# London’s rising phone theft epidemic threatens tourism and local economy



Concerns are mounting over a significant rise in phone thefts in London, with industry leaders warning that rampant crime is deterring tourists and impacting the local economy. Greg Hegarty, co-chief executive of PPHE Hotels, which operates 51 properties across Europe, has highlighted the alarming trend, stating that the security environment in the capital is deteriorating at an unprecedented rate. He emphasised the need for heightened security measures, which his company has doubled in recent years to reassure both leisure and corporate guests.

Hegarty's comments come amid reports detailing a staggering £50 million-a-year crime wave in London, characterised by thugs using scooters and bikes to snatch phones from unsuspecting victims. Alarmingly, even very young children are now counted among those affected by these aggressions. Establishing a sense of safety is crucial for both hotel operators and the city at large, noted Hegarty, who lamented, "If I'm looking at the South Bank of London and Oxford Street, you can't carry a mobile phone in the street anymore." He further remarked on the growing hesitation among tourists to visit certain areas of the city, which historically has been one of the UK’s foremost destinations.

In reaction to the escalating crime, the Metropolitan Police have recently intensified their crackdown on mobile theft. This includes a mandate to destroy e-scooters and e-bikes used in the commission of these crimes within 48 hours of seizure, a significant change from the previous two-week waiting period. Authorities argue that this swift action is essential in discouraging repeat offenders and enhancing public safety. A spokesperson for the Met commented on their ongoing efforts, stating, "By intensifying our efforts, we’re catching more perpetrators and protecting people from having their phones stolen in the capital."

The repercussions of this crime wave extend beyond the immediate victims. A recent report indicated that in the year leading up to September 2024, approximately 66,528 mobile devices were stolen in London, with Westminster alone witnessing 22,253 thefts, translating to 85.4 incidents per 1,000 residents. The frequency of these crimes has left many feeling unsafe; a compelling example is actress Genevieve Chenneour, who recounted a traumatic experience where she was left "concussed and traumatised" after confronting her attacker.

Advancements in police techniques are being employed to counteract these crimes. The Met is integrating the use of SelectaDNA, a unique invisible dye that marks both perpetrators and stolen items, making it easier to trace and prosecute offenders. This innovative method is already being deployed in London and other hotspots throughout the UK, reflecting a proactive approach to crime prevention.

Despite these measures, a pervasive sense of insecurity remains. Hegarty pointed out that compared to cities like Amsterdam, where crime is actively policed with zero tolerance, London’s response to thefts appears insufficient. The hotel industry and the wider tourism sector are now advocating for more robust policing to restore confidence among visitors, who have historically contributed significantly to the UK’s travel and tourism spending.

As the government continues to address both the crimes and public perception of safety in the city, residents and businesses alike hope for a future where visitors feel free to explore London without the fear of phone theft looming over them. The stakes are high, as the capital’s reputation as a welcoming destination hangs in the balance.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14769189/Hotel-boss-London-phone-theft-epidemic-scaring-tourists.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14769189/Hotel-boss-London-phone-theft-epidemic-scaring-tourists.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490),
* Paragraph 3 –

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14769189/Hotel-boss-London-phone-theft-epidemic-scaring-tourists.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data