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'British Behaviour Abroad' - Foreign & Commonwealth Office releases 2008-09 incident figures -

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) today releases its annual British Behaviour Abroad report¹ that reveals Britons are continuing to get into trouble abroad, with key concerns including drink² and drug related cases.

The report, based on incident figures from FCO offices around the world*, reveals that over the period April 08 – March 09, 5,430³ Britons needed consular assistance in Spain. There were 1,534 British arrests in the USA, 2,446 passports were lost or stolen in Australia and 433 Britons were hospitalised in Greece. In addition to assistance cases, FCO staff around the world dealt with 2.1m consular enquiries last year.⁴

Foreign Office Minister, Chris Bryant, said: "The report highlights just how many British nationals encounter difficulties whilst abroad. Helping those who do get into trouble is a vital part of our job, but so many of the problems we deal with can be avoided with a little bit of preparation. Researching the local laws and customs before you travel could avoid time in a foreign jail. Getting comprehensive travel insurance means that whilst an accident may disrupt your holiday, it won't bankrupt you in extortionate medical or repatriation bills.

The message is clear – have a great time while you're away, but make the necessary preparations before you go."

The report, which helps to provide the FCO with a clear understanding of where resources should be best deployed, also highlights some of the key issues currently facing British nationals abroad. These problems show the importance of the FCO's 'Know Before You Go' campaign⁵ which offers advice to British nationals on how to prepare properly for their foreign travel so they can avoid preventable problems. The campaign works with over 300 travel industry partners to communicate travel advice in a variety of ways.

Arrests and drug offences:

2,290 Britons were arrested in Spain last year, significantly more than any other country. However as a proportion of the number of visitors, Britons were most likely to be arrested in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (294) followed by Thailand (202) and the USA (1,534). Arrests for drugs offences formed a significant percentage of these arrests, contributing to a quarter of the total arrests in Thailand. There were 991 total arrests

¹ Please note: There are a number of changes to the way in which the information is now collated that make it impossible to accurately compare to last year's results. Moving forward accurate comparisons between this year's data and next year's data will be possible.

² We do not have official figures for alcohol-related incidents but feedback from FCO staff around the world consistently reveals that alcohol contributes to many arrests and hospitalisations abroad. FCO staff also commented that excessive consumption of alcohol can lead to disrespectful behaviour which can cause difficulties between locals and British travellers.

³ Lost/stolen passports are not included in the figures because in the vast majority of cases, the work done by consular staff is mainly data entry with no additional assistance required.

⁴ An enquiry is a request for information that doesn't require any further action from the FCO staff concerned. A case requires action to assist the individual in dealing with whatever situation they face.

⁵ Awareness of the Know Before You Go campaign is growing. Our research on the travelling public shows that since 2006 the awareness of the FCO website has grown from 31% (2006) to 61% (2009); and awareness of the travel advice line from 25% (2006) to 49% (2009) Source: Travel behaviours & attitudes, TNS consumer research, July 09

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for drug offences worldwide which accounted for around a seventh of all arrestable offences. Topless sunbathing, swearing and public displays of affection can also lead to arrest in some countries. This highlights the need for Britons to ensure they carefully research the area to which they are travelling. Local laws and customs can vary from the UK significantly and ignorance of these laws can lead to more severe punishments than in the UK.

Hospitalisations and deaths:

The highest number of hospitalisations occurred in Spain (741), followed by Greece (433), France (203) and Thailand (198). As a proportion of the number of visitors, Britons were most likely to be hospitalised in Thailand, followed by Greece, Egypt and India. The FCO embassies commented that many of these hospitalisations were due to moped and motorbike accidents as well as drink-related incidents such as balcony falls. In a separate survey commissioned by the FCO, a third (33%) of holidaymakers from the UK admitted to drinking more whilst on holiday⁶. All of these incidents escalate over the summer months with the increase in consumption of alcohol and drugs. There were 5,629 reported deaths of UK citizens abroad including natural causes, accidental deaths and murders. The FCO recommends visiting your GP as early as possible before travel to obtain any necessary vaccinations or medication. If you're going to be driving, it is advised that you familiarise yourself with the rules of the road, the condition of the roads and whether the general style of driving is different from the UK. If you're hiring a car always do so from a reputable company.

Passports:

Lost or stolen passports were by far the most frequent problem encountered by British tourists with 29,774 reported incidents worldwide. 7,548 passports were lost or stolen in Spain, 3,228 in the USA, 2,446 in Australia, 1,932 in France, 990 in Germany and 871 in South Africa. The FCO recommends photocopying important documents such as your passport and storing them separately from the originals to speed up the replacement processes. Various countries also reported an increase in scams and thefts of British passports so travellers are advised to stay vigilant.

For specific travel advice by country and more information on the 'Know Before You Go' campaign, visit www.fco.gov.uk/travel

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----- Please see below for full findings and data tables from the British Behaviour Abroad Report -----

⁶ Survey by YouGov Plc on behalf of the FCO. Total sample size was 2010 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 8th - 10th July 2009. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

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- FCO BRITISH BEHAVIOUR ABROAD REPORT -

Top 20 countries where British nationals required the most consular assistance from 01 April 2008 - 31 March 2009

Please Note: Due to the changes in how the information is now collated it is not possible to accurately compare these figures to previous years' results. The figures do not include any 'consular advice and self help' enquiries.

Country	Number of Visitors	Number of British Residents ⁷	Drug Arrests ⁸	Total Arrest / Detention	Total Death	Hospitalisation	Rape	Sexual Assault	Total Other Assistance ⁹	Total Consular Cases	Passports Lost/Stolen ¹⁰
Spain	17,000,000 ⁱ	761,000	180	2,290	1,825	741	22	35	517	5,430	7,548
USA	6,500,000 ⁱⁱ	678,000	148	1,534	152	123	2	7	154	1,972	3,228
France	14,000,000 ⁱⁱⁱ	200,000	63	193	611	203	4	5	204	1,220	1,932
Australia	670,000 ^{iv}	1,300,000	6	120	73	49	-	2	150	394	2,446
Germany	2,372,320 ^v	115,000	8	148	438	48	-	1	47	682	990
Thailand	812,000 ^{vi}	41,000	54	202	288	198	3	1	151	843	774
Greece	3,000,000 ^{vii}	18,000	36	237	118	433	28	9	60	885	441
China ¹¹	1,211,988 ^{viii}	36,000	12	129	47	41	1	-	83	301	826
Italy	3,500,000 ^{ix}	26,000	11	47	103	114	1	6	61	332	715
South Africa	451,580 ^x	212,000	5	23	48	23	-	-	45	139	871
Portugal	2,254,300 ^{xi}	38,000	8	22	208	91	3	1	72	397	612
Turkey	1,920,000 ^{xii}	34,000	2	47	102	112	8	28	50	347	507
Cyprus	1,300,000 ^{xiii}	59,000	48	205	149	86	10	4	75	529	283
New Zealand	300,000 ^{xiv}	215,000	3	24	23	9	-	1	19	76	717
Canada	650,000 ^{xv}	603,000	12	120	62	13	-	2	42	239	495
UAE	1,100,000 ^{xvi}	55,000	48	294	77	31	1	1	58	462	247
India	734,000 ^{xvii}	32,000	8	40	123	52	1	2	63	281	411
Ireland	3,579,000 ^{xviii}	291,000	19	52	24	12	-	-	46	134	493
Egypt	1,201,859 ^{xix}	14,000	0	45	108	97	6	28	148	432	153
Pakistan	285,720 ^{xx}	47,000	7	21	15	7	-	-	283	326	189

TOTAL WORLDWIDE FIGURES	991	6,919	5,629	3,146	116	154	3,423	19,387	29,774
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- REPORT FINDINGS AND TRAVEL ADVICE FROM THE FCO -

ARRESTS (AND DRUG OFFENCES)

7 Source: IPPR, 2005 (Institute for Public Policy Research). Figure based on Brits living in country for a year or longer

8 The number of arrests due to drugs offences is included in the next column 'Total Arrest/Detention'

9 'Other Assistance' includes the following: Abduction; Assault - General; Child - Access; Child - Abduction; Child - Custody; Forced Marriage; Missing Persons; Psychiatric; Repatriation; Welfare; missing person reports. 'Other assistance' does not include any advice & self-help enquiries.

10 'Lost/Stolen Passports' are not categorised as consular assistance cases because in the vast majority of cases, the work done by consular staff is mainly data entry with no additional assistance required.

11 Includes visitor and resident numbers for Taiwan and Hong Kong

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The facts

- 2,290 Britons were arrested in Spain last year, more than any other country. This is followed by 1,534 arrests in the USA and 294 in United Arab Emirates
- As a proportion of the number of visitors, Britons were most likely to be arrested in the United Arab Emirates, followed by Thailand and the USA. Arrests for drugs offences formed a significant percentage of these arrests, contributing to a quarter of the total arrests in Thailand. There were 991 total arrests for drug offences worldwide which accounted for around a seventh of all arrestable offences. Overstaying visas also contributed to a high number of arrests
- 180 Britons were arrested in Spain for drug offences, 148 in USA, 63 in France and 54 in Thailand
- As a proportion of the number of visitors, Britons were most likely to be arrested for drug offences in Thailand, United Arab Emirates, Cyprus and Pakistan. There are currently 22 British Nationals facing capital charges worldwide¹²

FCO advice to prevent unwittingly getting into problems with the law abroad:

- Before you travel, check out the local laws and customs of your destination – what might be perfectly appropriate behaviour or dress in one country might not be acceptable in another. Check out www.fco.gov.uk/travel which contains the latest travel information by country. Travel guide books and tour operators are also good sources of information
- Many arrests are due to behaviour caused by excessive drinking. Know your limit and stay in control. Be aware that your travel insurance probably won't cover you if you have an accident whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Avoid areas where you might be unintentionally caught up in trouble e.g. rallies, marches or protests

HOSPITALISATIONS

The facts

- The highest number of hospitalisations occurred in Spain (741), followed by Greece (433), France (203) and Thailand (198).
- As a proportion of the number of visitors, Britons were most likely to be hospitalised in Thailand, followed by Greece, Egypt and India
- Feedback from FCO staff around the world reveals that moped accidents and balcony falls contribute to a high number of hospitalisations

FCO advice to prevent illness or injury whilst on holiday:

- Before travel, visit your GP as soon as possible beforehand to obtain any necessary vaccinations or medication
- If you are going to be driving, familiarise yourself with the rules of the road, the condition of the roads and whether the general style of driving is different from the UK – and if you're hiring a car always do so from a reputable company.
- If you are going to hire a moped or quad bike abroad, check the small print of your insurance to

¹² Source: FCO 2008 Annual Human Rights Report. 'Capital charges' means criminal charges that carry the death penalty. There are twelve British Nationals facing capital charges in Pakistan, four in Thailand, three in the USA, two in Bangladesh and one in the UAE

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make sure you're covered and always wear a helmet

- See the FCO's advice on driving abroad at www.fco.gov.uk/drivingabroad
- Check with your airline that you can carry any medication you are taking in hand luggage and pack enough supplies for your whole trip and possible delays. You should keep your medication in its original packaging and take any prescription documents with you. Check with the embassy of the country you are visiting, that your medication will be legal in that country and find out whether you will need to take a doctor's letter with you
- Get comprehensive travel insurance. Anyone travelling within the European Economic Area or Switzerland should also get a free European Health Insurance Card (EHIC – which replaces the former E111) that entitles you to some reduced or free emergency care – but you will still need travel insurance. You can apply for an EHIC with the Department of Health online via www.dh.gov.uk/travellers
- Make sure your travel insurance is up to date, valid for the entire trip and covers everyone who is travelling. Check exactly what is covered, and ensure you are covered for all the activities you want to do, including any dangerous sports, all your luggage and equipment, personal injury and legal costs
- Make sure you fill in the emergency contact details in your passport. This will make it much easier for FCO staff to contact someone if necessary
- Your travel insurance will probably be invalid if you have an accident whilst under the influence of alcohol, check the small print

DEATHS

The facts

- There were 5,629 reported deaths of UK citizens abroad including natural causes, accidental deaths and murders
- There were 1,825 British deaths in Spain, 611 in France, 438 in Germany, 288 in Thailand
- As a proportion of visitors British deaths are most likely to occur in Thailand, Germany, India and Cyprus
- There are currently 8 British Nationals facing the death penalty worldwide¹³

FCO advice around death abroad:

- Ensure all members of your party have insurance and declare all pre-existing medical conditions – if an uninsured person dies whilst abroad, any treatment they have received and their repatriation to the UK will not be covered
- All deaths must be registered in the country in which the death occurs. If a person in your party dies, whatever the circumstances, report the incident to the local authorities immediately
- There is no obligation to contact the British Consul/Embassy but they can offer support and practical advice at this distressing time

¹³ Source: FCO 2008 Annual Human Rights Report. There is one British National facing the death penalty in Ghana, China, Afghanistan and Pakistan with four facing the death penalty in the USA

REPORTED RAPES

The facts

- 116 cases of rape and 154 sexual assaults were reported and needed help from embassy staff
- There were 28 cases for rape dealt with by FCO staff in Greece, 22 in Spain, 10 in Cyprus, 8 in Turkey
- FCO staff dealt with 35 cases for sexual assault in Spain, 28 in Turkey and 28 in Egypt
- Most countries reported no cases of rape or sexual assault on British nationals

FCO advice to help prevent yourself becoming a victim of rape and sexual assault whilst abroad :

- Try and avoid walking alone, particularly at night – stick to well lit areas in safe neighbourhoods
- Always tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return
- Make sure you know the address and phone number of where you are staying and how to get there
- Be aware that drugs are sometimes used in rape. They are normally colourless and tasteless, and can make you virtually unconscious and defenceless. Be aware that rape drugs can also work in non-alcoholic drinks
- If you are going to drink alcohol, know your limit and be aware that alcohol measures are often much larger abroad than in the UK. Alcohol is the most frequently used drug in drug-assisted rape

LOST/STOLEN PASSPORTS

The facts

- Lost or stolen passports were by far the most frequent problem encountered by British tourists with 29,774 cases.
- 7,548 passports were lost or stolen in Spain, 3,228 in the USA, 2,446 in Australia, 1,932 in France, 990 in Germany and 871 in South Africa

FCO advice on passports:

- Before you travel, make a copy of the page with your details on. Take one copy with you, store it separately from the original and leave one copy with friends or family at home or upload it onto a secure online data storage site - this will help a speedier turnaround if your passport is lost or stolen
- Take the number of the British Embassy or Consulate that will be nearest to you (find out the details at www.fco.gov.uk/travel) or 0845 850 2829
- Once abroad, keep your valuables and passport in a safe place (e.g. hotel safe)
- If you lose your passport or it is stolen, report the loss immediately to the nearest local police station and obtain a police report before contacting the nearest Embassy or Consulate. Have your photocopy handy.

Notes to Editors

About the Report

*The report collates the number of cases where assistance is provided to British nationals across the world by FCO staff. The report covers the time period from April 08 through to March 09 for 141 countries [including Overseas Territories]. The figures also include assistance provided by our consular staff to unrepresented

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EU/Commonwealth nationals. In addition, it includes figures for neighbouring countries where there is no official representation. Generally, these cases account for less than 2% of the total assistance cases. Figures have only been provided where a country has had one or more assistance cases. Worldwide consular assistance figures are available on request.

Further Information

For more information, please contact Emma Breakspear, Katy Ball or Katie Sogorski at Weber Shandwick on 0207 067 0065 or email knowbeforeyougopress@webershandwick.com

- FCO spokespeople are available on request
- Vox pops with British travellers in Alicante are available in mpg format
- FCO TV advert 'GB Logo' is available on request. GB Logo shows dramatised situations involving British travellers in trouble abroad.

About Know Before You Go

The FCO's Know Before You Go campaign encourages British nationals to prepare for their foreign travel so they can avoid preventable problems. The campaign targets a number of audiences, from gap year students to package holidaymakers; sports fans to older travellers and people visiting friends and family abroad. The campaign works with nearly 300 travel industry partners to communicate its messages. For more information please visit www.fco.gov.uk/travel

ⁱ Around 17 million visits to Spain each year are made by British nationals (Source: Instituto de Estudios Turísticos - IET).

ⁱⁱ Around 6.5 million British nationals visit the United States each year (source: US Department of Homeland Security).

ⁱⁱⁱ More than 14 million British nationals visit mainland France every year (Source: Ministère Français de l'économie et des finances).

^{iv} Over 670,000 British nationals visit Australia every year (Source: Tourism Australia: www.tourism.australia.com).

^v 2,372,320 British nationals visited Germany in 2007 (Source: Statistisches Bundesamt Deutschland - www.destatis.de).

^{vi} 812,000 British nationals visited Thailand in 2008 (Source: Tourism Authority of Thailand).

^{vii} Around three million British people visit Greece every year (Source: Civil Aviation Authority).

^{viii} 551,523 British nationals visited China in 2008 (Source: National Tourism Administration of the People's Republic of China). 588,465 British tourists visited Hong Kong in 2008 (Source: The Hong Kong Tourism Board). Total figure also includes 72,000 British Nationals visiting Taiwan (source: Tourism Bureau, Republic of China).

^{ix} Around 3.5 million British tourists visit Italy every year (Source: Ministry of Tourism).

^x 451,580 British travellers visit South Africa every year (Source: Statistics, South Africa)

^{xi} Around 2,254,300 British tourists visit Portugal every year (Source: Portuguese National Statistical Office (www.ine.pt)).

^{xii} Around 1,920,000 British tourists visited Turkey in 2007 (Source: Ministry of Tourism).

^{xiii} Around 1.3 million British nationals visit Cyprus every year (Source: Cyprus Tourist Organisation).

^{xiv} 300,000 British nationals visit New Zealand every year (Source: Statistics, New Zealand)

^{xv} 650,000 British nationals visit Canada every year (Source: Statistics, Canada)

^{xvi} Around 1.1 million British nationals visit the United Arab Emirates each year (Source: Abu Dhabi and Dubai Immigration Authorities)

^{xvii} Over 734,000 British tourists visit India every year (Source: Bureau of Immigration).

^{xviii} 3,579,000 British Nationals visit Ireland every year (Source: Fáilte Ireland – National Tourism Development Authority)

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^{ix} 1,201,859 British nationals visit Egypt every year (Source: Egyptian Ministry of Tourism, 2008)

^x 285,720 British nationals visited Pakistan between January – December 2008 (Source: Ministry of Tourism).