

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01hrs, Friday 16 July 2010

'British Behaviour Abroad'

- Foreign & Commonwealth Office releases 2009-10 incident figures -

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) today releases its annual British Behaviour Abroad report which shows that Britons are still getting into preventable problems abroad. Based on cases reported to FCO staff around the world between April 2009 and March 2010, the report shows high numbers of drink¹ and drug related cases – 944 Brits were arrested for drug related offences last year, accounting for a seventh of all arrests of British Nationals around the globe.

FCO staff overseas also report continuing high numbers of road traffic accidents. In addition, staff report that they are frequently assisting elderly Britons who are being landed with extremely high treatment and repatriation bills, as a result of not declaring pre-existing health conditions when they purchase travel insurance. Mental health cases are also a concern, often caused by people failing to take their medication on holiday. The recent volcanic ash crisis also underlines the need to pack extra medication in case of delays and to have emergency numbers to hand.

Separate FCO research² also highlights a risky lack of preparation, leading to many of the preventable incidents reported to staff overseas. The survey found that Britons are spending an average £12.00 at the airport on magazines and sweets – more than double the cost of a standard single trip insurance policy³ – yet one in five (19%)⁴ are still travelling without travel insurance. Britons are also spending nearly twenty minutes longer cleaning their house before they go abroad (46 minutes), than they do researching the local laws and customs of where they are travelling to.

With so many of the reported incidents being preventable, the FCO is appealing to British Nationals travelling or going to live abroad to make some simple preparations before they go in order to minimise preventable problems. Foreign & Commonwealth Office Minister, Jeremy Browne, said: "This report shines a light on the number of Britons who get into difficulty abroad each year. The worrying fact is that so many of these situations are preventable. Helping out Britons in trouble abroad is part of our job, but we can't get you out of jail or pay your hospital bills. A bit of preparation before you go, such as arranging travel insurance and checking our website, will ensure you get the most out of your trip without bad memories and big bills. The message from the Foreign Office is clear – have a great time while travelling or living abroad, but make the necessary preparations before you go."

¹ There are no 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.

² Research commissioned by FCO and carried out by RedShift research in June 2010, based on a UK sample of 1,000 people

³ Based on the value of the Post Office's standard single trip insurance policy, available online June 2010 for £5.50

⁴ Based on Gfk NOP research commissioned by the FCO in June 2010

The report, based on incident figures reported by British visitors and residents to FCO offices around the world, reveals that over the period April 09 – March 2010, the most Britons (5,283) needed consular assistance in Spain, although as a proportion of British visitors and residents, most assistance was needed by Britons in Thailand (957), Pakistan (273), and Cyprus (736). There were 563 British deaths in Germany and 471 Britons hospitalised in Greece. In addition to assistance cases, FCO staff around the world dealt with 1.95m consular enquiries last year.⁵

The figures, which help to provide the FCO with a clear understanding of where resources could be best deployed, shows the importance of the FCO's 'Know Before You Go' campaign which offers travel advice to British Nationals. The campaign works with around 400 travel industry partners to communicate travel advice directly to travellers in a variety of ways.

Arrests and drug offences:

Over 2,000 Britons (2,012) were arrested in Spain last year, significantly more than in any other country. However, when taking visitor and resident numbers into consideration, proportionally Thailand is the country where the highest number of Brits were arrested (249), followed by the UAE (265), and the USA (1,367).

Drug offences were a significant cause of these arrests, contributing to over a third of the total arrests in France (37%), over a quarter in Ireland, Italy and Thailand (27% for all) and over a fifth in South Africa (22%). There were a total of 994 arrests for drug offences worldwide, which accounted for around a seventh of all arrestable offences. As a proportion of the number of visitors and residents, Britons were most likely to be arrested for drugs in Thailand (68 cases), followed by Cyprus (39) and the UAE (24). In Canada, nearly three quarters of all drug arrests were for smuggling Khat, a substance that is legal in the UK but illegal in North America.

As high profile cases throughout 2009 and 2010 have shown, what may be acceptable in the UK, including public displays of affection, may cause offence or even be illegal in other countries. This highlights the need for Britons to ensure they carefully research the area to which they are travelling, as breaking local laws can lead to more severe punishments than in the UK.

Hospitalisations and deaths:

3,689 cases of Brits being hospitalised abroad were reported to the FCO last year, with the highest number occurring in Spain (831), followed by Greece (471), and Egypt (235) which has replaced France (217) as the country where the third highest number of Brits ended up in hospital. As a proportion of the number of visitors and residents, Britons were most likely to be hospitalised in Thailand (199), followed by Greece (471), Egypt (235) and India (99). The FCO embassies commented that many of these hospitalisations were due to moped and motorbike accidents as well

⁵ An enquiry is a request for information that doesn't usually require any further action from the FCO staff concerned. A case requires action to assist the individual in dealing with whatever situation they face.

as drink-related incidents such as balcony falls. Suspected swine flu accounted for a rise in hospitalisations in Egypt and Greece.

There were 5,930 reported deaths of UK citizens abroad including natural causes, accidental deaths and unlawful killings. Proportionally, most Britons died in Thailand (292), Germany (563) and Cyprus (323). To avoid preventable illness, the FCO recommends visiting your GP as early as possible before travel to obtain any necessary vaccinations or medication. With road traffic accidents continuing to be a significant cause of accidents and deaths, Brits are also reminded to wear protective clothing and helmets, even if the locals don't, and to familiarise themselves with local rules of the road.

Passports:

Lost or stolen passports were by far the most frequent problem encountered by British tourists and residents with 27,272 reported incidents worldwide. 6,618 passports were lost or stolen in Spain, 3,268 in the USA, 2,400 in France, 1,017 in Germany and 832 in South Africa. However, when considered proportionally, most passports were lost or stolen in New Zealand⁶ (1,662), South Africa (832), Thailand (827) and Australia (980). Many of these locations are popular backpacking destinations and South Africa records a high level of opportunistic crime, highlighting the importance of safeguarding important documents at all times and particularly when on the road. To speed up the replacement of your passport if it is lost or stolen, the FCO recommends making a photocopy and storing it separately from the original.

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

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

⁶ Australia had proportionally the highest incidence of lost/stolen passports (2,446 cases) in the last BBA report. Passport work for Australasia and the South Pacific was centralised in New Zealand in July 2009, so the New Zealand figures for 2009/10 include a large proportion of cases from Australia.

- FCO BRITISH BEHAVIOUR ABROAD REPORT -

Top 20 countries where British Nationals required the most consular assistance from 1 April 2009 - 31 March 2010 (based on the total number of consular cases, and lost / stolen passports.)

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
Spain	13,300,000 ^a	808,000	179	2012	1786	831	25	20	609	5283	6618
USA	5,525,000 ^b	829,000	105	1367	148	126	3	1	133	1778	3268
France	19,300,000 ^c	253,000	58	157	527	217	8	5	180	1094	2400
Germany	1,749,663 ^d	160,852 ¹⁰	5	124	563	45	0	1	48	781	1017
Thailand	841,425 ^e	46,000	68	249	292	199	9	5	203	957	827
New Zealand	288,100 ^f	257,000	1	26	21	11	0	0	57	115	1662
Greece	2,350,000 ^g	35,000	12	222	149	471	27	11	43	923	496
Australia	664,000 ^h	1,072,000	16	124	77	42	1	8	126	378	980
China	1,131,342 ⁱ	47,000	16	120	46	89	1	0	151	407	827
Cyprus	1,300,000 ^j	59,000	39	207	323	112	2	0	92	736	345
Portugal	1,629,000 ^k	30,000	5	8	218	92	6	10	49	383	618
South Africa	479,192 ^l	219,000	4	18	70	21	0	0	34	143	832
Turkey	2,426,749 ^m	51,000	3	63	93	144	19	27	77	423	551
Italy	4,000,000 ⁿ	28,000	10	37	106	101	1	0	41	286	506
India	787,000 ^o	36,000	3	41	148	99	3	3	99	393	292
UAE	1,000,000 ^p	100,000 ¹¹	24	265	56	31	1	3	69	425	246
Egypt	1,346,724 ^q	15,000 ¹²	0	35	71	235	2	25	104	472	146
Ireland	3,579,000 ^r	299,000	12	44	12	7	0	0	43	106	462
Canada	724,000 ^s	611,000	18	125	35	17	0	0	37	214	170
Pakistan	275,351 ^t	43,000	5	21	19	7	0	0	226	273	108
TOTAL WORLDWIDE FIGURES			944	6439	5930	3689	132	140	3509	19,839	27,272

a. Around 13,300,000 British Nationals visit Spain every year (Source: Instituto de Estudios Turísticos – IET. Due to free borders in the EU, this figure does not capture the millions of Brits who travel to Spain via France)

b. Around 5.525 million British Nationals visited the United States last year (Source: US Department of Homeland Security)

c. Around 19,300,000 British Nationals visited France last year, including 14.7 million holidaymakers and 4.5 million day trippers (Source: Ministry of Tourism)

d. 1,749,663 British Nationals visited Germany in 2009 (Source: Statistisches Bundesamt Deutschland)

e. 841,425 British Nationals visited Thailand in 2009 (Source: Thai Immigration)

f. Around 288,100 British Nationals visit New Zealand every year (Source: Statistics, New Zealand)

g. Around 2.35 million British Nationals visit Greece every year (Source: Civil Aviation Authority)

h. Over 664,000 British Nationals visit Australia every year (Source: Tourism Research Australia)

i. 1,131,342 visited China in 2009 (Source: National Tourism Administration of the People's Republic of China). This includes visitor numbers for Hong Kong and Macao (Source: Macao Tourism Board)

j. Around 1.3 million British Nationals visit Cyprus every year (Source: Cyprus Tourist Organisation)

k. Around 1,629,000 British Nationals visit Portugal every year (Source: ONS)

l. 479,192 British Nationals visited South Africa in 2009 (Source: Statistics South Africa)

m. 2,426,749 British nationals visited Turkey in 2009 (Source: Ministry of Tourism)

n. Around 4 million British Nationals visit Italy every year (Source: Ministry of Tourism)

o. Around 787,000 British Nationals visit India every year (Source: Immigration Authorities 2009)

p. Around 1 million British Nationals visit the United Arab Emirates every year (Source: UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

q. 1,346,724 British Nationals visited Egypt in 2009 (Source: Egyptian Ministry of Tourism)

r. Around 3,579,000 British Nationals visit Ireland every year (Source: Irish Tourist Board)

⁷ Unless otherwise stated, all resident figures are taken from the 2010 IPPR report (Institute for Public Policy Research). The methodology used to estimate the number of British nationals living abroad for a year or longer draws on varying sources, including census or population survey figures where they are available and consular estimates, adjusting them to compensate for non-registered nationals and to reflect trends in growth and decline

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; Mental health; Repatriation; Welfare; missing person reports. 'Other assistance' does not include any advice & self-help enquiries.

¹⁰ There are 95,852 civilian residents in Germany (Source: German Statistics Office). In addition there are 65,000 military personnel and their dependents (Source: Joint Headquarters of Nato in Germany) so the total number of British Nationals residing in Germany is 160,852

¹¹ Source - UAE Government and latest HMG/Embassy analysis

¹² Source: FCO

s. Around 724,000 British Nationals visit Canada every year (Source: Statistics Canada)

t. 275,351 British Nationals visited Pakistan in 2009 (Source: Ministry of Tourism)

Top 20 countries where British Nationals required the most consular assistance from 1 April 2009 - 31 March 2010

The information in the following table is the same data as the above table, but is listed in the same order as the 2008/2009 rankings to enable easy and direct comparison with the preceding year.

Country	Number of Visitors	Number of British Resident ^s ¹³	Drug Arrests ¹⁴	Total Arrest / Detention	Total Death	Hospitalisation	Rape	Sexual Assault	Total Other Assistance ¹⁵	Total Consular Cases	Passports Lost/Stolen
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¹⁵ 'Other Assistance' includes the following: Abduction; Assault - General; Child - Access; Child - Abduction; Child - Custody; Forced Marriage; Missing Persons; Mental health; Repatriation; Welfare; missing person reports. 'Other assistance' does not include any advice & self-help enquiries.

¹⁶ There are 95,852 civilian residents in Germany (Source: German Statistics Office). In addition there are 65,000 military personnel and their dependents (Source: Joint Headquarters of Nato in Germany) so the total number of British Nationals residing in Germany is 160,852

¹⁷ Source - UAE Government and latest HMG/Embassy analysis

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For comparative purposes, please find below the top 20 countries where British Nationals required the most consular assistance from 1 April 2008 - 31 March 2009

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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 ²³	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

- 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)
 xix 1,201,859 British Nationals visit Egypt every year (Source: Egyptian Ministry of Tourism, 2008)
 xx Includes visitor and resident numbers for Taiwan and Hong Kong

¹⁹ Source: IPPR, 2005 (Institute for Public Policy Research). Figure based on Brits living in country for a year or longer

²⁰ The number of arrests due to drugs offences is included in the next column 'Total Arrest/Detention'

²¹ 'Other Assistance' includes the following: Abduction; Assault - General; Child - Access; Child - Abduction; Child - Custody; Forced Marriage; Missing Persons; Mental health; Repatriation; Welfare; missing person reports. 'Other assistance' does not include any advice & self-help enquiries.

²² '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.

²³ Includes visitor and resident numbers for Taiwan and Hong Kong

ARRESTS AND DRUG OFFENCES

The facts

- There was a total of 994 arrests for drug offences, accounting for a seventh of all arrests worldwide
- Drug arrests accounted for over a third of the total arrests in France (37%), over a quarter in Ireland, Italy and Thailand (27% for all) and over a fifth in South Africa (22%)
- As a proportion of the number of visitors and residents, Britons were most likely to be arrested for drugs in Thailand (68 cases), followed by Cyprus (39) and the UAE (24). In Canada nearly three quarters of all drug arrests were for smuggling Khat, a substance that is legal in the UK but illegal in North America

FCO staff anecdotally report a rise in domestic violence arrests. There is a zero tolerance policy to domestic violence in Spain, which could account for more arrests.

FCO advice:

- Be aware that there may be harsher penalties for drug offences in different countries. For example, drug offences carry the death penalty in China, Thailand, and Vietnam
- The FCO is unable to get British Nationals released from jail but can offer a list of local English speaking lawyers and visit you in prison if you request it
- 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 – check country-specific travel advice at www.fco.gov.uk/travel before you go as situations can change from one day to the next. FCO travel advice is regularly updated

HOSPITALISATIONS

The facts

- There were 3,689 cases of Brits being hospitalised abroad last year
- The highest number of hospitalisations occurred in Spain (831), followed by Greece (471) and Egypt (235) which has replaced France (217) as the country where the third highest number of Brits ended up in hospital. However, the rise in Egypt was mainly because of precautionary measures taken by the Egyptian government for suspected swine flu cases

- As a proportion of the number of visitors and residents, Britons were most likely to be hospitalised in Thailand (199), followed by Greece (471), Egypt (235) and India (99)

FCO advice:

- Find out if any vaccinations or medication are advised for your destination well before you travel – visit www.nathnac.org/travel
- If travelling to a destination with malaria, you should begin taking the medication before you leave and continue taking it after your return to the UK
- 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 vehicle, 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 make sure you're covered, and always wear a helmet and protective clothing
- 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. Some medicines that can be bought over the counter in the UK are illegal in other countries e.g. it's illegal to take certain inhalers and allergy medications into Japan
- 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 a free EHIC online via www.ehic.org.uk
- EHICs are only valid for a few years so check yours is still valid before you travel
- Make sure your travel insurance is up to date and valid for the entire trip. Check exactly what is covered, and ensure you are covered for all the activities you want to do, including any adventure activities, 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
- FCO staff report a rise in mental health cases, which could be attributed to Brits forgetting to take prescribed medication when travelling abroad
- Whether you are taking prescribed medication for a physical or mental health problem, ensure you take it with you, and don't stop taking medication just because you feel better in the sun. Also remember to seek medical advice before combining alcohol with any medication

DEATHS

The facts

- There were 5,930 reported deaths of UK citizens abroad including natural causes, accidental deaths, unlawful killings and suicides
- There were 1,786 British deaths in Spain, 563 in Germany, 527 in France, 323 deaths in Cyprus and 292 in Thailand
- Proportionally, most Brits died in Thailand (292), followed by Germany (563) and Cyprus (323)

FCO advice:

- Ensure all members of your party have travel 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 Embassy/Consulate but they can offer support and practical advice at this distressing time

SEXUAL ASSAULTS

The facts

- 132 cases of rape and 140 sexual assaults were reported to FCO staff overseas. There were 27 cases of rape dealt with by FCO staff in Greece, 25 in Spain, 19 in Turkey and 2 in Cyprus
- FCO staff dealt with 27 cases of sexual assault in Turkey, 25 cases in Egypt, and 20 cases in Spain.

FCO advice:

- Never leave any drinks unattended as they might be spiked with drugs
- 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
- 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

LOST/STOLEN PASSPORTS

The facts

- Lost or stolen passports were by far the most frequent problem encountered by British tourists with 27,272 cases
- 6,618 passports were lost or stolen in Spain, 3,268 in the USA, 2,400 in France, 1,017 in Germany and 980 in Australia
- Proportionally, most Britons had their passports lost or stolen in New Zealand (1,662)²⁴, followed by South Africa (832) and Thailand (827)

FCO advice:

- Before you travel, make a copy of the passport 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 for obtaining a replacement 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 call 0845 850 2829)
- Be aware that it may take a couple of days to obtain a replacement passport and that there is a charge
- 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
- Once abroad, keep your valuables and passport in a safe place (e.g. hotel safe)

COUNTRY SPECIFIC INFORMATION AND ADVICE – more details can be found at www.fco.gov.uk/travel

Australia

- Australia records a high frequency of passport loss. This is connected with the fact that UK driving licences are not accepted as a form of identification in pubs and bars so Britons use their passports to prove their age instead. We recommend that visitors and residents obtain a proof of age card from their nearest Roads & Traffic Authority (RTA) office on arrival in Australia.
- If you intend on travelling to remote outback areas you should plan your trip with care and seek and follow local advice on what precautions to take. In addition, when travelling to remote tourist areas of the outback, it is essential to leave your route details and expected time of

²⁴ Australia had proportionally the highest incidence of lost/stolen passports (2,446 cases) in the last BBA report. Passport work for Australasia and the South Pacific was centralised in New Zealand in July 2009, so the New Zealand figures for 2009/10 include a large proportion of cases from Australia.

return with the relevant local tourist authorities or police, your hotel/hostel, or with friends and relatives. Ensure that you also notify them if your travel plans change and when you finally return. Many tourists are reported missing only to be found safe and well at their next destination.

- Around 600 British Nationals are rescued from drowning in Australia each year. Many have been drinking alcohol, making the situation even more dangerous. FCO staff in Australia are working with the Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA) to promote beach safety.
- Australian authorities are rigorous in their efforts to keep out any pests and diseases that could affect plant, animal and human health. Before landing you must declare any food or goods of plant or animal origin. These goods include nuts, dried fruit and vegetables, herbs and spices, biscuits, cakes and confectionery, teas, coffees and milk-based drinks and sporting goods (including camping gear), amongst others.
- Hospitalisations associated with strokes and deep vein thrombosis related conditions, following long-haul flights (particularly among the elderly), are common, as are road traffic accidents
- One specific case that highlights the importance of taking out travel insurance is that of a 19 year old man who was on a working holiday in Australia. During a party he fell from the third floor of an apartment building, landing on a concrete pavement below. He suffered severe internal injuries and remained in intensive care for several weeks, before returning to the UK to undergo rehabilitation. Fortunately, his emergency hospital treatment was covered by the reciprocal healthcare arrangements between the NHS and Medicare Australia. But his travel insurance had expired, so his parents had to cover the high cost of his repatriation.

Canada

- The majority of drug related arrests in Canada in 2009/2010 were for Khat. This marked an increase of over 100% compared to the previous year. Khat (or Qat) is a substance that is legal in the UK but illegal in Canada and carries a maximum 10 year jail sentence.
- Many of the reported arrests due to domestic disputes are as a result of people going over to Canada to meet someone they met on the internet. After travelling to Canada with the intention of settling down, things don't always work out as expected. An argument with their Canadian partner can develop, and they can end up in jail, either because of the nature of the altercation or because it is found out that the visitor has overstayed their visa limit.
- There have been a number of cases where people visiting friends or family in Canada have extended their stay without extending their travel insurance. If they then need medical attention, the medical treatment costs can run into tens of thousands of dollars. This is a situation highlighted by a British male who was visiting his mother and decided to extend his stay. After being hospitalised following a massive heart attack his medical treatment bills were in excess of around \$40,000 as a result of his insurance having lapsed due to the extended stay.

China

- China's 'zero tolerance' policies lead to detention followed by deportation for infringements such as gambling, drink driving, fighting or, most commonly, overstaying a visa (offenders are deported only after they have found money to pay for their tickets).
- More serious offences, for drugs and serious assaults, commonly originate in the cities' bar areas or red light districts, and usually involve alcohol and attract serious penalties. There are particularly severe penalties in China for drugs offences. These include the death penalty, which was imposed on a British National who was executed in China for a drugs offence in December 2009.
- In Hong Kong, there has been an increase in cases of drink spiking, particularly among men, who wake up the next morning minus their wallets and possessions.
- British Nationals doing business in China should be aware that if they become involved in a business and/or civil dispute, and the case actually goes to court, the Chinese government may prohibit them from leaving China until the matter is resolved.
- Rabies is common in China, which has the second highest incidence in the world. In recent years an average of 2,400 deaths from rabies has been reported annually. (Source: NaTHNaC website).
- There are restrictions on undertaking certain religious activities, including preaching and distributing religious materials.
- Foreign nationals are required to carry their passports with them at all times as the police carry out random checks; failure to produce your ID can lead to a fine or detention.
- One Briton working in China got into serious trouble after getting into an altercation with a local prostitute over payment, resulting in the lady being injured and the British National arrested. He was kept in prison until his trial eight months later. The only visitor he was allowed, for half an hour a month, was the British consul. The trial resulted in conviction and he was sentenced to three years in prison.

Cyprus

- Short-term visitors and tourists are permitted to drive on UK driving licences and driving is on the left-hand side of the road. You may be heavily fined if you drive without wearing a seat belt or ride a motorbike without wearing a crash helmet. Heavy fines also apply if you use a mobile telephone or are under the influence of alcohol while driving.
- Cyprus has a strictly enforced zero tolerance policy towards drugs. If you are caught in possession of any type of narcotic you will receive either a prison sentence or a hefty fine.
- The EHIC is not valid in northern Cyprus and so all travellers to this part of the island should take out private medical insurance.
- There has been an increase in the number of British Nationals admitted under 'section' for mental health treatment – usually because they have stopped taking their medication.

- Younger British Nationals in the resort areas, such as Ayia Napa, are often hospitalised due to accidents on hired quad or motor bikes, often involving alcohol. Frequently they have hired vehicles without insurance.
- Other reasons for hospitalisation involve falls from buildings and fights when under the influence of alcohol. Most victims are unaware their holiday insurance will not pay if an accident happens while the person is intoxicated. For example, a young male fell from the roof of an apartment block while drunk and fractured his spine but his insurance declined to pay because he was drunk. His family then had to pay more than £30,000 for an air ambulance to the UK.
- Local FCO staff have also noticed an increase in the number of calls requesting help for Britons who want to return to the UK after several years residency in Cyprus. Britons cite the lack of work opportunities and the economic downturn as reasons for their move, without having made provisions for a life abroad not working out and mistakenly believing the UK government will repatriate them.
- There are risks involved with purchasing property on the island of Cyprus. Many British Nationals, who have purchased property either in the north or south of Cyprus, face problems caused by misleading advertising, the failure of developers to complete properties that have been purchased off plan, illegal construction or double selling.

Egypt

- Egypt saw a spike in hospitalisations in 2009/ 2010 because of precautionary measures taken over suspected swine flu cases. Several British Nationals were taken to hospital after showing high temperatures or flu-like symptoms. The Egyptian authorities have since stopped screening for the swine flu virus at air and seaports and no longer place in quarantine those who show flu-like symptoms.
- Egypt records a high number of cases caused by older travellers suffering from pre-existing medical conditions, including heart and blood pressure problems, but not always declaring them when purchasing insurance policies. This was a situation faced by a British National who went on a holiday booked by his niece. Pre-existing conditions were not reported when the insurance was bought so when he fell ill in-resort and had to spend time in intensive care, the insurers rejected his claim and his family had to pay all of his medical bills.
- Local FCO staff urge visitors to check that their insurance policy covers any adventure activity they propose to undertake. You should check that any vehicle hire company adheres to proper health and safety standards.
- There have been several incidents involving tourists riding quad bikes with unregulated companies, including the case of a teenage girl who went on a private quad biking trip with her friend. The company did not check she was wearing suitable clothing, or if she was in an appropriate state to ride the bike. When she had an accident she suffered severe facial injuries along with cuts and grazing to her body having not worn a helmet, and only dressed in

a bikini top, shorts and flip flops. She was admitted to the intensive care unit of the local hospital, but the staff were unable to immediately administer pain relief due to the high level of alcohol in her system. Her insurance policy did not cover quad biking so her family had to pay more than £30,000 for an air ambulance to repatriate her back to the UK so she could undergo further treatment and cosmetic surgery to her face.

- We continue to receive a significant number of reports of sexual assault cases against British Nationals (25 in 2009/2010). Women are advised to take extra caution when travelling alone as there have been cases of harassment and sexual assault, including rape.
- Local laws reflect the fact that Egypt is predominantly an Islamic country. You should respect local traditions, customs, laws and religions at all times and be aware of your actions to ensure that they do not offend other cultures or religious beliefs. What may be acceptable in the tourist resort areas may be frowned upon in other areas. You should dress modestly in rural areas, mosques and souks (markets). Women's clothes should cover their legs and upper arms. Men should cover their chests.
- Public displays of affection are frowned upon and although homosexuality is not in itself illegal under Egyptian law, homosexual acts in public are illegal and homosexuals have been convicted for breaching laws on public decency.
- Drinking in the street and anywhere other than a licensed restaurant or bar is not allowed and can lead to arrest.
- Possession, use or trafficking of illegal drugs is a serious offence and can, even for possession of small amounts, lead to lengthy prison sentences (25 years), life imprisonment or the death penalty. Those convicted to life imprisonment on drugs charges will normally spend the rest of their life in prison with no possibility of parole or pardon.

France

- To drive in France you must be 18 years old and have a valid UK driving licence, insurance and vehicle documents. Failure to comply may lead to a fine and/or your vehicle being impounded. You are not permitted to drive at 17 even if you hold a valid licence.
- There has been a recent spate of lorry drivers being arrested as a result of carrying illegal goods. These cases include the carrying of drugs, sometimes in very large quantities, cigarettes or even illegal immigrants. Many lorry drivers have been caught out as a result of their loads being tampered with – which is particularly common at the loading stage, when the drivers are not in attendance. Many drivers are not aware that they are accountable for their loads under French customs law, even in the case of illegal stowaways.
- Forest fires can be a regular occurrence in forested areas anywhere during the summer months, but especially along the Mediterranean coast and on Corsica.

Germany

- The most frequent reasons for Britons being arrested in Germany in 2009 were drug offences, theft and tax evasion.
- In a country that has no national speed limit on its autobahns (motorways), hospitalisation is often a result of road traffic accidents, particularly involving motor cycles.
- The area around the Black Forest and also the race track at Nürburgring are common locations for road traffic incidents.
- There is an environmental zone (umweltzone) in Berlin's inner city centre. Only vehicles that meet specific exhaust emission standards will be allowed to enter the zone. Any vehicles with especially high emissions are barred.
- Pedestrians who cause an accident while crossing on a red pedestrian lights are liable for all costs incurred.
- You should carry your valid passport with you at all times. German police have the right to ask to see identification. For British citizens, the only acceptable form of ID is a valid passport.

Greece

- If you are seeking employment in bars or night clubs in Greece, you are required to have a health certificate/licence issued by the local authorities. Failure to have such a certificate is punishable by a fine and or imprisonment.
- You should maintain high standards of public behaviour in Greece. The Greek police will not accept rowdy or indecent behaviour, especially where excessive alcohol consumption is involved. Greek courts impose heavy fines or prison sentences on people who behave indecently.
- Visitors should bear in mind that some fancy dress costumes may offend the local Greek authorities and be considered as contravening decency laws. Indecent exposure in the more lively resorts has caused problems, such as when 17 costumed 'nuns' were arrested for disrespecting local customs. In separate incidents last year, 15 youths were arrested for damages to private property, and 14 tour operators were reprimanded for leading bar crawls.
- If you purchase pirate CDs or DVDs in Greece you could be imprisoned.
- Common causes of hospitalisation include road traffic accidents involving mopeds and quad bikes, as well as cars.
- There have been some cases of people jumping from one balcony to another, under the influence of alcohol, resulting in serious injury.

India

- The greatest cause of arrest in India remains drug related. Drugs are illegal in India (including Goa). There is a minimum sentence of six months for possession of small amounts – even if for personal consumption only. A 10-year sentence for possession of other amounts is the norm. Furthermore, the slow judicial process means that pre-trial detention can be lengthy, usually several years is the norm.

- There are also a high number of detentions as a result of property or family disputes, often connected with marriages and child custody. You are advised to seek comprehensive legal advice from a reliable source before investing in property or businesses in India, particularly as the law can differ between states. There have been a significant number of cases where British citizens (including those of Indian origin) and other foreign nationals have encountered serious difficulties, often apparently as a result of misleading advice from unscrupulous agents and by not adhering to strict visa and FEMA (Foreign Exchange Management Act) regulations resulting in (often unwitting) illegal acquisition of property.
- Staff have noticed a rise in mental health cases, often due to holidaymakers not taking the correct medication with them or simply by not taking prescribed medication because the warmer climate makes them "feel better".
- Several British Nationals are injured or die each year on Indian roads, usually as a result of not wearing a helmet or suitable clothing. Special care should be taken at night as driving on the wrong side of the road without lights is common. Always look to travel in a well-maintained vehicle with seatbelts.
- According to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) tourists departing India will now receive a stamp in their passports indicating that they may not re-enter India for two months, regardless of their length of stay in India prior to departure. However, exemptions have been put in place for tourists wishing to visit neighbouring countries.

Italy

- The majority of detentions are for drug-related crimes, usually smuggling.
- With Naples attracting high numbers of cruise visitors, FCO staff have to deal with a number of situations connected with elderly visitors falling ill but not having their EHIC card with them, or not carrying details of next of kin who can be notified of their situation.
- Italy has introduced a law forcing skiers and snowboarders to carry tracking equipment if going off-piste. The law also obliges under-14s to wear a helmet and there are plans for snowboarders to be banned from certain slopes. There have also been a number of hospitalisations due to skiing and snowboarding accidents, often following heavy drinking on the slopes, leading to local FCO staff running an awareness campaign last winter, 'Think before you drink'.
- It is an offence to sit on steps/courtyards or to eat and drink in the immediate vicinity of the main churches and public buildings in Florence.
- Travellers driving in Italy should be aware that private cars and hire cars are not permitted to enter the historic centre of many Italian cities without an official pass.
- You are advised not to buy from illegal street traders: if you do so you run the risk of being stopped by the local police and incurring a large fine.

New Zealand

- New Zealand records a high frequency of passport loss²⁵. As well as the fact that this is due to New Zealand processing all replacement full passports for British Nationals in Australia, this is also connected with the fact that UK driving licences are not accepted as a form of identification in pubs and bars so Britons use their passports to prove their age instead.
- Most hospitalisations seem to result from drunken falls.
- If you are visiting remote areas, you should ensure that your journey details are made known to local authorities or friends/relatives before setting out. Weather conditions can quickly become treacherous, especially in winter.
- If you intend to participate in extreme sports you should check that the company is well established in the industry and your insurance covers you.
- Motor insurance is not a legal requirement in New Zealand. Therefore, even though the UK has a reciprocal Healthcare Agreement with New Zealand, private accident insurance is recommended.
- New Zealand has very strict bio-security regulations which affect the importing of wood products, golf clubs and shoes (may have soil and dirt attached), Wellington boots (for the same reason) and items made from animal skin (e.g. crocodile handbags).
- It is illegal to import most foodstuffs (meat and meat products, honey, fruit, dairy produce etc) and strict penalties are handed out to those breaking these rules. Failure to comply with these regulations can result in a heavy fine. As a result of these quarantine procedures, you should expect some delay on arrival.

Pakistan

- One of the major cause of arrests of British Nationals in Pakistan is drug trafficking, a trend that has been observed over a number of years. Drug smuggling can attract the death penalty.
- A growing trend is one of arrests due to property disputes, a situation the FCO cannot help with. Often connected with inheritance issues, these are increasingly resulting in serious crimes including unlawful killing– there are currently nine British Nationals charged with murder in Pakistan.
- Importing alcohol or pork products is illegal.
- If you or your father were born in Pakistan, you might be considered a Pakistani national by the authorities, even if you do not hold a Pakistani passport, and the British government might be prevented from providing the full range of consular assistance.
- Co-habitation by an unmarried couple is illegal.

²⁵ Australia had proportionally the highest incidence of lost/stolen passports (2,446 cases) in the last BBA report. Passport work for Australasia and the South Pacific was centralised in New Zealand in July 2009, so the New Zealand figures for 2009/10 include a large proportion of cases from Australia.

- You should not take photographs at military establishments, airports or any infrastructure, including bridges and dams or from aircraft - in the past British Nationals have been arrested on suspicion of 'spying'.
- If you are intending to travel to Pakistan, you should follow the developing situation in the news media and consult FCO Travel Advice regularly. You are also recommended to register with the British High Commission.

Portugal

- Fines for traffic offences are substantial in Portugal. Such infringements as speeding, driving under the influence of drink or drugs, the use of mobile phones whilst driving and illegal parking are heavily penalised. The police have the authority to fine on-the-spot and most of their vehicles are equipped with portable ATM machines to facilitate immediate payment.

South Africa

- Most arrests are for drug smuggling or being drunk and disorderly.
- Many hospitalisations are a result of road traffic accidents - the standard of driving in South Africa can vary greatly and there are many fatal accidents every year.
- A valid UK driving licence is accepted in South Africa for up to 12 months after entry, provided it carries the photograph and signature of the holder.
- Opportunistic crime, including muggings, is a problem – it is advisable to keep copies of key documents in a safe place.
- In the 2008 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic the UNAIDS/WHO Working Group estimated that around 5,400,000 adults aged 15 or over in South Africa were living with HIV; the prevalence rate was estimated at around 18.1% of the adult population. This compares to the prevalence rate in adults in the UK of around 0.2%. You should exercise normal precautions to avoid exposure to HIV/AIDS.

Spain

- Most arrests involving British people in Spain are for drug or drink related offences. Spain's zero tolerance of domestic violence means arrests for this type of crime are also common.
- Throughout Spain it is illegal to have sex in public places, including the beach.
- Parents should be aware that Spanish law defines anyone under the age of 18 to be a minor, subject to parental control or adult supervision. Unaccompanied minors that come to the attention of the Spanish local authorities (for whatever reason but particularly in connection with criminal incidents or when in hospital) are deemed to be vulnerable under the law. They could be taken to a Minors' centre for their protection until their situation is resolved and a parent or suitable guardian can be found.
- Spanish law states that children under the age of 12 cannot be sat in the front passenger seat of a car.

- When on the road, remember that if you need to wear glasses when you drive, you have to carry a spare pair in the car. If you have to leave your vehicle due to an accident or breakdown, or whilst awaiting the arrival of the emergency services, you must wear a reflective jacket. Failure to do so could result in a heavy fine.
- In Spain, you must carry identity at all times. Driving licenses are not accepted as a form of photo-ID. It is important to keep all important documentation safe.
- Staff in Palma de Mallorca became aware of a young British man who had been arrested. He had not paid a taxi fare and then refused to provide identification or accompany the police to the local station when requested.
- The FCO advises against keeping all of your valuables and documents in one place, in case you lose your bag or have it stolen. The British Consulate in Alicante gave assistance to a couple who had their bag stolen on the beach with all of their documents and forms of payment.
- You should never hand over your passport as a guarantee against returning a vehicle, or renting accommodation.
- Local FCO staff advise that travellers to Spain be particularly vigilant of their belongings in arrival and departure halls of airports and when checking in and out at hotels.
- There have been cases of young people stranded without the funds to return home after seasonal jobs have ended. The FCO cannot provide funds for these journeys and advises visitors to plan ahead.
- Possession of even a small quantity of drugs can result in arrest. In Ibiza there has been a crackdown on drug selling and clubs are being closely monitored. Last year there were 24 arrests of British Nationals in one day as part of this project.
- The FCO advises you to take out travel insurance before travelling abroad. A British man was successfully repatriated to the UK after five weeks in a Spanish hospital for injuries he got from a serious motorcycle accident. Local FCO staff liaised with the hospital and also advised him how to get a police report required by his insurance company. Had he not had travel insurance, this man's situation could have been very different.
- Many people move to Spain to seek work. Unemployment rates are currently very high.
- If people choose to return to the UK after living in Spain, the FCO advises that they prepare their move in the same amount of detail as when they moved to Spain.
- Lots of people have had problems purchasing property in Spain, due to local corruption or lack of understanding of regional and national planning laws. The FCO advises people wanting to buy property to seek independent legal advice. More information can be found on our website <http://ukinspain.fco.gov.uk/en/help-for-british-nationals/living-in-spain/property-issues/>

Thailand

- A high proportion of reported illness and hospitalisation cases are due to liver and renal failure. Those patients who are hospitalised in government-run hospitals are expected to be cared for by family members – unlike the UK where care is provided by hospital staff – and many British Nationals do not have people to care for them in this way.
- A number of British Nationals have suffered severe mental health episodes because of drug use, in a small number of cases resulting in suicide.
- British Nationals should be aware that being found guilty of possession of 20 grams, or more, of a class A drug carries the death penalty. Amphetamines and Ecstasy are regarded as class A drugs and possession or trafficking of them carries the same penalties as, for example, heroin.
- There have been a number of incidents where tourists have had their drinks drugged (in both tourist areas and red light districts). You should be careful about taking drinks from strangers and be wary at clubs and parties, particularly in the Koh Samui area and at the Full Moon party on Koh Phangan.
- British Nationals who receive a UK state pension are not entitled to annual increments in Thailand, and coupled with the weak Pound many are finding they cannot afford local private health care and daily living expenses. Private health care can cost around £1,000 per day for treatment in ICU.
- Riding a motorcycle or scooter in Thailand can be dangerous. On average 38 people a day die in motorcycle accidents in Thailand. The Thai law that safety helmets must be worn is widely ignored, a contributing factor in many tourist deaths each year.
- Before you hire a vehicle you should check your travel insurance policy carefully to ensure that you are covered and check the small print of the lease agreement carefully. Also check that the company you are hiring off is reputable.
- You should never hand over your passport as a guarantee against returning a motor scooter or cycle. Unscrupulous owners have been known to hold on to passports against claimed damage to the motor scooter or cycle.
- You should avoid any demonstrations or large gatherings of people. If you become aware of any nearby violence you should stay indoors, monitor the FCO travel advice and the local media.
- It is a criminal offence to make any defamatory remarks about the king or the royal family in Thailand, punishable by a sentence of three to fifteen years.
- By law, tourists are expected to carry their passports with them at all times in Thailand.
- One specific case which highlights the importance of taking out the right level of insurance is that of a British National who fell off the back of a motorbike while in Thailand seriously injuring his knee. Despite taking the prescribed medication, his knee became infected so severely that he required intravenous antibiotics. He was fortunate that his insurance covered the cost of all his medical treatment which came to about £10,000.

Turkey

- 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 four to 24 years.
- The greatest cause of arrests and hospitalisations is excessive alcohol consumption.
- It is an offence to insult the Turkish nation or the national flag, or to deface or tear up currency
- 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.
- Homosexuality is not illegal but is not widely tolerated: public displays of affection could result in prosecution for public order offences.
- It is important to declare all pre-existing health conditions to your insurance provider. For example, one pregnant lady travelled to Turkey without telling her insurance company that she was pregnant. She gave birth prematurely and her baby was in intensive care for one month costing thousands of pounds, which the insurance company wouldn't cover as she hadn't declared her condition to them before travel.

United Arab Emirates

- The majority of arrests are alcohol and drug related. There have been cases of British Nationals visiting or transiting Dubai being arrested at the airport with drugs, or even residue of drugs, found in bags and clothing.
- Arrests for financial crime are increasing.
- Public displays of affection, including kissing, can also lead to trouble as found by a young British couple, who spent more than a month in jail and were deported after being found guilty of kissing in public.
- It is illegal to have sex or cohabit outside marriage, including in hotels. Pregnancy outside marriage can lead to imprisonment. Adultery, cross-dressing and homosexual behaviour are illegal.
- It is a punishable offence to be drunk in public.
- Eating in public during Ramadan can lead to a jail sentence, even if you are not Muslim.
- Swearing or making rude gestures is considered an obscene act and offenders can be prosecuted. It has been known for offenders to receive a six-month jail sentence for such an act. Particular caution should be exercised when dealing with the police and other officials.

USA

- British travellers to the US under the Visa Waiver Programme (VWP), which allows most British Citizen passport holders to visit for up to 90 days without a visa, must get an authorisation via the Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (ESTA) prior to their journey. Visitors should

register for free through the ESTA website at www.esta.cbp.dhs.gov and are advised to do so at least 72 hours prior to travel. If you do not have an ESTA you will be refused travel to the USA.

- Laws vary from state to state, including speed limits and the age of consent.
- The plant Khat (or Qat) is an illegal narcotic in the US. You will be arrested and detained with the possibility of a prison sentence if you are caught trying to take Khat into the USA.
- There is a risk of severe weather conditions such as hurricanes and wildfires in different parts of the USA depending on the time of year. Always check before you travel.
- A retired couple were travelling in the USA when the husband suffered a major heart attack. His wife called the consular team to seek advice because the policy that had been taken out was deemed invalid as the couple had failed to declare the husband's double by-pass operation some 20 years before. Having already paid \$10,000 to the hospital, as a result of not having a valid insurance policy, the wife was understandably concerned about costs and FCO staff helped her to arrange a payment plan via the hospital's financial department.

CASE STUDIES

Travel insurance

The family of a young man who drowned whilst on a trip in Brazil found that it would cost them up to £10,000 to repatriate him, as he did not have any travel insurance. The 18-year old had been trying to save a friend who had encountered difficulties whilst swimming in the sea off the north eastern coast.

FCO advice: Ensure you take out travel insurance for all trips – and make sure it includes repatriation.

Motorbike accident

A man, aged 19, from Surrey, was travelling in South-East Asia on a gap year when he had an extremely serious moped accident. Although he had insurance he did not read the small print which stipulated he had to have a licence for riding a motorbike. As he didn't have a licence, the insurance company refused to pay for his repatriation to the UK which cost his parents £20,000.

FCO advice: Check the terms and conditions of insurance policies carefully and contact your insurance provider if anything is unclear.

Malaria

A woman assumed that she did not need to take any preventative measures against malaria because she regularly visited Africa. Unfortunately, she contracted malaria after her visit to Uganda because she didn't realise that resistance to malaria can decrease with time.

FCO advice: Check if you are travelling to an area with malaria (visit www.malariahotspots.co.uk) and take the appropriate medication.

Skiing accident

A man was on a skiing holiday when he had a bad fall halfway down a slope. He ended up with a broken collarbone and a €4,500 bill for the mountain rescue, transport and medical costs because he hadn't arranged comprehensive travel insurance.

FCO advice: Always take out travel insurance and ensure it covers you for any activities you might be doing such as skiing, water sports etc.

Drink related

A drunken British tourist who urinated on one of Latvia's most revered monuments was made an example of by the Baltic state and sentenced to five days in custody.

FCO advice: Research your destination – know the laws and customs of the destination you are travelling to.

Lost luggage

A woman aged 28 from London travelled home to Ghana for Christmas. Her flight from the UK was over-booked and she was transferred onto a different flight. However, her hold luggage didn't arrive with her. She didn't have travel insurance and she lost her personal belongings as well as the presents for her family.

FCO advice: Take out travel insurance, even if you don't think you will be doing any high-risk activities.

Financial assistance

A woman from Derbyshire was supposed to fly back from a two week holiday but her flight was cancelled and she had no indication as to when she would get another one. She didn't budget to be away for so long so was relieved that her travel insurance covered her accommodation and food.

FCO advice: Ensure you have sufficient medication and money, or access to emergency funds, to cover you in the event of an unplanned stay.

Culture and customs

A British man in Dubai was arrested and sentenced to one month in prison followed by deportation for kissing a woman in public. The woman in question, also a British citizen, was also given a month's sentence. A court in Dubai also confiscated the passport of a British man for almost eight months after he was charged with making a lewd hand gesture at a student, who then complained to the police. Similarly, in Brazil, a group of British tourists were arrested and charged with "inconvenient conduct" after being seen removing their clothes in public and making "obscene gestures" to passers-by. They were fined and released on bail.

FCO advice: Research your destination – know the laws and customs of the destination you are travelling to.

- Ends -

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 1st April 2009 through to 31st March 2010 and focuses on the 20 countries where the total number of cases needing assistance was highest. The figures also include assistance provided by our consular staff to unrepresented 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. Worldwide consular assistance figures are available on request.

(There may be some discrepancy between the figures contained in this report, which are the most up to date, and those quoted on www.fco.gov.uk/travel which may refer to 08/09 figures.)

Further Information –

For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact:

FCO press office - 0207 008 3100 or email newsdesk@fco.gov.uk

FCO spokespeople and case studies of Britons getting into trouble abroad are available on request, including:

Case studies

Hannah Stewart, 23, was backpacking alone in Fez, Morocco, during Ramadan, and went to a popular viewpoint to enjoy a beautiful sunset. Although there were other people at the site, she was the last to leave and two men mugged her at knifepoint. Hannah's phone, camera and £150 cash were all stolen. Although she reported the incident to the police, in the shock of the situation she didn't get a copy of the police report, and didn't realise that she would need this to make an insurance claim. "Had I known more about the local culture, I would have known that it's unusual for people to be out and about at dusk during Ramadan. I've since been told that most locals who are wandering around, rather than breaking their fast with friends and family, are often up to no good. Had I known this, I definitely wouldn't have been on my own. My experience just goes to show the importance of researching information on local culture and customs. Looking back, I would also have pushed to get the necessary police documentation so I could have claimed against my insurance policy."

Whilst travelling on a gap year in South America, Lisa Martin, 27, who lives near Stratford upon Avon, Warwickshire, was crossing the border from Ecuador to Peru. At the border crossing all travellers had to get off the bus and show their identification at the passport control. As it would only take a few minutes, and all passengers were to get back on the same bus, Lisa decided to leave her day bag on the bus under the seat. However, when she got back on the bus, Lisa realised it had been stolen. Lisa explains: "As we were only going to be off the bus for a couple of minutes, it seemed pointless to take

my heavy bag with me. But I've since found out that this border crossing is notorious for thefts and scams - someone else in my group exchanged some Ecuadorian dollars for Peruvian Soles and was given fake notes. I wish I'd known about the scams and threat of theft before I had crossed the border. I certainly would have been more cautious. Luckily I had travel insurance, but my travel journal was also stolen and things like that are irreplaceable.”

About the FCO’s Know Before You Go campaign

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 around 400 travel industry partners to communicate its messages.

Know Before You Go advice:

- British Nationals who are planning on travelling abroad should visit the FCO website at: www.fco.gov.uk/travel or call the Travel Advice Line on 0845 850 2829:
- Take out comprehensive travel insurance in case things do go wrong - and remember to declare any pre-existing conditions and check the small print. If you are drunk when an accident happens, your policy probably won’t be valid
- Research the local laws and customs of your destination by visiting www.fco.gov.uk/travel
- If you’re travelling in Europe, make sure you have a European Health Insurance Card which allows free or low cost emergency healthcare in most European countries. Visit www.ehic.org.uk
- Check your passport is valid and has the next of kin details filled in
- Make copies of important travel documents such as your passport - keep them separate from the originals or store them online
- Take enough money and arrange access to emergency funds
- Take emergency numbers with you and leave your travel itinerary with someone back home
- Register with the FCO’s LOCATE service so we can help to find you in the event of a crisis – visit www.fco.gov.uk/locate
- Ensure you take enough prescribed medication on holiday with you to cover unplanned delays
- Make sure you have the right visa for entry – and don’t accidentally overstay your welcome

What the FCO can and can’t do to help:

<p>The FCO can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue you with a replacement passport or an emergency travel document 	<p>The FCO can’t:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get you out of prison • Help you enter a country if you don’t have a valid passport
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give you a list of local lawyers, interpreters, doctors or funeral directors• Contact friends and family back home for you• Help get you get care, advice or medication to treat mental health conditions• Provide information about transferring funds• Visit you in hospital or if you have been arrested	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Give you legal advice• Search for missing people• Get you better treatment in hospital or prison than is given to local people• Pay any bills or give you money• Make travel arrangements for you
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FCO TV adverts 'GB Logo' and 'Check In' are available on request, or downloadable from:

'GB Logo' – http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_CPEOttNCI&feature=related

'Check In' - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYF6WW68udU&feature=related>