

# Embassy of the United States Moscow, Russia

## SOCHI OLYMPICS 2014

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### Sochi 2014 – Visitor Information For Olympic and Paralympic Games

- [Latest Travel Alert: 2014 Olympic Games - Sochi, Russia](#)

The Department of State provides U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Russia the following information related to the XXII Winter Olympic Games and XI Paralympic Games taking place in and around Sochi, Russia, from February 7 to February 23, 2014, and March 7 to March 16, 2014. This fact sheet provides information regarding the current conditions within the country to U.S. citizens as they consider traveling to Russia for the Games. Travelers should use the information and resources below to have a safe and enjoyable Olympics experience.

#### Traveling to Sochi for The Olympics

##### *Before you go..*

- Ensure you have a [valid U.S. Passport](#). If your passport will expire before or during your trip, renew it now. Don't forget to sign your passport and complete the emergency information page. **Note: To be issued a Russian visa, your passport must be valid for at least *six months* after your departure date from Russia. We recommend that passports be valid until at least October 16, 2014.**

Russian police officers have the authority to stop people and request their identity and travel documents at any time and without cause. Due to the possibility of random document checks by police, you should carry your original passport, migration card, and visa with you at all times.

- **U.S. citizens are required to have a visa for travel to Russia.** Ticket holders for Olympic events will not be exempt from the [visa regime](#) currently in place between Russia and the United States. Travelers should make travel plans and apply for visas well in advance. As of December 1, spectators may receive one-month visas with same-day processing upon presenting a ticket for Games events or confirmation of ticket purchase. Information about applying for such visas is available on the [website](#) of the Russian Embassy in Washington, D.C.
- Check your **overseas medical insurance coverage** to ensure you are covered abroad and you have coverage for medical evacuation should

medical evacuation be necessary. The Olympics are the first large-scale event to be held in Sochi and medical capacity and infrastructure in Sochi are untested for handling the volume of visitors expected for the Olympics.

Medical care in many Russian localities differs substantially from Western standards due to differing practices and approaches to primary care.

Travelers should consider purchasing private medical evacuation and/or repatriation insurance. Information on medical insurance and travel abroad can be found on our [website](#).

- **Enroll with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP).** This will enable the Embassy to keep you up to date with important safety and security announcements, and help your friends and family get in touch with you in an emergency. Travelers can enroll [online](#) easily. Travelers should select "Moscow" as the "Local Embassy or Consulate" when they enroll with STEP.
- The [SMART Traveler App](#) allows you to manage your STEP enrollment via a mobile device and is available at the iTunes Store and Google Play Market.
- Visit the State Department's Country Specific Information page on travel to [Russia](#). This page is updated frequently and provides current information about traveling in Russia.

### Helpful Websites and Resources

**Official Sochi 2014 Website (in English):** *Information on the Opening & Closing Ceremonies, sporting venues, accommodations, accessibility, ticket sales for foreigners living outside Russia, etc.*

**Official ticket reseller:** *CoSport is the official ticket reseller for the Sochi 2014 Olympics for U.S. residents.*

**U.S. Embassy Moscow Website:** *Information regarding services the Embassy offers to U.S. citizens, security and travel information, fraud warnings, etc.*

**Department of State Travel Website:** *Latest travel warnings, international travel tips, information regarding the STEP registration process, etc.*

**Team USA/U.S. Olympic Committee Website:** *Keep up with Team USA as they prepare for Sochi 2014. Site features athlete bios, merchandise, and more.*

### International Olympic Committee Website

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** - Information and advice for planning safe and healthy travel to Sochi.

### Hotel Accommodations and Lodging During the Olympics

There may be shortages of hotel rooms during the Olympics. While some hotels are under construction, visitors are urged to book rooms well in advance. Advertised rates for standard rooms are currently \$750-1000 per night. **Now is the time to determine where you will stay and make your arrangements.**

### **Emergency Contact Information**

Travelers to Russia may contact the emergency services in Russia by dialing 112 from a mobile phone. This number serves the same function as 911 in the United States. When dialing from a landline, callers should dial 01 for the fire department, 02 for the police, and 03 for a medical emergency.

In the event of an emergency, travelers may also call the U.S. Embassy's American Citizen Services (ACS) unit. Travelers requiring assistance may dial +7-495-728-5577 during regular business hours. After hours, travelers should dial +7-495-728-5000 and ask to be connected with a duty officer. More details on ACS services are provided below.

### **Sochi Contact Center**

During the Olympics and Paralympics, a Russian call center run by the Sochi city administration will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to assist travelers with inquiries about services and facilities in Sochi. Travelers to Sochi may contact the call center at +7 (800) 234-2014. English-speaking representatives will be available to respond to inquiries about medical facilities, financial services, transportation, accommodation, shopping, and other facilities and services available in Sochi. The call center will also have operators available who speak Russian, French, German, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean.

### **Tickets to Olympic & Paralympic Events**

CoSport is the **official ticket reseller** for the Sochi 2014 Olympics for U.S. residents. To purchase individual tickets or hospitality packages, visit [their website](#) or call 1-877-457-4647.

#### ***A few important things to remember when looking for tickets...***

- Be aware of scams, fake Olympic ticket websites, and unlicensed ticket resellers.
- Tickets must be purchased from an authorized reseller. Spectators may be refused entry for tickets purchased from someone other than an authorized reseller. Spectators may transfer tickets only through an official ticket exchange. It is illegal to resell Olympic tickets outside of an authorized exchange. Please consult the Official Sochi 2014 website for more details as they become available.

- Under Russian law, ticket scalping is punishable by an administrative fine. For individuals, the fine can amount to five and ten times the cost of admission; for officials, between ten and twenty times the cost of admission; and for legal entities, between five hundred thousand to one million rubles, or administrative suspension of activity for up to ninety days.

### **Spectator Passes**

**In addition to a valid ticket, fans will also be required to obtain a "Spectator Pass."** A Spectator Pass is required to visit the Olympic Park and competition venues. Applying for the Spectator Pass is part of the security regime for the Games and will subject the ticket holder to a background check administered by the Russian Federal Security Service. Detailed information on procedures for obtaining a Spectator Pass is available on the official [2014 Sochi website](#). Only ticket holders will be able to obtain a Spectator Pass.

### **Restrictions on Liquids in Carry-On Baggage**

Russia has implemented a "no liquids" policy for flights originating within Russia, effective through March 21, 2014. According to this policy, no liquids may be carried onboard an airplane, and must instead be placed in checked baggage. However, travelers may be allowed to bring aboard personal medications and care items less than 100ml in volume (3.38 fluid ounces), provided that they are properly labeled.

### **Money**

Visitors to Sochi should expect to conduct daily transactions in cash, as local businesses may not have the ability to accept credit cards in some cases. Visitors should also note that only cash and "Visa" brand credit cards will be accepted at Olympic facilities. ATMs are available in Sochi, but visitors should be aware that demand for cash from these machines will reach a peak during the Games. Most ATMs will have a daily withdrawal limit of approximately \$250 per day. Visitors should follow normal precautions using credit or debit cards, and should only use cards at banks and higher-class hotels and stores. Attending major sporting events can be expensive and visitors should plan accordingly.

### **Transportation**

An Olympic express train will shuttle passengers between the Olympic Coastal Cluster located in Adler and the Olympic Mountain Cluster located in Krasnaya Polyana. Trains are scheduled to run every hour and will take 34 minutes to travel between clusters. All Olympic venues within the Coastal Cluster are located within a relatively compact space and walking distance of each other. Ski lifts will be used to transport fans to individual Olympic venues within the Mountain Cluster.

Many Olympic-related events will also take place in the downtown Sochi area, which is located approximately 40 kilometers from the Coastal Cluster. A public transportation system, including buses and trains, can be used to access the Olympic Park from downtown Sochi.

It is recommended that travelers utilize public transportation as much as possible, since traffic in and around Sochi is expected to be extremely heavy during the Olympic Games, and traffic jams are likely. U.S. citizens are urged to remain vigilant and exercise good judgment and discretion when using any form of public transportation. Pedestrians should exercise great care when crossing streets or intersections, traversing parking lots, or walking on sidewalks, as drivers in Russia often do not yield to pedestrians. Pedestrians should use marked walkways, overpasses, or crosswalks, and not attempt to cross traffic in driving zones.

### **Safety and Security**

**Terrorism:** Large-scale public events such as the Olympics present an attractive target for terrorists, and the U.S. government continues to monitor reported threats of potential terrorist attacks in Sochi or in Russia in general.

Acts of terrorism, including bombings and hostage takings, continue to occur in Russia, particularly in the North Caucasus region. Between October 15 – December 30, 2013 there were three suicide bombings targeting public transportation in the city of Volgograd (600 miles from Sochi), two of which occurred within the same 24-hour period. In early January 2014 media reports emerged about the possible presence of so-called “black widow” suicide bombers in Sochi. These reports have not been corroborated, and the U.S. government continues to seek further information. Other bombings over the past 10-15 years have occurred at Russian government buildings, airports, hotels, tourist sites, markets, entertainment venues, schools, and residential complexes. There have also been large-scale attacks on public transportation including subways, buses, trains, and scheduled commercial flights, in the same time period.

In July 2013, Doku Umarov, the head of the Caucasus Emirate (an organization the United States designated as a terrorist organization in 2010, and known in Russian as the Imirat Kavkaz or IK) released a video message rescinding prior directions not to attack civilians and calling for attacks on the Winter Olympics in Sochi. The Caucasus Emirate is responsible for many of the aforementioned attacks. The group has targeted civilians, as indirect supporters of the government, including through attacks on a ski resort, metro system, high-speed rail, airport, and a theater. Westerners have not specifically been targeted, but are viewed by IK as complicit in the Russian government’s efforts to control the North Caucasus region. In January 2014 another video was released by a radical Islamist group claiming responsibility for the Volgograd bombings and promising “a present for tourists” in connection with the Olympic Games in Sochi.

Travelers to Sochi should expect increased police presence and enhanced security measures in and around Olympic venues. There is no indication of a specific threat to U.S. institutions or citizens but U.S. citizens should be aware of their personal surroundings and follow good security practices. U.S. citizens are urged to remain vigilant and exercise good judgment and discretion when using any form of public transportation. When traveling, U.S. citizens may wish to provide a friend, family member, or coworker a copy of their itinerary.

Sochi is located approximately 200 miles from Chechnya, and a further 50 miles from Dagestan. Less than 10 miles to its south, Sochi is bordered by the disputed territory of Abkhazia, which has witnessed its own share of extremist violence.

The U.S. Embassy will continue to monitor the security situation in Sochi throughout the Olympics. In the event the U.S. government receives information of any specific and credible threat, the Department of State will immediately provide information to the public. Information about potential threats to safety and security can be found on the Embassy's [website](#) and the [Department of State's travel website](#). Individuals who have enrolled in [STEP](#) will receive this information directly via email.

**Crime:** U.S. citizens planning to attend the Games in Sochi should remain alert regarding their personal security at all times. Criminal activity in Sochi is similar to other cities of comparable size. However, major events such as the Olympic Games, are a prime opportunity for criminal elements to target tourists. Travelers should avoid carrying large amounts of money or other valuables. Since cash may be the only accepted form of payment outside Olympic venues, consider keeping money in a hotel safe or dividing money and placing it in several different locations on your person. Purses, wallets, cell phones, and electronics should be secured while traveling on buses, trains, or other forms of public transportation. Travelers should only use marked taxi services and prearrange transportation through hotel concierge or other reputable services whenever possible. Photocopies of passports, visas, credit cards, and other important documents should be kept in a secure location so proper notifications can be made if original documents are lost or stolen.

**Public Demonstrations:** U.S. citizens should avoid large crowds in areas that lack enhanced security measures. Use caution in any areas where protests, demonstrations, or other public disturbances are taking place. Demonstrations intended to be peaceful can develop quickly and unpredictably, sometimes turning violent.

On January 10, Vice Prime Minister Dmitriy Kozak announced that the Sochi authorities have determined that the village of Khosta, located seven miles from the Olympic venues, will be the designated area for political demonstrations during the Winter Olympics. Demonstrations must be unrelated to the Olympics and the organizers must receive permission prior to the event from the regional authorities of the Ministry of Interior and the Federal Security Service (FSB). It is also worth noting that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Charter states, "no kind of

demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas."

**Personal Privacy Note:** Travelers should be aware that Russian Federal law permits the monitoring, retention and analysis of all data that traverses Russian communication networks, including internet browsing, e-mail messages, telephone calls, and fax transmissions.

### **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Issues**

In June 2013, Russia's State Duma passed a law banning the "propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations" to minors. The U.S. government understands that this law applies to both Russian citizens and foreigners in Russia. Russian citizens found guilty of violating the law could face a fine of up to 100,000 rubles (\$3,100). Foreign citizens face similar fines, up to 14 days in jail, and deportation. The law makes it a crime to promote LGBT equality in public, but lacks concrete legal definitions for key terms. Russian authorities have indicated a broad interpretation of what constitutes "LGBT propaganda," and provided vague guidance as to which actions will be interpreted by authorities as "LGBT propaganda." LGBT travelers should review the State Department's [LGBT Travel Information page](#).

The United States places great importance on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, as well as anyone attending or participating in the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The U.S. calls on Russia to uphold its international commitments regarding freedom of assembly and association and freedom of expression, now and in the future.

### **American Citizen Services**

The U.S. Embassy's American Citizen Services (ACS) unit will have an office in Sochi during the Olympic and Paralympic Games to provide a range of services to U.S. citizens in need. U.S. citizens who need assistance should contact Embassy Moscow's ACS unit during business hours. If you are a U.S. citizen with an emergency outside business hours, please call the Embassy's after-hours ACS hotline.

**All payments for ACS services must be paid by credit card; no cash or checks will be accepted in Sochi.**

### **ACS Contact Information**

#### **ACS, Sochi Office**

Noviy Vek Commercial Complex  
Staronasyynaya Street, 22

Adler District  
Sochi, Russia  
[Our Location on Google Maps](#)

Tel: +7-495-728-5577  
After Hours ACS hotline: +7-495-728-5000  
E-mail: [SochiWarden@State.gov](mailto:SochiWarden@State.gov)

Public Hours: Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 6:00 pm

We strongly recommend that U.S. citizens traveling to or residing in Russia enroll in the Department of State's [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#). STEP enrollment allows you to receive the Department's safety and security updates, and makes it easier for the nearest U.S. embassy or U.S. consulate to contact you in an emergency. If you do not have Internet access, enroll directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.