

Know
Before
You
Go

RUSSIA

A Guide to Keep You Safe Abroad

Provided by Sexual Assault Support and
Help for Americans Abroad (SASHAA)

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SASHAA
Sexual Assault Support &
Help for Americans Abroad

Let's be perfectly clear, the number one way to prevent sexual assault is to **not rape**. While the responsibility of ending sexual gender-based violence is on the perpetrators, this guide will offer general safety tips, country-specific information, and resources to help prevent and prepare travelers for the possibility of sexual assault abroad.

GENERAL SAFETY TIPS:

1. Use the **buddy system** and travel with friends!
2. Be aware of **social and cultural norms**. For example, looking at someone in the eyes when you speak to them is perfectly normal in the U.S., but in another country that could signify you're interested in the person.
3. **Recognize controlling behavior** when entering a relationship. Most rape survivors recall feeling "uncomfortable" about some of their partner's behaviors such as degrading jokes/language or refusal to accept "no" as an answer, whether in a sexual context or otherwise.²
4. **Avoid secluded places** where you could be more vulnerable. Meet new people in public spaces and let a trusted friend know where you'll be beforehand.
5. **Trust your gut**. Many victims have a "bad feeling" right before an assault takes place.



ALCOHOL AND DRUG AWARENESS:

- Always watch your drink being poured and carry it yourself, even to the bathroom.
- "Drug-facilitated sexual assault" drugs, also referred to as club drugs or roofies may turn your drink slightly salty, bright blue, or cloudy. Effects such as distorted judgment, lost sense of time, sight, sound, identity, and consciousness can be felt within 15 minutes and may last up to 4 hours.³
- Russia's does not have a legal drinking age, but selling alcohol to minors is prohibited by federal and additional regional laws.⁴

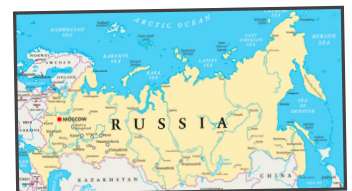
CULTURAL INFORMATION:

Major Religions: Orthodox Christianity 75%, Atheism 8%, Islam 5%, Roman Catholic 1%, Protestant Christian 1%, Judaism 1%, Buddhism 1%.⁵

Legal System: Russia has a common law constitution. Most cases have one professional judge and two lay judges presiding, but the exact number may vary. Jury trials are only used for the most serious crimes.⁶

Social/Cultural Norms: Russians are friendly people and very proud of their country. The family is the most important unit, and it is common that multiple generations live in the same house or apartment. Although the younger generations are less conservative in their dress, it is still more respectful to dress fairly conservatively in Russia. Both "Russia" and "Russian Federation" are correct country names under the constitution, and both are safe to say.⁷

Gender Equality: A 2015 survey by the World Economic Forum ranked the Russian Federation 75th out of 142 countries in terms of gender equality. Although women in Russia are gaining economic power and opportunity, they have had very little government representation in the last 50 years.⁸



Sexual Assault and the Law: Russian Context

In Russia, both men and women can be victims of rape and sexual assault by law. Under the Russian Criminal Code, rape is defined as “sexual relations with the use of violence or with the threat of its use against a victim or other persons, or in taking advantage of the victim’s helpless condition,” and sexual assault is “compulsion of a person to enter into illicit relations, pederasty, lesbianism, or the commission of other sexual actions by means of blackmail, threat of destruction, damage, or taking of property, or with the advantage of material or any other dependence of the victim.”⁹ someone familiar to them. Despite the encompassing wording of Russian sexual assault laws, the patriarchal roots of Russian society and the abundance of common rape myths among law enforcement means that only 3% of reported rape cases have ever been prosecuted.¹⁰

If You Experience Sexual Assault...

Don’t blame yourself! **Sexual assault is never the fault of the victim.** You may be unsure of how to proceed, and that’s okay. First, consider taking the following actions:

1. If you are in a safe place, **call someone you trust** to be with you. If you are not safe, call someone you trust to come and get you.
2. Do **self-collection of evidence**. Put all of the clothes you were wearing, bed sheets, and so on in a paper bag. If you have any injuries, **take pictures**. If there is semen present, collect what you can in a hotel glass or cup and put it in the paper bag.
3. **Call a SASHAA advocate** internationally toll free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They can help you through the ordeal, honoring your decisions. (See *Resources*)

Medical Care and Reporting Sexual Assault in Russia

Reporting sexual assault to the police can be a traumatic and difficult experience for a victim. Russia is still a very patriarchal society, and victim blaming is common among law enforcement. According to a 2006 report from Advocates for Human Rights, “Women are under tremendous social pressure not to report rapes, and even when they do, they often face “hostility and suspicion” from police and prosecutors who pressure them to drop their complaints or accuse them of inviting the attack.” Obtaining a medical examination may also be difficult, as some doctors do not wish to get involved with the criminal justice system, or may refuse to testify.¹¹

LGBTQ VICTIM CONCERNS



While it is legal for a person in Russia to change gender, the change requires surgery for a person to be considered legally transgender. Homosexual activity is legal, but same-sex marriage is not. Discrimination against sexual orientation and gender is common and legal. Recently, the government passed a law that public advertisements cannot depict any relationships other than the “traditional family.”¹² Furthermore, in spring of 2017, the autonomous state of Chechnya began targeting gay citizens on a wide scale by arresting, detaining, and in some cases, extrajudicial killing.¹³

POST EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS, EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION, AND ABORTION

Q. Are post exposure prophylaxis and emergency contraception available?

A: Emergency contraceptive in the form of a pill is readily available in Russia, but many doctors are unaware of PEP as HIV/AIDS is still stigmatized and mythicized. You may need to ask your healthcare provider for both, if they are not offered.¹⁴

Q: Is abortion legal in Russia?

A: An abortion is both legal and readily available up to 12 weeks by a licensed doctor. After 12 weeks an abortion is only legal if the pregnancy was the result of rape or if the mother’s life is at risk.¹⁵

Resources

SASHAA

SASHAA International Crisis Line:

To call our confidential, toll-free, International Crisis Line first dial the country specific AT&T access code for **Russia (8 ^ 10-800-110-1011, Moscow: 363-2400, Outside Moscow: 8 ^ 495-363-2400, St. Petersburg: 363-2400, Outside St. Petersburg: 8 ^ 812-363-2400)**. Then, at the prompt, enter our phone number: **866-USWOMEN (866-879-6636)**.

Crisis Email:

To reach a SASHAA advocate, you can email us at crisis@866uswomen.org. All crisis emails will be responded to within 24 hours. However, if you need to get in touch with us immediately, please call the international toll-free crisis line.

Live Chat:

SASHAA online chat services are available 24/7 at our website <https://sashaa.org>.

ANTI-VIOLENCE ORGANIZATIONS

HRO Soprotivlenie (Victim Support Russia)

Tel: +7 495 781 9602

Center Anna (only Russian-Speaking Advocates)

Tel: 8 800 700 06 00

Non-Discriminatory Gender Relations Institute

Tel: +7 (812) 327-30-00

Website: www.crisiscenter.ru

Email: natasha@women.spb.ru

Aleksandra - Social and Legal Assistance

Tel: +7 (812) 320-67-24

Email: lasoffice@laspodmoga.ru

Russian Association for Psychological assistance

Tel: +7 (812) 108-40-41

U.S. EMBASSIES/CONSULATES

U.S. Embassy in Moscow

Bolshoy Deviatinsky Pereulok No. 8, Moscow 121099

Tel: +7 (495) 728-5000

Fax: 728-5090

St. Petersburg (Consulate)

Ulitsa Furshatskaya, 15, St. Petersburg 191028

Russia — PSC 78, Box L, APO AE 09723

Tel: +7 (812) 331-2600

Vladivostok (Consulate)

Ulitsa Pushkinskaya 32, Vladivostok 690001

Tel: +7 (4232) 30-00-70

Yekaterinburg (Consulate)

Ulitsa Gogolya 15A, 4th floor Yekaterinburg 620151

Tel: (343) 379-30-01, 379-46-19

HOSPITALS

Intermedcenter/American Clinic - Moscow

26 Mira Prp., Bldg. 5

Emergency Tel: (495) 937-5757

European Medical Center - Moscow

5 Spiridonievskiy Per., Bldg. 1

Emergency Tel: (495) 933-6655

American Medical Clinic - St. Petersburg

Moika emb. 78

Tel: 740-2090 (24 hours)

The International Clinic Medem - St. Petersburg

Marata St. 6 (metro Mayakovskaya)

Tel: 336-3333 (24 hours)

City Hospital - Vladivostok

#1, 22 Sadovaya St.

Tel: (423)245-2601, (423)245-2682

Yekaterinburg

(Note: In Yekaterinburg, most patients pay in cash and receive reimbursement from their insurance companies upon their return to the United States. Availability of English-speaking doctors may vary.)

Sverdlovsk Regional Hospital No. 1

185 Volgogradskaya St., Yekaterinburg, 620102

Tel: +7 (343) 351-1697 (reception) : +7 (343) 351-1640

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

General Emergencies: **112**

Police: **102**

Ambulance/Medical: **103**

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