



Embassy of the United States of America

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American Citizen Services Newsletter June 2006

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SAFETY AND SECURITY SITUATION

While the security situation in Macedonia today is stable, travelers always should be alert for unusual behavior and other possible indicators that something out of the ordinary might be happening. Americans should avoid demonstrations and other sites, such as roadblocks, where large crowds are gathered, particularly those involving political causes or striking workers. Acts of intimidation and violence against American citizens have not occurred recently but remain possible. While overall levels of crime throughout Macedonia remain low, there have been occasional incidents of home and vehicle break-ins. We remind all American citizens to lock their windows and doors at all times and not to leave any valuables in plain sight in their vehicle.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's website at <http://travel.state.gov> where up-to-date [Worldwide Caution Public Announcements](#), [Travel Warnings and Public Announcements](#) can be found.

ARE YOU TRAVELING THIS SUMMER?

If you are traveling to another country this summer, be sure to check the Consular Information Sheet for your destination. These reports are prepared by U.S. Embassies and Consulates throughout the world.

CONSULAR INFORMATION SHEETS are an excellent source of information to consult before traveling. Available for every country in the world, they include information on location of the U.S. embassy or consulate in the subject country, visa and entry requirements, availability of medical care, unusual immigration practices, health conditions, minor political disturbances, crime and security information, road conditions, drug penalties, and much more.

Be sure to read any travel warnings or public announcements that may be in effect for the country or region where you are traveling.

TRAVEL WARNINGS are issued when the State Department decides, based on all relevant information, to recommend that Americans avoid travel to a certain country.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS are a means to disseminate information about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term and/or trans-national conditions posing significant risks to the security of American travelers. They are made when there is a specific threat that cannot be countered. In the past, Public Announcements have been issued to deal with coups, violence by terrorists and anniversary dates of specific terrorist events.

All of these documents, and other useful information for Americans traveling abroad, can be found at <http://travel.state.gov>.

INDEPENDENCE DAY PICNIC

U.S. citizens are cordially invited to the Embassy's

Independence Day Picnic

Saturday July 8, 2006 from 3:00-7:30 pm in the City Park
Adult: 300 MKD, Child (2-8 years): 100 MKD

The Independence Day Picnic will be held in the City Park (a map with directions will be provided with ticket purchase) on Saturday, July 8 from 3:00 – 7:30 pm. Tickets will be available for purchase beginning Monday, June 19, only for eligible American citizens with a valid U.S. passport, their spouse and dependent children. Each family is to bring a dessert to share. To purchase tickets, come to the U.S. Embassy Monday – Thursday between the hours of 10:30am-3:00pm. Upon arrival at the Embassy, please indicate to the guard that you are here to purchase tickets and ask them to call ext. 3114 or ext. 2158. You must have your valid U.S. passport with you at the time of purchase. All ticket sales are non-refundable.

EMBASSY MOVES TO SUMMER WORK HOURS

Beginning June 12, the U.S. Embassy in Skopje has moved to summer hours. From that date, the Embassy will be open from 14:00 to 16:00, Monday through Thursday, to accept passport applications, register births of American citizens abroad, and perform other routine services for American citizens. For emergencies outside of business hours, please call 070 205 687.

UPCOMING HOLIDAYS

The Embassy will be closed for the following holidays:

- Independence Day – Tuesday, July 4
- Ilinden Uprising Day – Wednesday, August 2
- American Labor Day – Monday, September 4
- Macedonian Independence Day – Friday, September 8

A full list of all of our holiday closings for 2006 is available online at <http://skopje.usembassy.gov/holidays.html>

U.S. EMBASSY INTRODUCES NEW VISA INFORMATION SERVICE

The Embassy is pleased to announce the introduction of the new Visa Information Service (VIS) for visa applicants who reside in Macedonia or Kosovo. VIS is now the only authorized means to make appointments for nonimmigrant visa interviews or obtain general visa information by telephone. General visa information remains available at the Embassy's website, <http://skopje.usembassy.gov>, but the Embassy's consular section can no longer accept appointment requests by email or fax.

The Visa Information Service, based on similar models operating today in more than 35 countries on four continents, will streamline the appointment process and provide prompt information on visa application procedures and requirements in Macedonian, Albanian, and English. The Visa Information Service:

- Answers callers' questions about application procedures for nonimmigrant and immigrant visas.
- Provides information about nonimmigrant visa classifications and the supporting documents needed for each type.
- Provides information about immigrant visas and immigrant visa petitions.
- Schedules appointments for nonimmigrant visas.

The service is operated by Computer Sciences Corporation on behalf of the U.S. Embassy.

Accessing the Visa Information Service

From Macedonia:

- Prospective applicants must obtain a personal identification number (PIN) from any branch of Komercijalna Banka for \$12, payable in Macedonian denars.
- The following business day, applicants may then use their PIN to access the Visa Information Service by calling (+389 2) 309 9090 from a touchtone phone.

From Kosovo:

- Prospective applicants must obtain a personal identification number (PIN) from any branch of Raiffeisen Bank for \$12, payable in euro.
- The following business day, applicants may then use their PIN to access the Visa Information Service by calling (+381 38) 247 973 from a touchtone phone.

Each PIN is valid for seven minutes of VIS access, and can be used any time within a year of the original purchase date. Callers may use their PIN to schedule themselves and up to four immediate family members, including parents, siblings, and children, and may use the same PIN for more than one call if the original seven minutes has not expired. The Visa Information Service will be available to the public from 8:00am to 5:00pm from Monday to Friday, excluding Macedonian holidays. The VIS PIN fee is non-refundable and is in addition to the visa application fee.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT AVIAN INFLUENZA

Information on the prevention and treatment of avian influenza (AI) is available from the State Department at http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1181.html. Those traveling to countries where AI is prevalent should consider the potential risks and keep informed of the latest medical guidance and information in order to make appropriate plans.

A specific vaccine for humans that is effective in preventing AI is not yet readily available. Based upon limited data, the CDC has suggested that the anti-viral medication Oseltamivir (brand name-Tamiflu) may be effective in treating avian influenza.

The Department of State cannot provide Americans traveling or living abroad with medications, including in the event of an emergency. However, Tamiflu is readily available in Macedonia at the Biolek Pharmacy (tel: (2) 3063 315) in Skopje, in the Leptokaria shopping center.

IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT THE 2006 ELECTIONS

All American citizens are reminded that 2006 is an election year in the United States. Overseas citizens are eligible to participate in primary, run-off, and special elections that occur throughout the year, as well as the general elections in November. A calendar of election dates is available on the Internet at <http://www.fvap.gov/pubs/primarycal.html>. You are encouraged to register to vote and/or request absentee ballots as early in the year as possible to ensure that you will receive all ballots for which you are eligible.

The official US Government website for overseas absentee voting assistance is the Federal Voting Assistance Program website at www.fvap.gov. It has a wealth of information about absentee voting, including the downloadable absentee ballot application (SF-76, Federal Post Card Application, or FPCA), state-specific instructions for completing the form, links to or contact numbers for state and local officials, and the downloadable emergency ballot.

WORLD CUP 2006 FACT SHEET

The 2006 FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) World Cup will take place in twelve cities in Germany, from June 9 to July 9, 2006.

For additional information on the FIFA World Cup, including information on hotel accommodations, tickets, transportation, and advice for spectators, please see the official World Cup 2006 website at <http://www.fifaworldcup.com/> or the U.S. Soccer Federation's website at <http://www.ussoccer.com/>.

American citizens planning to travel to Germany to see or participate in the Games should visit the U.S. Mission to Germany's World Cup website at <http://worldcup2006.usembassy.de/>.

The State Department has assembled a World Cup 2006 Fact Sheet available at: http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/world_cup/world_cup_2900.html

PLAN AHEAD FOR AIRPORT SECURITY PROCEDURES

With the summer travel season upon us, air travelers are urged to plan ahead for security procedures at the airport. Because of the heavy passenger traffic expected throughout the summer, the U.S. Transportation Security Administration has created a summer travel website to help passengers prepare for the screening process. Following a few simple guidelines will help make passenger screening as efficient as possible.

The checklist is available at:

<http://www.tsa.gov/public/display?theme=40&content=090005198013fe99>



This newsletter is an unofficial and informal source of practical information for American citizens residing in Macedonia. If you have comments, questions, or suggestions, please contact the Consular Section at (02) 311-6180, or at consularskopje@state.gov. This newsletter is also available on the American Citizens Services page of our website at <http://skopje.usembassy.gov>