

# BE SAFE & HAVE THE BEST TIME WHEN TRAVELING



## 14 Tips to Stay Safe While Traveling Abroad

Traveling is fun but it can also be scary and overwhelming at times especially when you're traveling to a place that you've never been to. When traveling to a foreign place, there are a lot of questions and unknowns, a lot of things to consider, a lot to know and be aware of when it comes to learning the ways and culture of the people and the country itself. For the most part, traveling throughout the world is very safe. To ensure an enjoyable, happy and memorable trip, there are safety precautions that every traveler needs to do to ensure that you are also safe as you travel internationally.

### **Make copies of your travel documents**

Before you leave, make copies of all credit cards, airline tickets, passports and all other important documents front and back. It is also a good idea to photograph jewelry and valuables you are bringing with you. Leave a copy of your passport at home with the rest of the copies and photographs and bring another copy with you. While out and about abroad, you can leave your passport in a safe place and bring a copy with you in case you need to access all the details. In case your passport gets lost, the copy will come in handy when you get a replacement.

### **Check the State Department's website**

When traveling abroad, it is wise to check in with the State Department. Visit the State





Department's website before you leave. The site has updated safety information for every country of the world and provides tons of information that could be valuable as you embark on your journey. Reviewing the safety and security information on the country will help you determine for yourself the risks, if any, you are taking by going to the country you are visiting. It also provides information on what vaccinations you need, customs and import restrictions and any crisis information you need to know to be informed, prepared, connected, and safe. This site also provides the address and phone number of the nearest US embassy or consulate for you to take in case of an emergency. Also, remember you can't call 911 when you're in another country so find out what the local emergency hotlines are and save the information on your phone preferably on speed dial.

### **Protect your home while you're away**

Before your trip, stop your mail

delivery. You can now stop your mail delivery online through the postal service. It is so convenient there is no excuse for you to forget this step before you go. An overflowing mailbox is a huge neon sign on your house that tells everyone "no one is home". Having your mail held will also prevent important documents stolen from your mailbox while you are gone.

### **Car rental abroad and other ground transportation**

The number one cause of death for US citizens abroad, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), is due to motor vehicle crashes. Before you rent a car, determine if you are allowed to drive abroad or if you need to get an international driving permit. Make sure that you rent a dependable vehicle that is in good condition and has working seatbelts. Get adequate insurance for the vehicle. It also helps if you familiarize yourself with the rules of the foreign roads. If you are part of a group tour, make sure that the bus company has excellent safety records.





### **Find a safe hotel**

If at all possible choose a hotel that has modern electronic room locks, has fire sprinklers and smoke detectors, and located in a safe area. To maximize safety and security it is best to choose a room between the 4th and 6th floor. It is always nice to have the top floor especially one with a view, but the height the fire department ladders can reach only goes up to the 6th floor. It is also a good idea to take a look at the emergency escape routes in your hotel. Know where the exits are and where the stairwells are located in case of emergency and the elevators are inaccessible. In an event of an emergency and evacuation, you will be glad you did this exercise, in addition to finding out what other amenities and perks the hotel has to offer.

### **Don't carry everything together**

Do not keep your cash, credit cards, identification, and travelers checks all in your wallet. Leave any money, credit cards and IDs you won't be using locked in your hotel room safe. Keep your identification and money separate from each other and in different spots on your person. That way if your wallet gets stolen you don't risk losing everything. If you have medication, leave some in your luggage, some in your pocket and some in your carry-on bag. If you are diabetic or if you suffer from any other disease, carry a note from your doctor along with your prescription.

### **Don't carry things in your back pocket**

Pickpocketing is common in specific areas around the world. Pickpockets target tourists who are pre-occupied with the scenery and doing "all things tourists" making tourists an easy target. Keeping your wallet or hotel keys or anything in your back pocket as well as carrying your purse hanging on your back makes you an attractive target. Remember to keep everything to your front. Do not hang your purse on the



back of your chair or set your bags down on your feet. Keep your bags in your lap or with the straps wrapped around your leg. Always be attentive and aware of your surroundings. And when leaving, be sure to check and look back at where you were sitting to make sure you didn't forget your purse, shopping bags or anything else of importance.

### **Don't talk to strangers**

The best part of traveling is meeting new people talking to the people of the country you are visiting. However, remember what we tell our children about trusting and talking to strangers. Stranger Danger! Don't get carried away and be super friendly and trusting strangers with your personal information and life story. Do not accept food or drinks or go somewhere with strangers unless they are your licensed tour guide and you're on an officially booked tour. If you become a victim of a mugging, rather than to attempt to fight off the perpetrator, give your belongings up.

Do not be a hero! Cash, credit cards and identification papers are not worth injury or death. Report the incident to the nearest US Consulate or appropriate authorities.

### **Don't solicit panhandlers**

There are many countries that suffer from poverty and as you do when you travel here in the US, try not to go to areas that iffy and unsafe without the proper guides. You will notice that there a lot of beggars in some of the places that you visit. They are most prominent where there are tourists. You may be tempted to help them out and offer to give cash, food or any of your belongings. Try to refrain from doing this. If you genuinely want to offer your generosity and aid, research local charities in the place you are visiting and make your donation that way.

### **Avoid using your credit card at internet cafes**

In the age of the internet, we always want to be connected and love to





share the adventures of our travels with friends and family through social media, text or email. Remember to always have a secure connection. Internet cafes have been a trendy place where travelers hang out and quickly avail themselves of a computer to connect. We are so used to sharing our life and adventures of travel while having a cup of coffee. Criminals are always finding ways to commit identity theft by using sophisticated software on computers in internet cafes to steal your credit card information. If possible, use cash when paying for your computer use.

### **Avoid using public Wi-Fi**

Avoid using public Wi-Fi all together. Instead of using public Wi-Fi get a portable router to set up your own personal Wi-Fi. You are also now able to set up a personal hotspot on most phones. A personal hotspot lets you share the cellular data connection on your iPhone or iPad when you don't have access to a Wi-Fi network.

### **Password-protect phones**

Most everyone now store sensitive information on their smartphones. Make sure that you password protects your phones to make it harder for thieves to access your phone and retrieve personal and sensitive information. It is also good to install a tracking device on your phone in case your phone is stolen or misplaced. Not only should you set up a password to unlock your device but you should also create a strong and unique password that you change on a regular basis. In addition, enable

location tracking to track down your phone and install software that can destroy data on your phone when it gets stolen.

### **Social Media Safety**

We love to share on social media. We post photos and status updates while traveling and only a few of us disable geotagging on pictures. Sharing our agenda or location on social media give thieves information so it becomes easy for them to keep track of us and making it easier for them to time a crime. If you can, wait till you get home to post about your trip.

### **Trust your gut**

Be smart and stay aware of your surroundings. Use common sense and trust your gut. If you feel unsafe on any given place, get out of there! If you don't feel comfortable traveling alone, make sure you travel with a friend or a family member.

