



# OLYMPICS SECURITY

**Kate Fitzpatrick** considers the main security concerns as the world gathers in Paris

**P**aris is hosting the Olympics for the first time in 100 years. While many Parisians are planning to leave the city or have been told to work from home, over 15-million tourists, athletes and journalists are predicted to descend on the city.

Paris' infrastructure, including its airports, roads, trains, hotels, the metro underground and cafes and restaurants, will be under enormous pressure during the six-week period of the Games. Furthermore, following

the 22 March terrorist attack in Moscow, France raised its national security alert system to the highest level.

The Olympics are taking place from 26 July to 11 August with almost 10-million tickets available for the events, while the Paralympics Summer Games, from 28 August to 8 September, is selling a further three-million tickets.

To fulfil its desire to be the greenest Olympics ever, Paris has chosen to utilise existing buildings and spaces. This means that not only will events be held across the

city, stretching security capabilities, they will also be held at iconic landmarks, including the Eiffel Tower, Place de la Concorde and the Grand Palais, adding to the complexity of security logistics. In addition, and for the first time, the opening ceremony is not in the confines of the main stadium but instead is being held on the River Seine.

Hosting this monumental event comes with it a myriad of security challenges, necessitating comprehensive planning and coordination to keep the participants and spectators safe.

With any large-scale event, security is pushed to its limits. They are also a prime target for protests, terrorist acts and general unrest, eg, strikes. With the world's media present, it is the ideal time to raise awareness for a cause or create major havoc.

We know that security is often very tight entering a venue, with the public generally very cooperative with security personnel's checks. However, on exiting people are relaxed and focused on getting home rather than thinking about their surroundings. In 2017, it was at the end of an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, as the crowds were dispersing, that the terrorists struck, taking advantage of the happy, milling crowd.

Around 35,000 police and gendarmes are expected to be mobilised each day during the games, with a peak of 45,000 expected for the opening ceremony. 18,000 French military troops will also be deployed, including 3,000 responsible for aerial surveillance and supported by up to 22,000 private security agents and 18,000 soldiers. The security operation will also be boosted by military and police personnel from 46 other nations including dog handlers, horse riders and mounted patrols.

The French government is also undertaking one million anti-terrorism checks and investigations in the run-up to the Olympics, which will include athletes and people living close to key infrastructure.

To guarantee the safety of visitors and to manage crowd flows, safety perimeters will be set up around the competition venues. These will restrict vehicles but will allow for the free movement of ticket holders, pedestrians and cyclists depending on which of the four zones is entered. Motorised vehicles may need to be Paris 2024-accredited to gain entry.

The security perimeter will often be in place for the hours preceding and immediately after the last event. Also, at least a week before the start, anyone entering areas of central Paris will need to have registered for a QR code and to show identity papers.

The Opening Ceremony on 26 July is being held on the River Seine with 10,000 athletes sailing on around 100 boats along a four mile (6km) stretch of the river.

From around 20 July onwards, a first security perimeter will be set up around the Seine, following the same regulations as the perimeters for the competition venues. The airspace will be closed and more than 45,000 police officials will be in attendance on the day.

Spectator places have already been reduced from about 600,000 people to just over 320,000 for security reasons. President Macron has said that France has a "plan B and a plan C" if they are forced to cancel this open-air spectacle for security reasons.

Paris' historical landmarks and buildings will form the backdrop of the Olympics, which has prioritised

adapting existing buildings and structures to host the 869 events rather than building new ones.

With the Place de la Concorde hosting the basketball, skateboarding and BMX competitions, to the beach volleyball at the foot of the Eiffel Tower, and the fencing and taekwondo at the Grand Palais, the Olympics will stretch all over the city. The Palace of Versailles will also host equestrian events and is on the marathon route.

Holding events outside stadiums requires more sophisticated security arrangements, not least because France is at its highest alert level.

The Olympics will also extend beyond Paris, with the cities of Lyon, Nice, Bordeaux, Nantes and Marseille hosting events, and it even extends to the beaches of Tahiti, which is hosting the surfing.

The security risk will be high, but steps can be taken to minimise exposure and preparation is key to ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience.

## UP TO 3,000 FRENCH MILITARY TROOPS WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR AERIAL SURVEILLANCE

**The Opening Ceremony:** This is taking place on the River Seine, so there will be detailed crowd control measures in place. Before attending this event, you should familiarise yourself with the rules governing where you can and can't go. Some streets and exits will be blocked.

**Stay Informed:** Keep up-to-date on the latest security news, speak to your hotel reception and check for any unrest, protests, etc. on reputable websites, including government ones. Download a travel risk app or set up news alerts to be the first informed. Remember social media is not a reliable source of information.

**Know your surroundings:** Get your bearings and research in advance the best routes to arrive and leave. Have a hard copy of an up-to-date map and mark your hotel, the airport and train station on it, as well as routes to and from the events. Also download an offline map on your smartphone.

**Think About Your Personal Situation:** Are you a lone traveller, a family, friends, or work colleagues? How fit and mobile is your party? Also, are you at particular risk, for instance are you diabetic and need regular medication? What can you do to mitigate the risks if, for example, you cannot return to your hotel due to a large-scale protest?

**Remain Alert:** Always remain vigilant and be aware of your surroundings, so you are more likely to notice if something doesn't look or feel safe. Also, keep your valuables close. In crowded situations, there will always be opportunistic thieves and con artists, so leave expensive watches and jewellery at home to avoid being a target.

**Smartphones:** In a security situation, phone signals are often blocked by the authorities or are just overloaded, so it's important to have back-up sources of information and knowledge such as keeping your hotel address, directions and other important information in the notes section of your phone.

**Around 35,000 police and gendarmes are expected to be mobilised each day during the games**

**Go Old School:** Think about how you would manage without modern technology and prepare accordingly. Have hard copies of important documents, maps and useful information, eg important telephone numbers including next of kin, a passport copy and insurance details. Ensure that all members of your party have hard copies of each other's contact details as well as the address and phone number of your hotel/accommodation.

## FROM 20 JULY ONWARDS, A FIRST SECURITY PERIMETER WILL BE SET UP AROUND THE SEINE

**Transport:** A local taxi firm can be a good option as they know the local area and will be abreast of the latest news. Pick up a card for a local company on arriving in Paris.

**React Quickly:** Do not wait for a situation to get out of control, if there are red flags that your safety might be compromised then it's important to remove yourself from the situation as soon as possible.

**Find a Place of Safety:** If you feel in danger because of protests or unrest, find somewhere you can shelter temporarily, like a café or restaurant, until the authorities say it's safe.

**Designate an Emergency Meeting Place:** With large crowds, it can be easy to get separated so have an agreed safe meeting place to head towards.

**Emergency Numbers & Providers:** Know the country code for emergencies. For France and the European Union, it is 112. Also, know where the nearest hospitals are and mark them on your hard copy map.

**Power pack:** Have a back-up power pack to charge your smartphone and spare chargers (remember to have the country-specific adapter).

**Cash:** Have some cash to hand as cards might not work if power lines are down.

**Stay hydrated:** Travel with refillable water bottles. It's important not to get dehydrated, particularly as there could be high temperatures in Paris.

**Airport / train station:** In the unlikely event of a serious incident where you need to leave the city, it's important to know where your main transport exits are located. Write down the directions from the hotel or stadium to the airport, and train stations. If the airport is over-congested, it might be worth taking a train to an alternative airport for a flight home ●

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**A Rapier FSC Ground Based Air Defence (GBAD) system was employed in the London 2012 Olympics**

