

## UPPER INTERMEDIATE UNIT 9



## 1 Work in pairs and discuss.

- 1 Look at the photos. What crimes do you think could be associated with them?
- 2 Do you know of any unusual laws in your country? What are they?

## 2 Read the blog post about strange crimes around the world. Choose the best summary of the tone of the article.

- 1 Quite dry and academic, making serious points about these crimes.
- 2 Informal and light-hearted, using a lot of funny and practical examples.
- 3 Exaggerated and dramatic, describing these crimes in great detail.



## Strange Crimes

When you travel, I reckon it's a good idea to take precautions, find out how safe your destination is and accustom yourself to the different laws that might apply there.

Mind you, a city's reputation can change a lot. Parts of New York City used to be very dangerous a few decades ago, but now it's considered one of the safest metropolises in the world. Meanwhile, people are seduced by the beauty and culture of a city like Barcelona where I live, but petty crime such as muggings are surprisingly common, as you might come across street scams and pickpockets in touristy areas.

Muggings and thefts would be considered crimes wherever you go. However, nothing can properly prepare you for certain laws that exist in some places and that might seem futile anywhere else.

One of the best known is the law against selling or importing chewing gum in Singapore. Authorities say it damages pavements and gets stuck in subway doors. Break the law and you face a £49,000 fine or even a two-year prison sentence. Singapore is a country renowned for its cleanliness and functionality, so the law does fit the place well. Having been there now, I can say that the law is enforced – it is actually great not to see gum on pavements or have it stuck to your shoes!

Other laws related to hygiene include the ban on feeding pigeons in Trafalgar Square in London. One of the UK's great tourist sights was becoming increasingly dirty due to these 'rats with wings', as Londoners call them in disgust. Likewise, the act is forbidden in St Mark's Square in Venice as some of the great monuments there have also fallen victim to the pigeons.

If we're talking about damaging ancient monuments, then another ban is the wearing of high heels at historic sites in Greece, such as the Acropolis. Although I can't imagine why anybody would want to do that!

Spain is such a hot country, it's easy to understand why you might wear flip-flops while driving. But if you do, you'll be breaking the law. Another favourite of mine is the law against carrying a durian fruit on public transport in Indonesia. Why? Because it smells so bad!

Meanwhile, in Finland, fines for certain crimes are based on your income. If you are rich, you pay more. It's as simple as that. A few years ago, a businessman was caught speeding and got a fine of over 100,000 euros. Now that wouldn't happen in my country and I'm not sure it should. Surely, fines should be the same for everybody.

It's unlikely you'll ever be caught committing these offences but it's worth knowing about them just in case!

**3** Read the blog post again. Are the sentences true (T) or false (F)? Correct the false sentences.

- 1 The image of a city can sometimes be *worrying/deceptive* – there is more crime there than you think.
- 2 Most crimes that tourists are involved in are *not/quite* serious.
- 3 The author is *sceptical/enthusiastic* about Singapore's chewing gum law.
- 4 Feeding pigeons is banned in London and Venice for *similar/different* reasons.
- 5 The author thinks that the anti-high heels law in Greece is silly because it is *impractical to wear them/difficult to enforce* at historic sites.
- 6 The author says that the law in Finland is *not right/a very welcome idea*.


**4** Complete the sentences with the words in the box.

precautions petty pickpockets futile  
renowned enforced speeding offences

- 1 Some of these \_\_\_\_\_ are not really serious crimes, but they are culturally interesting.
- 2 Most city centres suffer from \_\_\_\_\_, so avoid very crowded places and look after your valuables.
- 3 Some countries, like China, are \_\_\_\_\_ for enforcing quite strict laws.
- 4 Take \_\_\_\_\_ if you are going to some cities. Street crime is serious in some places and it's not safe to walk the streets.
- 5 A lot of the laws in the article are \_\_\_\_\_, they are not necessary and probably don't do much good.
- 6 You can get caught for \_\_\_\_\_ if a camera spots you driving over the limit.
- 7 Some laws exist officially but they are not \_\_\_\_\_, nobody would arrest you for breaking them.
- 8 If you are unlucky enough to suffer a crime, it is most likely to be a \_\_\_\_\_ one, something not serious at all.

**5** Work in pairs or small groups and discuss.

- 1 Which of the laws in the article do you think are correct or incorrect, necessary or unnecessary?
- 2 What do you think should be the different punishments for these crimes?

**6**  **9.1** Listen to a conversation between Richard and Sonia about different crimes and punishments. What is the best summary of their conversation?

- 1 They believe that many punishments should follow the Finnish model, you pay a penalty according to your income.
- 2 They believe that more criminals should receive fines or have their cases resolved outside court because of the cost to the state.
- 3 They believe that punishments are disproportionate. Serious criminals go free while petty offenders receive heavy penalties.

**7** Listen again. Underline the correct alternative.

- 1 Richard and Sonia initially *agree/disagree* about the Finnish law.
- 2 Richard says that the law would *be/not be* possible in other countries.
- 3 Sonia is amazed that *there are so many corrupt politicians/people empathise with these criminals*.
- 4 Richard says that footballers do not get punished for their crimes because of their *fame/fans*.
- 5 Sonia talks about parents who *allowed/didn't allow* their child to go to a funeral during school time.
- 6 Richard says that sometimes *you don't realise that you have committed a crime/you can't imagine you'll be punished for a crime*.
- 7 Although they are unfair, Sonia says that many people pay fines because they *are too lazy/don't want any more trouble*.

**8** The words in the box are from the recording. Match them with their meanings 1–8.

procedure overcrowded overlook swindle play truant  
refuse inadvertently disproportionate

- 1 without realising
- 2 too many people
- 3 not pay attention to something (often deliberately)
- 4 not accept something/say no
- 5 deliberately avoid going to school
- 6 a plan that you should follow
- 7 exaggerated or imbalanced
- 8 deceive somebody out of their money

**9** Work in pairs or small groups and discuss.

- 1 Which of the arguments put forward by Sonia and Richard do you agree with?
- 2 Which of the cases that they mention could be common in your country?
- 3 Do you think your country does enough to combat these crimes?
- 4 What could be done to ease the unfairness of the justice system?