in bags where possible. Carry your bag across your body rather than on your shoulder.

Terrorism

There is a low threat from terrorism, but you should be aware of the global risk of indiscriminate terrorist attacks, which could be in public places, including those frequented by expatriates and foreign travellers.

There is considered to be 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.

Natural disasters

Turkmenistan is located in an active seismic zone. Earth tremors can occur and there is a possibility of earthquakes.

The US Federal Emergency Management Agency has advice about what to do before, during and after an earthquake.



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Health & Wellbeing

Travellers should be up to date with routine vaccination courses and boosters as recommended in the UK. These vaccinations include for example measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine and diphtheria-tetanus-polio vaccine. Country specific diphtheria recommendations are not provided here. Diphtheria tetanus and polio are combined in a single vaccine in the UK. Therefore, when a tetanus booster is recommended for travellers, diphtheria vaccine is also given. Should there be an outbreak of diphtheria in a country, diphtheria vaccination guidance will be provided.

Those who may be at increased risk of an infectious disease due to their work, lifestyle choice or certain underlying health problems should be up to date with additional recommended vaccines.

The quality of medical care is poor. There are some diagnostic facilities, particularly in Ashgabat, but treatment may be unreliable or even unwise due to poorly trained staff, and a lack of drugs and equipment. Anything other than basic or emergency treatment, particularly away from the capital, is usually best avoided. Make sure you have adequate travel health insurance and accessible funds to cover the cost of any medical treatment abroad and repatriation.

Typhoid and hepatitis A are endemic. You should ensure your inoculations are up to date. You should drink or use only boiled and filtered or bottled water and avoid ice in drinks. Avoid unpasteurised milk.

In the summer temperatures regularly reach 45 Celsius in the shade, so drink plenty of water in the summer and avoid sunburn.

The number for the local ambulance service in case of an emergency is 03. Please note however that the operator may only speak Russian or Turkmen. You should contact your insurance/medical assistance company promptly if you are referred to a medical facility for treatment.

Altitude Illness

There is a risk of altitude illness when travelling to destinations of 2,500 metres (8,200 feet) or higher. Important risk factors are the altitude gained, rate of ascent and sleeping altitude. Rapid ascent without a period of acclimatisation puts a traveller at higher risk.



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There are three syndromes; acute mountain sickness (AMS), high-altitude cerebral oedema (HACE) and high-altitude pulmonary oedema (HAPE). HACE and HAPE require immediate descent and medical treatment.

Altitude illness in France

- There is a point of elevation in this country higher than 2,500 metres. Ayrybaba is the highest peak in Turkmenistan at 3,138m.

Prevention

- Travellers should spend a few days at an altitude below 3,000m.
- Where possible travellers should avoid travel from altitudes less than 1,200m to altitudes greater than 3,500m in a single day.
- Ascent above 3,000m should be gradual. Travellers should avoid increasing sleeping elevation by more than 500m per day and ensure a rest day (at the same altitude) every three or four days.
- Acetazolamide can be used to assist with acclimatisation, but should not replace gradual ascent.
- Travellers who develop symptoms of AMS (headache, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea and sleep disturbance) should avoid further ascent. In the absence of improvement or with progression of symptoms the first response should be to descend.
- Development of HACE or HAPE symptoms requires immediate descent and emergency medical treatment.

Local Travel

Certain areas of the country, particularly border areas, are designated restricted zones and require special permission to enter. The borders with Afghanistan and Iran are particularly sensitive.



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Ashgabat, the Caspian port of Turkmenbashi, and the ancient Silk Road city of Merv/Mary are not in restricted areas. Check with your local tour guide before travelling outside the capital.

Road Travel

You can drive in Turkmenistan using an International Driving Permit.

Driving standards are poor. Road travel at night outside cities is particularly dangerous because of the condition of the roads.

Seat belts, if fitted, should be worn at all times.

Licensed taxis are clearly identified and yellow in colour. Although taxis have meters, drivers will usually ask foreign nationals for a set fee of around 5 to 10 Manat. Taxis from the airport cost more and drivers usually ask for US\$. Most taxi drivers do not speak much English. Don't use unlicensed taxis.

Culture

- Hospitality is the distinguishing feature of Turkmen people.
- You will be offered tea and food before even being asked what the purpose of your visit is. You should accept this.
- Turkmens are famous for their rug making called Turkmen Rugs.
- Turkmens are traditionally nomadic. Their attempts to urbanise have been largely unsuccessful.
- Turkmens are very polite and respectful, particularly of their seniors.
- It is mandatory to carry identification E.G. Passport
- Homosexuality for males is illegal and punishable by imprisonment. For females it is not, but local customs should be respected and observed.
- It's illegal to photograph security services, including police. Penalties may include detention and confiscation or photography/ video cameras

Business

Turkmenistan's economic growth in the first half of 2015 was reported at 9.1%, lower than in the first half of 2014. Growth was driven by expansion in industry by 6.2%, construction by 12.1%,



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agriculture by 11%, and services by 11.6%. On the demand side, a 7.9% rise in investment was the main driver of growth.

The Central Bank of Turkmenistan moved to limit inflation in the first half of 2015. Despite some food price increases and the devaluation of the Turkmen manat on 1 January 2015, price controls have also restrained inflation.

For the year as a whole, the decline in global energy prices is projected to reduce export earnings and somewhat slow the pace of investment. However, strong fiscal and external buffers will help support growth in a difficult external environment. Accordingly, the Asian Development Outlook 2015 Update slightly reduces the forecast for growth in 2015 but maintains the forecast for slower growth in 2016.

The inflation forecast for 2015 is maintained in light of the pass-through effects of manat devaluation and lower state subsidies for electricity, fuel, and public transportation that will bring marginally higher prices for food, construction materials, services, and public utilities. Inflation in 2016 is expected to moderate slightly, as forecast in ADO 2015.

Declining energy prices are expected to reduce export receipts despite a higher volume of gas exports to satisfy gas contracts with the PRC. Under the current scenario of low prices for hydrocarbons, the ADOU 2015 maintains the forecast for the current account deficit widening in 2015 and subsequently narrowing in 2016 with some recovery in oil and gas prices.

Business Tips

- Men will greet men with a handshake as will women.
- Saving face is an important part of Turkmen culture so people will rarely answer with a direct "no".
- When addressing elders or a boss it's best to use the first name + father's name, e.g. Serdar Atayevich. In less formal situation the first names is fine, e.g. Serdar.
- It's best to wait to be invited to call someone by their first name.
- It's best to use your right hand or both hands to give and receive business cards.
- Be punctual for business meetings. Don't be offended if others are late. Public transport and the roads network are poor and is often the cause of lateness.



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- Dress is formal. Men should wear a suit and tie and women should wear a dress or business suit.
- Meetings should be made in advance.
- The working week consists of Monday to Friday 09:00 - 18:00.

Standing Travel Advice

- Travel can continue.
- Take increased security precautions against robbery and street crime.
- Anti-government protests and social unrest could occur with the potential to cause travel disruption. In the event of unrest, foreign travellers and expatriates are unlikely to be at direct risk, but may need to remain flexible in their travel arrangements.
- There is an underlying risk of both small-scale opportunistic and large-scale terrorist attacks by Islamist extremists.
- Minimise time spent in the vicinity of likely targets; these include government and military buildings, military facilities, Western embassies and foreign commercial assets. Be alert to suspicious behaviour and report any suspect packages to the authorities.
- Taxis and privately driven vehicles are suitable means of transport for business travellers but ensure they are licensed.
- The quality of roads are poor. Outwith the city they are extremely poor as are driving standards. You can self-drive if you are very familiar with local conditions. If you are involved in an accident, immediately report the incident to the police and do not move the vehicles until police officers have arrived at the scene.
- Be aware of the potential cultural sensitivities, which could be cause for concern.
- Watch and read news about the destination and region prior to travel.
- Be vigilant in public areas and places that attract foreigners and Westerners - embassies, hotels, restaurants, bars and businesses
- Look out for anything suspicious. Report it to the local authorities immediately – many terrorist attacks are foiled by the vigilance of ordinary people.
- Try to avoid routines that make you an easier target – vary the time and route of your regular journeys.