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# What to do about earthquakes when abroad?

**Earthquakes cannot be predicted and there is no comprehensive protection against them. However, you can take the following personal precautions when travelling to an earthquake-prone area.**

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## Before a strong earthquake

Before starting your journey, you may wish to find out if your destination is often affected by earthquakes (see page 3). When travelling to an area recently hit by a major earthquake, ask your tour operator or the local authorities or media about the situation on the ground and what are the consequences for you planned travel.

### For shorter stays

- Familiarise yourself with the recommended behaviour in the event of an earthquake.
- When you arrive at your accommodation, take a moment to find out where you might seek protection in the event of an earthquake (e.g. underneath a sturdy table or bed).
- Arrange with your fellow travellers where you would meet up after a quake or how you would get in touch with each other. Please note that mobile telephony and the power supply may not work for quite some time after a major event. Parks and open spaces make suitable meeting places.
- Make sure that you always have access to a modest cash reserve and to your passport or ID.
- If possible, when choosing accommodation or renting an apartment or house, ask about its earthquake resistance. Take note of the kind of geology the building is located on (in general the softer it is and the more sediment it contains, the worse is its performance in earthquakes) and avoid buildings with soft ground floors (e.g. large shops at ground level with just a few columns supporting the floors above them) or locations in narrow streets or on steep hillsides.

### For longer stays

- Keep emergency provisions at hand.
- Put together a first-aid kit.
- Copy important documents like passports and driving licences and have them to hand in the event of an earthquake.
- To get through power outages, have a flashlight, battery-powered radio and cash to hand (money withdrawals from ATMs may no longer be possible).
- Secure any items susceptible to damage from tremors and/or that could fall down and cause injury. These include such things as ceiling panels, shelves and their contents, televisions, music systems and lighting.
- Make a list of key telephone numbers, including those of the local police station, fire service and paramedics, as well as of the responsible embassy and/or nearest consulate. Save these numbers in your mobile phone, leave a copy in a readily accessible place and/or print it out in a small format to keep in your wallet.
- Find out how to switch off gas, electricity or water supplies in the event that you need to do so.

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## During a strong earthquake

### Inside a building

- Take cover (e.g. under a sturdy table).
- Beware of falling or toppling objects (e.g. shelves, heavy furniture, televisions and stereos, light fittings) and keep away from windows and glass walls, which may shatter.
- Only leave the building when the surrounding area is safe (when there are no more falling objects such as roof tiles, etc.).



### Outside

- Stay outside, do not seek shelter in a building.
- Keep away from buildings, bridges, electricity pylons, large trees, and other things that could collapse or fall.
- Keep away from the shores of waterbodies.



### In a vehicle

- Stop the vehicle and do not leave it during the earthquake.
- Do not stop on bridges, in underpasses, or tunnels.
- Keep away from buildings at the side of the road (danger of collapse).



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## After a strong earthquake

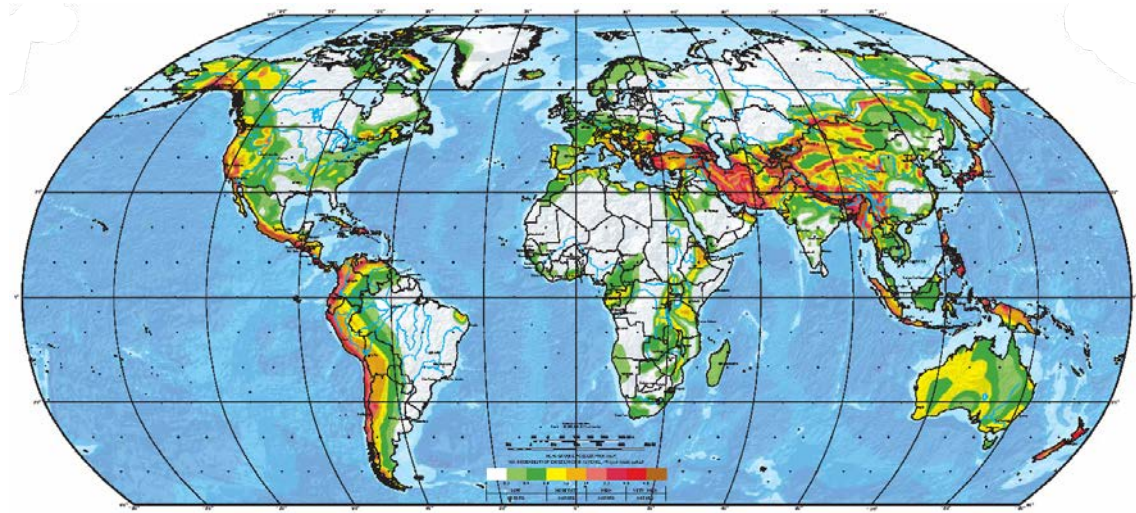
- Expect aftershocks.
- Help others without putting yourself in danger.
- Check building for damage. Leave the building in case of severe damage. The building may be at risk of collapsing and will not withstand further earthquakes.
- Caution when leaving the building. Pieces of masonry, roof beams, tiles, and the like may still fall off.
- Check the building and surrounding area for potential fires. When possible, extinguish small fires and / or alert the fire service.
- Check water and gas pipes and electrical wiring for damage. Turn off supply if damage is suspected.
- Seek information from television, radio, or the internet.
- Follow the instructions of emergency service personnel.
- Only use telephones in an emergency. Phone lines should be kept free for genuine emergencies.
- No individual travel by car. Roads should be kept free for emergency services.
- Power cuts are likely.

When staying in coastal areas you should pay special attention to the possibility of **tsunamis**. If you feel seismic tremors on a flat stretch of coast, move to higher ground inland as quickly as possible. Even more distant earthquakes can cause tsunamis close to where you happen to be. Heed and follow the instructions issued by the local authorities and find out in advance about local tsunami warning systems and escape or evacuation routes. Leave your place of refuge only after the local authorities have sounded the all clear, since more waves may follow initial ones, sometimes only after a lengthy time lag. An overview of the various official tsunami warning service providers can be found on the website of the [International Tsunami Information Center \(ITIC\)](https://www.itic.govt.nz/).

## Earthquake zones

### Worldwide

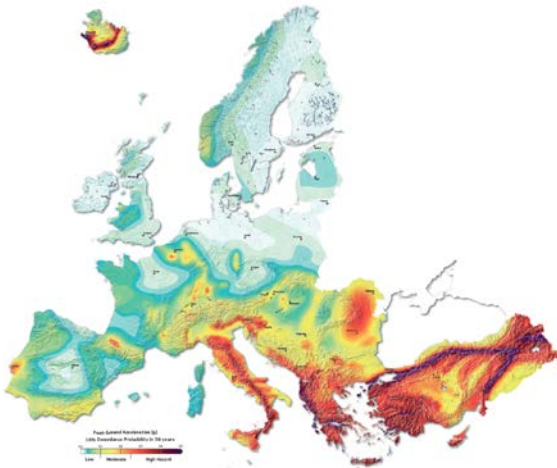
Ninety percent of earthquakes worldwide occur along the so-called 'Ring of Fire'. This makes it the most seismically active region and affects regions on the West Coast of South, Central and North America as well as Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, the South Seas and New Zealand.



Global Seismic Hazard Assessment Program (GSHAP)

### Europe

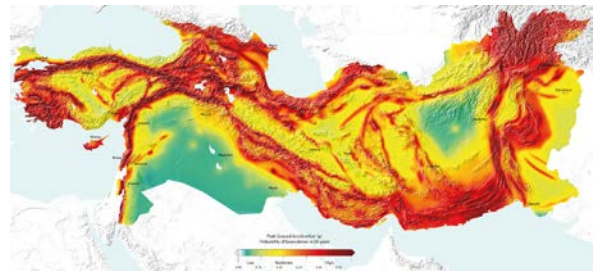
In Europe, Greece, Italy, Turkey, Cyprus, the Balkan states, Iceland and Romania are particularly earthquake prone. Switzerland, like Portugal and Spain, is subject to a moderate earthquake hazard. Countries like Germany, Norway and Great Britain are at little risk of seismic activity, although earthquakes cannot be completely ruled out in these regions either.



Seismic Hazard Harmonization in Europe (SHARE)

### The Middle East and Asia

In the Middle East and Asia (excluding the Ring of Fire), countries such as Azerbaijan, China, Georgia, Iran, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and Pakistan are high-risk earthquake zones.



Earthquake Model of the Middle East Region (EMME)