

Domestic and International Travel Tips

USE COMMON SENSE

- The key to safe traveling in any area is situational awareness. Distractions because of luggage, children, hotel personnel, strangers, etc. can put you at risk.
- Know your surroundings and stay in control of every situation. Look and act confident. Be alert.
- Act like you know where you are going. Do not look lost or confused; simply look for an authoritative person or company in which you can ask for directions.
- Never flash your money in public. Exchange funds with reputable and recognized exchangers only.
- Do not discuss travel plans, your room number or any other personal information in public within earshot of strangers.
- Watch for scams on the street. Children working with adults are notorious as pickpockets.
- Avoid public demonstrations and other civil disturbances.

1) Documentation/Personal Information

- Passport, cash and credit cards should be kept in a hotel safe or in various places on your body.
- Avoid handbags, fanny packs and outside pockets - inside pockets or a sturdy shoulder bag with the strap worn across your chest. Consider locking/tying the zippers shut.
- Be aware of pick pocketers.
- Never list your home address on the luggage tag. If on business, put the company's address on the tag; if visiting friends you can list their address. Use covered luggage tags as well.
- Stay with your luggage until the luggage is checked. If you must put your bag down, keep one foot on the handle.
- Carry important papers with you; NEVER check anything that you simply cannot afford to lose.
- If possible travel with only one or two credit cards, and keep them in separate storage areas/pockets.
- Do not wear name tags in public.
- Leave a copy of your passport identification page, airline tickets, driver's license, the credit cards you're taking, serial numbers of your travelers' checks, insurance information, as well as the addresses and phone numbers of the places you'll be. Having copies of these documents at home will allow your family or friends to contact you or help you in case of an emergency. (Carry additional copies of these documents with you on your trip, separate from the originals.)
- Consider bringing your driver's license, even if you didn't plan to drive, as when faced with an emergency, you may need to drive.

2) Police/Laws

- Visit www.travel.state.gov before you travel abroad.
- Register your travel. <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>
- The Consular Information Program consists of three main components that provide information to the American public about travel to specific countries: Country Specific Information, Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts.
- Familiarize yourself with your destination.
- If you are planning to drive, familiarize yourself with driving laws.
- Learn the emergency contact number, as "9-1-1" isn't universal in every country.
- Do not carry or buy recreational drugs. Besides this being against the law, other countries often have different penalties that can include the death penalty.
- Know the liquid limits and luggage weight limits for traveling prior to date of travel and pack accordingly.

3) Culture/customs/local activities

- Learn the local dress code and any religious dress customs; buy appropriate clothing locally if necessary.
- Learn some phrases in the local language or have them handy in written form so that you can signal your need for police or medical help.
- Never wear anything that projects affluence. No gold chains, expensive watches and rings, luggage, or other paraphernalia should be in easy view. **Best option:** leave your jewelry at home.
- Never accept a drink from a stranger. Keep an eye on your drink at all times.
- Vary your schedule; try not to come and go at the same time every day.
- Never leave with a stranger.
- Never go out alone. Use the buddy system!

4) Currency

- Convert your cash before you go abroad.
- Know the US dollar ratio.
- Use Travelers' Checks.
- Consider using prepaid credit cards, as in the case of theft or loss, at least there are limited funds on the card.

5) Communication

- If your cell phone does not work outside of the country, consider renting one that does for the duration of your trip. Consider purchasing a worldwide cellular SIM card before you travel.
- Consider purchasing portable alarms that emit a loud sound.
- You may want to purchase several calling cards.
- Purchase a mini translator, or a dictionary.
- Establish a Skype account before you travel. This allows international calls for free via the internet.

6) Navigation

- Bring a small flashlight. You never know when you'll suddenly be "in the dark" and find yourself in unfamiliar surroundings.
- If you must rent a car, rent only from a reputable company. Any operating problems that occur could signal sabotage.
- Familiarize yourself with train and bus schedules before traveling. Have an alternate plan in place in the event your transportation plans change.
- Confirm cost of journey/travel prior to entering a taxi.
- Do not use unmarked taxi cabs.
- Beware of taxi drivers wanting to take diversions while on route- to shopping areas (as often they get commission from store owners to do this).
- Sit behind the driver so you can see him, but he cannot see you.
- Pay the driver upon arriving at your destination and while you are still sitting in the vehicle.
- Be aware of 'staged' car accidents meant to catch you off guard.
- Back into your parking spaces to facilitate a quick exit.
- Park only in well lit and well traveled areas.
- Never pick up hitchhikers.
- Don't use short cuts, narrow alleys or poorly lit streets.
- If you do not feel safe stopping at a red light, proceed safely with caution.
- Keep your car doors locked at all times, including when you are in the vehicle.
- Only pull over for the police.

7) US Emergency Contacts

- Discuss with your family/home contact, what they would do in event of an emergency while away from home, e.g. whom to call, how to contact emergency personnel, etc.
- Provide your family/home with your itinerary and all travel information and contacts.
- Write down important contact numbers that you will need, in the event that your cell phone gets lost or stolen.
- While traveling, if you plan to use an internet café, ensure that you log out of all applications- especially any application that has your private or confidential information.
- Traveling with Children:
 - Write your child's name, your contact information and your hotel number on an index card; include close friends or relatives contact information. Give a card to each child which they will carry with them as long as you are traveling. Destroy once home.
 - Bring along an updated photograph of each child in the event that you become separated from them.
 - Consider writing your cell phone number on an item/labelled pinned to your child

8) Safety/Health

- Visit the Travelers' Health page of the CDC- <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>
- If your medical insurance does not cover you abroad, purchase a short-term policy that does.
- Any medications being carried overseas should be left in their original containers and be clearly labeled.
- If you wear eyeglasses, take an extra pair with you. If you wear contacts, take a pair of eye-glasses with you too.
- Make sure your prescription medication is not considered an illegal narcotic.
- Travel with a basic first aid kit with bandages, iodine, mosquito repellent, sunscreen, alcohol packets, motion sickness pills, stomach upset/diarrhea medicine, etc.
- Research the nearest and best hospitals or urgent care facilities and pharmacies.
- Bring any medicines you need in your carry-on luggage.
- Make sure that your prescription medicines are filled *properly* and labeled *accurately*. Ensure that you have enough medicine in the event your return trip gets delayed.

9) Lodging

- Research area and make reservation(s) with a reputable hotel. Use online reference sites like Trip Advisor and Yelp, to view visitors comments.
- Only stay in a hotel that uses cards to open room doors and make sure your room has a peephole and a deadbolt lock. Secure the chain and secure the door by pushing a rubber stop under it.
- Keep your hotel door locked at all times. Meet visitors in the lobby. Do not allow any strangers into your hotel room.
- Do not leave money and other valuables in your hotel room while you are out. Use the hotel safe.
- Have gratuity/tips ready in advance for service personnel.
- Know the identity of any visitors before opening the door of your hotel room. Don't invite strangers to your hotel room, or to remote locations.
- Try to stay in a room near a stairwell. Never take the elevator if a fire or smoke is detected. Always stay in a hotel where the doors enter the hallway and not directly from the outside.
- Read the fire safety instructions in your hotel room. Know how to report a fire, and be sure you know where the nearest fire exits and alternate exits are located. (Count the doors between your room and the nearest exit; this could be a lifesaver if you have to crawl through a smoke-filled corridor.)
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10) Embassies

- Make note of the US Embassy in the country you are traveling to- <http://www.usembassy.gov/>

- Ask for American Citizens Services (ACS).