

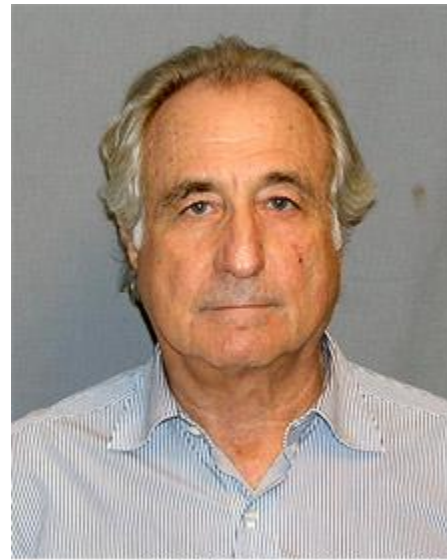
Prison survival tips for Madoff

Experts don't see a 'camp cupcake' for Madoff as they offer suggestions to keep out of danger.

By Aaron Smith, CNNMoney.com staff writer
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Ponzi scheme mastermind Bernard Madoff, 71, was sentenced Monday to a 150-year prison sentence. That means he will soon be sent to a real prison with real bars and violent offenders, not a "country club" for white collar crooks, experts say.

Madoff has been held at a Manhattan jail since March 12, when he [confessed](#) to 11 felony counts for orchestrating the largest Ponzi scheme of all time. For decades, Madoff stole billions of dollars from more than a thousand victims, while masquerading as a legitimate businessman through his investment firm.



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The length of Madoff's sentence, which is based on the sweeping magnitude of his crimes, gives him an incentive to escape and virtually ensures that he'll be sent to a prison instead of a [minimum-security camp](#), according to prison consultants.

"Madoff, he's not going to a camp, ever," said Larry Levine, founder of Wall Street Prison Consultants and a former inmate of the federal prison system. "His sentence is too long, so he becomes a flight risk. And then it gets into the severity of his crime. If you have more than 10 years, you can't get a camp."

No camp for Madoff

Camps are generally preferred by convicts, because they're deemed as safer, with fewer restrictions, consultants said.

"Prison camps are open facilities," said Alan Ellis, an attorney, prison consultant and author of the "Federal Prison Guidebook." "They are not surrounded by a fence. They generally house first-time offenders, non-violent offenders, people who are not going to be troublemakers."

Larry Levine speaks from first-hand experience. During his 10-year sentence for ties to organized crime, he said he served in 11 federal facilities, including high, medium and low security prisons, and minimum-security prison camps.

He said his favorite facility was Federal Prison Camp Nellis, on an air force base near Las Vegas. That's where Martha Stewart's co-conspirator in insider trading, Peter Bacanovic, served five months. The facility has since closed.

Madoff will most likely serve time in a medium-security prison, consultants believe -- his non-violent history will keep him out of maximum-security, but his sentence is too long to justify low-security.

Madoff's next home

Madoff's lawyer, Ira Lee Sorkin, would not comment last week on whether he'll request a specific prison for his client. The Federal Bureau of Prisons has the final say in such matters. BOP spokeswoman Felicia Ponce said the bureau tries to place inmates within 500 miles of their families, but she would not comment on where Madoff will be sent.

But Alan Ellis believes Madoff will probably land in one of the closest medium-security prisons to his family in Manhattan, where he lived in a \$7 million apartment until his March 12 guilty plea. Since then, he has been incarcerated in the Metropolitan Correctional Center in lower Manhattan, a temporary federal facility, prior to his prison transfer.

Ellis identified the most likely prisons for Madoff's term as Federal Correctional Institution Otisville, about 70 miles northwest of New York City, and FCI Fairton in nearby New Jersey. He said that Madoff might also be sent to FCI Ray Brook in upstate New York and FCI McKean in northwestern Pennsylvania. All are medium-security.

In a medium-security prison, prisoners are fenced behind a double-layered razor-wire perimeter with electronic detection systems, according to Felicia Ponce of the BOP. Inmates share cells, which are closely monitored after lights-out by patrolling officers, she said. They are subject to cell searches and pat-downs in the near-constant search for weapons and other contraband. They work menial jobs, often in kitchens or laundry rooms, where they are paid 12 to 40 cents an hour.

Madoff's prison survival strategy

"You're going to find a lot of people in medium who have a violent background," said Ellis, noting that the top concerns of his soon-to-be-incarcerated clients are "fear of prison assault" and "fear of the unknown."

Levine said that Madoff might be targeted by other prisoners as "an economic terrorist" and blamed as a general scapegoat for the financial woes of family members on the outside, even if they had nothing do with his Ponzi scheme.

"There will be people who think that Bernie can give them stock tips, but I don't see anyone being his big pal," said Levine. " I believe he'll be treated like an outcast."

Levine said that Madoff should always "maintain high visibility" as a security precaution.

"Try to stay in an area where there's a lot of people watching you, where the guards are watching you," Levine said, when asked what his advice would be for Madoff. "Do not become confrontational with anybody. Respect people; be polite. Don't borrow anything from anyone. Don't become beholden to anyone."

If Madoff feels that he's in danger, then he can report the threat to correctional officers and request protective custody, said Ponce. If that happens, he would be separated from the general inmate population and put into a special housing unit while the prison staff investigated his claims, she said.

In this regard, Madoff's fame -- or infamy -- might actually help keep him out of danger, the consultants said.

"If he gets assaulted while he's in there, that's big news, and the BOP hates publicity," said Levine. "If anything comes down on Madoff, it's going to come down on the warden." ■

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