

HORIZON TRAVEL WATCH

Current Trends & Risk Mitigation Guidance

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International travel is becoming more complex. As travel continues its strong post-pandemic recovery, organisations sending staff, students, and volunteers abroad face a mix of physical, digital, geopolitical, and health risks. This briefing brings together current government advice, specialist risk insight, and major news reporting to highlight the issues travellers need to consider now.

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1. FCDO Travel Advice: Recent Updates

The UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) has expanded its travel advisory list in 2026. As of **3 June 2026**, it advises against travel to **76 countries and territories** worldwide [3]. In the past 24 hours alone, the FCDO updated guidance for **13 countries**, largely in response to the ongoing US-Israeli military conflict with Iran, now in its sixth day. Airports in Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Israel, Bahrain, and Qatar remain closed or are operating on a severely limited basis, causing disruption well beyond the immediate conflict zone.

With an estimated **138,000 British nationals registered in the Middle East** and around 300,000 across the Gulf states overall, the FCDO has set up a dedicated information hub for those in affected countries and is coordinating repatriation options, including commercial, charter, and military flights, as well as land routes through Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Organisations should note that travelling against FCDO advice can **invalidate travel insurance** and significantly limit the consular support available in an emergency.

Latest Updates — 3 June 2026

The following country advisories have been updated in the past 24 hours and are of immediate relevance to organisations with staff in the region:

- Saudi Arabia — FCDO now advises against all but essential travel to Eastern Province and Riyadh Province; advice against all travel within 10km of the Saudi-Yemen border remains in place
- Lebanon — FCDO has increased the scope of its "all travel" warning; all areas of Lebanon now covered by either "all travel" or "all but essential travel" advice
- UAE (Dubai and Abu Dhabi) — Airports operating on limited basis; those in high-risk areas advised to shelter indoors and follow local authority guidance

- Israel, Palestine, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar — "Do Not Travel" or "all but essential travel" designations maintained; airspace closures in effect
- USA — FCDO updated 2 June 2026 to add Ebola entry screening requirements for travellers arriving from DRC, Uganda, and South Sudan

"Do Not Travel" — Current FCDO Designations

The FCDO currently advises against all travel to the following countries or to specific areas of them:

- Afghanistan, Belarus, Burkina Faso, Haiti, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Mali, Niger, Palestine, Russia, South Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, and Yemen

"Avoid Non-Essential Travel" — Current FCDO Designations

The FCDO advises against non-essential travel to a further group of countries, including:

- Angola, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Ghana, Guatemala, Kosovo, Kuwait, Laos, Malaysia, Mexico, North Korea, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Qatar, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia (Eastern Province and Riyadh Province), Tanzania, and Thailand

Countries with Specific Regional Warnings

Many additional countries carry partial or regional warnings. These include:

- Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Moldova, Mozambique, Myanmar (Burma), Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, and Western Sahara

Key Actions for Organisations

- Check FCDO travel advice immediately for any staff currently in or travelling to the Middle East — the situation is changing hourly
- Staff in affected Gulf countries should follow local authority guidance and maintain regular contact with a nominated controller within your organisation where possible
- Register staff in affected regions with the relevant GOV.UK travel advice pages, where available, to receive updates
- Ensure travel insurance policies are valid for the destination; cover is typically void if FCDO advises against travel
- Set up FCDO email alerts for all countries where staff travel regularly — 13 countries were updated in a single 24-hour period this week
- Review and update your organisation's approved destination list urgently in line with current FCDO designations

2. Crime & Physical Threats

Opportunistic and organised crime remains one of the most consistent risks for international travellers. The 2026 Continental Risk Maps produced by Safeture and Riskline identify cities including Caracas, Guatemala City, Port-au-Prince, and Kabul as among the least safe globally, citing widespread violent crime, cartel activity, and weak law enforcement as key drivers [1].

Even in destinations not typically considered high-risk, travellers face elevated exposure to pickpocketing, phone theft, and distraction-based robbery in crowded tourist areas, transport hubs, and

markets. Cartel-related violence in parts of Mexico — including popular resort areas such as Acapulco and Los Cabos — has prompted updated advisories from multiple governments.

Practical Considerations

- Phone theft in crowded public spaces remains a leading incident type — individuals should take care using devices visibly in busy areas
- Lone travellers, particularly women, face heightened risks in certain regions; pre-travel briefings should address personal safety protocols
- Kidnap-for-ransom remains a risk in parts of Latin America, West Africa, and South/Southeast Asia — organisations sending staff to these regions should consider specialist security briefings
- Travellers should identify the location of the nearest police station, embassy, and hospital before arrival

3. Digital Threats & Travel Fraud

AI-powered fraud is now a leading digital threat for travellers. A May 2026 McAfee study found that **1 in 3 travellers have encountered a travel scam**, with 41% of those losing money — and nearly half of that group losing more than £500 [2]. Scammers are using AI tools to create convincing phishing emails, cloned booking websites, and deepfake voice calls that appear to come from airline staff, hotel representatives, or travel agents.

A separate industry report from SecureTrust revealed that **66% of travel agencies experienced data breaches in the past year**, compromising passport and payment data [4]. Deepfake technology is also being used to create fraudulent rental listings, fake host identities, and AI-generated travel documents capable of defeating basic verification systems.

Practical Considerations

- 90% of travellers feel pressure to book quickly — scammers exploit this urgency; staff should be trained to pause and verify before committing payment
- TripAdvisor was the most commonly impersonated travel platform in 2026, cloned at nearly three times the rate of competitors such as Booking.com and Expedia
- Public Wi-Fi use (airports, hotels, cafés) exposes devices to interception — a VPN should be standard issue for all travelling staff
- Voice cloning scams can impersonate known contacts or service providers using just seconds of audio — staff should verify unexpected calls through a separate channel
- All travel bookings should be made via verified platforms using credit cards, which offer fraud protection and dispute rights

4. Geopolitical Instability & Civil Unrest

The global security environment remains highly volatile. In March 2026, the US State Department issued a **worldwide caution alert** urging Americans abroad to exercise increased vigilance, citing escalating tensions involving Iran and the risk of attacks on US interests worldwide [5]. The UK FCDO maintains similar guidance for British nationals (see Section 1), and airspace closures continue to disrupt routes across the Middle East.

Currently at Level 4 ("Do Not Travel") under US State Department advisories: Afghanistan, Belarus, Burkina Faso, Haiti, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, North Korea, Russia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen [6]. Several Middle Eastern nations including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE have been elevated to Level 3 ("Reconsider Travel") due to regional spillover risks.

Beyond active conflict zones, youth-led protest movements have caused sudden disruptions in cities including Jakarta, Kathmandu, and Seoul. Organisations should monitor local developments closely and ensure staff have contingency plans for itinerary disruption.

Practical Considerations

- Avoid sending staff to Level 3 or Level 4 destinations without specialist risk assessment and appropriate insurance cover
- Monitor FCDO, US State Department, and Australian DFAT advisories regularly — risk levels can change rapidly
- Ensure staff know how to contact the nearest embassy or high commission in an emergency
- Have a clear crisis communication plan: staff should know who to contact within your organisation if an incident occurs

5. Natural Disasters & Climate-Related Disruption

Extreme weather is increasingly part of normal travel disruption. Redpoint Travel Protection's 2026 Traveller Risk Report found that **more than half of travellers have already changed plans because of extreme weather**, and nearly 70% expect to do so regularly in future [7]. High winds, wildfires, flooding, and unseasonal temperatures are the most common concerns.

Although this report focuses on American travellers, the issues are likely to be similar regardless of where a traveller is based and are therefore worth noting.

Recent events illustrate the scale of disruption: wildfires in Greece affected tens of thousands of tourists; storms battered the Canary Islands ahead of Easter travel; and Hurricane Melissa caused significant disruption across the Caribbean. Climate-related events can strike with little warning, affecting flights, accommodation, and personal safety simultaneously.

The *Met Office* says a strong El Niño may develop in 2026, with global effects most likely later in the year. For travellers, that can mean higher chances of heat, drought, flooding, wildfire smoke, and transport disruption in some regions, so seasonal conditions should be checked closely before departure [12].

Practical Considerations

- Build weather risk assessment into pre-travel planning — check seasonal patterns and historical climate data for destinations
- Ensure travel insurance policies explicitly cover weather-related cancellations, delays, and emergency accommodation
- Choose refundable booking options where possible to preserve flexibility

6. Health & Disease Risks for Travellers

Two significant disease outbreaks are currently active and directly relevant to international travellers. The US Centre for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) has issued a **Level 3 (Avoid Non-Essential Travel) alert for Ebola Bundibugyo Virus Disease in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**, and a

Level 2 alert for Uganda [8]. US authorities have introduced enhanced Ebola screening at designated airports for travellers arriving from DRC, Uganda, and South Sudan within 21 days of travel.

A multi-country hantavirus cluster linked to cruise ship travel has also been identified, with the WHO issuing a Disease Outbreak Notice in May 2026 [9]. Additionally, global dengue fever remains at elevated levels (CDC Level 1 notice), and chikungunya has been flagged in Mauritius (Level 2). Healthcare infrastructure in many high-risk destinations — including Afghanistan, South Sudan, Papua New Guinea, and Haiti — remains severely limited, making medical evacuation cover essential.

Practical Considerations

- Consult a travel medicine clinic at least 4–6 weeks before departure to any high-risk destination
- Ensure vaccinations are current; check destination-specific requirements via [Travel Health Pro](#).
- Travel insurance must include medical evacuation cover — standard policies may not suffice for remote or high-risk destinations
- Travellers to DRC, Uganda, or South Sudan should be aware of enhanced screening requirements on return to the UK and US
- Carry a basic medical kit and any prescription medications in sufficient supply for the full duration of travel

7. Evolving Entry Requirements & Border Changes

Two major border system changes have come into effect in 2026 that directly affect UK-based organisations sending staff abroad.

EU Entry/Exit System (EES) — Fully Operational from 10 April 2026

The EU's Entry/Exit System became fully operational across all 29 Schengen countries on 10 April 2026 [10]. Passport stamping has been replaced with digital biometric registration — facial images and fingerprints are now recorded at every Schengen border crossing for non-EU nationals. Since its phased introduction in October 2025, over 52 million border crossings have been registered and more than 27,000 entry refusals issued. Travellers should allow additional time at border crossings, particularly during peak travel periods.

UK Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) — Mandatory from 25 February 2026

From 25 February 2026, visitors from 85 nationalities — including the US, Canada, France, and other EU countries — must obtain a UK Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) before travelling to or transiting through the UK [11]. The ETA costs £16, is linked to the traveller's passport, and is valid for two years or until passport expiry. Travellers without an approved ETA may be denied boarding. British and Irish citizens are exempt.

Practical Considerations

- Ensure all non-EU staff travelling to Schengen countries are aware of biometric registration requirements and allow extra time at borders
- International visitors, partners, or delegates travelling to the UK must obtain an ETA in advance — this applies to transit passengers as well
- Check passport validity: many countries require at least 6 months' validity beyond the travel dates; some Schengen countries require validity beyond the intended stay
- Organisations hosting international visitors for conferences, training, or study should communicate ETA requirements well in advance of travel

8. Practical Tips for Managing Travel Risk

These recommendations are intended for organisations sending staff, students, or volunteers abroad. They reflect current good practice in duty of care and travel risk management.

Before Travel

- Register with the [FCDO](#) where this option is available for the country you are travelling to
- Monitor official government travel advisories and set up real-time alerts for your destination
- Consult a travel medicine clinic 4–6 weeks before departure; ensure vaccinations are current
- Purchase comprehensive travel insurance including medical evacuation, natural disaster, civil unrest, and cancellation coverage
- Check EU EES biometric requirements and UK ETA requirements; verify passport validity for all destinations
- Brief all travellers on destination-specific risks: crime patterns, cultural norms, local laws, and emergency contacts

Digital & Financial Safety

- Use a VPN on all public Wi-Fi networks; enable remote wipe on devices before departure
- Book travel exclusively through verified, reputable platforms; pay by credit card for fraud protection
- Be alert to AI-generated phishing, deepfake voice calls, and cloned booking websites — verify unexpected communications through official channels
- Avoid storing financial cards in phone wallet attachments; keep digital and physical copies of key documents separately

During Travel

- Maintain situational awareness in public spaces; identify emergency exits, police stations, and hospitals at your destination
- Avoid areas of known protest or civil unrest; follow local authority guidance
- Have a crisis action plan: staff should know who to contact within your organisation and how to reach the nearest embassy
- Avoid using phones visibly in crowded areas; use hotel safes for passports and valuables

DISCLAIMER

This briefing is for informational and educational purposes only. It draws on publicly available sources, including the UK FCDO, US State Department, CDC, WHO, and specialist travel risk publications. Horizon Global Awareness does not provide security, investigative, or intelligence-based services. Travellers and organisations should always consult official government advice for the most current guidance.

9. About Horizon Global Awareness

Horizon Global Awareness provides clear, practical travel awareness training to help organisations prepare their people for safe and confident international travel. Our workshops are designed for staff, students, and volunteers who may be travelling to unfamiliar environments and need straightforward guidance on how to navigate common risks.

We deliver engaging, accessible sessions on:

- International travel awareness and personal safety basics
- Cultural awareness and appropriate behaviour abroad
- Digital and cyber-hygiene for travellers
- Pre-travel planning and preparation
- General global risk awareness using publicly available information

We work with universities, SMEs, charities, NGOs, and community organisations across the UK. Our aim is simple: to help travellers make informed decisions, feel more confident, and be better prepared when operating overseas.

If your organisation wants to strengthen its duty of care and support international travellers with clear, practical training, **Horizon Global Awareness is here to help.**

Contact: info@horizonglobalawareness.co.uk

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