



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

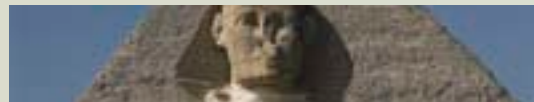
MAKING TRAVEL ADVICE CLEARER AND SIMPLER

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's travel advice provides accurate, up-to-date information about the risks Australians might face overseas, enabling you to make well-informed decisions about whether, where and when to travel.

Over the past few months we have consulted with travellers and members of the travel industry on how to improve our travel advisories. We are now introducing a number of changes to the way our travel advice is written and presented.

These changes have been designed to:

- make our travel advice **clearer** and **simpler**
- make it clearer that **it is up to individual Australians to decide whether or not to travel**, bearing in mind the kind of risks they might face.



While the changes will make the travel advisories look and feel different, they do not mean that the risk level at different destinations has increased or decreased. We are not changing the way we assess the relative risk at any overseas destinations.

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It's a must see destination.



We are making the following changes:

- simplifying the number of levels within travel advice to a more straightforward **five-level system**
- introducing a graphic table, which we call a '**continuum**', at the top of each travel advice to allow you to tell at a glance the relative level of risk
- putting the summary of our travel advisories in a **dot point** format, so the key information is easier to take in
- introducing **additional headings** in the safety and security section including Crime, Money and Valuables and For Parents, so it is easier to find the information you're looking for
- adding a simple **map** to each travel advice, to help travellers understand advice about specific areas
- using more direct and **simpler language**, so the risks at each destination are easier to understand.

One important change is that we are now advising Australians to **reconsider their need to travel** to a particular destination rather than to **defer non-essential travel** as we did under the old system. This change aims to make it clearer that it is up to individual Australians to decide whether or not to travel, bearing in mind the kind of risks they might face. The change in wording does not indicate any change in our assessment of the level of risk.



We are revising all 152 of our travel advisories as quickly as possible. As at 8 November 2005 the 20 destinations most frequently visited by Australian travellers had been revised, covering 96% of the trips made by Australian travellers. A number of other travel advisories have also been rewritten and all will soon be available in the new style.

WHAT'S CHANGING?

More detailed information on the improvements being incorporated into our travel advice program is provided below.

A five-level system to gauge risk

To ensure the levels used within our travel advice system are as meaningful as possible, we have created a new, simple five-level system. Our five new levels are as follows:

- 1 Be alert to your own security
- 2 Exercise caution and monitor developments that might affect your safety
- 3 Exercise a high degree of caution
- 4 Reconsider your need to travel
- 5 Advised not to travel

Our aim is to provide Australian travellers with a realistic understanding of the risks overseas, so they can make their own informed travel decisions in light of the potential risks. The wording of these new levels proved in focus testing to describe most clearly to travellers the relative level of risk. While we are making changes to the levels so they more accurately convey the risk at the destination, ultimately decisions about whether, where and when to travel can only be made by travellers themselves.





A level continuum

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Be alert to own security | Exercise caution | High degree of caution | Reconsider your need to travel | Do not travel |
|--------------------------|------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|

To help Australian travellers understand the relative setting of each travel advice and become more familiar with the levels, we have introduced a **level continuum** (above). This graphic table at the top of each travel advice allows users to immediately identify the level of their selected destination.

Some advisories will have more than one continuum. This is because while the overall destination is at a certain level, different regions within the destination are assessed to be at higher or lower levels.

The continuum should help more Australians and the travel industry to become familiar with the different levels used and make it easier to quickly compare different destinations.

Maps

Many of our travel advisories mention specific areas in a country and provide special advice for those locations.



A simple map will now be included with each advisory, to help travellers locate areas identified in the advice and plan their itinerary accordingly.

Dot point summaries

To make the key issues in each travel advice easier to identify, we have introduced dot point summaries. These summaries will be written in the most direct and simple language possible, so travellers can quickly absorb key information.

We are also including three standard dot points in the summaries to encourage travellers to:

- take out travel insurance
- register their overseas contact details with DFAT's on-line registration system at www.smartraveller.gov.au and
- subscribe to the travel advice at www.smartraveller.gov.au.

As we say in our smartraveller public information campaign – we want all Australians to be informed, safe, smart travellers.

More direct language and additional headings

We know Australians want travel advisories to be as clear as possible. That's why our new travel advisories are being written in a more direct, less formal style. We are also introducing new headings to help travellers locate information quickly. Our new travel advisories include sections on **'Crime'**, **'For Parents'**, **'Local Travel'** and **'Where to Get Help'**.



WHAT'S NOT CHANGING?

While we are making changes to improve our travel advice service, we are not changing the way we manage our travel advice program.

We will continue to review our travel advice for each of our 152 destinations at least quarterly, or more often if required.

In preparing travel advice we will continue to factor in the advice of staff at our Australian missions, our experience of the common or recurring consular problems Australians are experiencing overseas, threat assessments provided by Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and the advisories prepared by our consular partners (United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand and Canada), although we may reach different conclusions.

The Department's travel advice is designed to be consulted as part of your routine travel preparations. It is not intended to be a running news service or provide "all a traveller needs to know" about a particular destination. Although we are consistently working to make our travel advisories more user-friendly, we are not trying to provide a guide book style service.

An important principle behind our work remains that the advice we provide to the public is no different to the advice we provide to our own staff, to other government agencies or to the private sector. The only travel advice we produce is the official advice which is publicly available on the smartraveller website. If you ring the Department, we will not be able to add to the advice that is published on the internet. Our travel advice is our most up-to-date advice and we cannot, and should not, predict what will happen in the future.



Further information

We encourage you to find out more about the changes we are making to our travel advisories at www.smartraveller.gov.au.

On the smartraveller website you can navigate some of our new travel advisories, read our frequently asked questions, register your overseas contact details and locate a wealth of information about safe, smart travel.

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