Malaysia 2015 Crime and Safety Report

The overall crime rate is designated as high for Malaysia. Petty crime against expatriates is fairly common, while violent crime remains relatively uncommon.

There has been a noticeable increase in crime in Kuala Lumpur in 2014, including several reported assaults and robberies, sometimes involving weapons. Petty theft, particularly purse snatching and pickpocketing, and residential burglaries are the most common crimes committed against foreigners. Other types of non-violent criminal activity include credit card fraud and automobile theft.

In most purse snatching incidents, two thieves on a motorcycle speed up from behind a victim, and the passenger on the back snatches a purse, handbag, or cellular phone. Thieves have also conducted snatch thefts while leaning out of the passenger side of moving vehicles. Increasingly, large groups of robbers have physically confronted victims. These types of thefts can occur at all hours and often in front of large groups of witnesses, even in upscale neighbourhoods frequented by expatriates. Women walking by themselves or with small children are the most common targets, but men walking or jogging alone have also been targeted. Victims have been injured and even killed after falling and being dragged by thieves in cars or on motorcycles. More recently, thieves carrying knives have slashed and cut the victim in order to shock him/her into immediately releasing valuables.

Taxi drivers in downtown Kuala Lumpur have been involved in recent incidents of violent crime perpetrated against foreign tourists and local residents. A useful app, “My Teksi,” allows smart phone users to book on-line.

Credit card fraud continues to be a problem. Unauthorized charges may not show up on a credit card account for several months (and can appear in amounts of U.S.$10,000 or more). Employees in retail stores swipe the credit card in a legitimate transaction under the counter, where account information is “skimmed” into a machine that either transmits the information or it stores the information for reproduction. In some cases, more sophisticated criminals have tapped into data lines of legitimate establishments to obtain account information. ATM cash withdrawals are generally safe as long as the ATMs are associated with reputable Malaysian or international banks.

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