

Safety Abroad – Step by Step Tips for a Safe Trip



University of California Police Department, Los Angeles

Protecting Your Passport

Your passport is the most valuable document you will be carrying around. To protect your passport:

- Hide your passport securely on your person. Keep it handy since you may need to show it to pick up mail, check into hotels, cash traveler's checks, and be required to carry it as an identity document.
- Do not leave your passport in a handbag or an exposed pocket. Keep passports in pockets, clothing, purses or packs that are inaccessible to thieves and pickpockets.
- Be aware that in some countries, your passport may be retained overnight at the reception desk of your hotel in order to be checked out by the police. However, if your passport is not returned by the following morning, immediately report the impoundment to the local police authorities and to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.
- If you are traveling with a group, do not have one person carry all the passports. Each traveler should hold on to their own passport.

Protecting Your Luggage

To minimize the risk of having your luggage or items from your luggage stolen, try:

- Running a strip of nylon filament tape around the suitcase to prevent it from accidentally opening if dropped or mishandled.
- Setting each lock on your luggage piece with a different combination.
- Checking with airlines and your personal insurance company regarding lost luggage coverage.
- Using only a business or school address and telephone number, or the address and telephone number of the travel agency through which you are flying, on all luggage tags.
- Never placing valuables in luggage that will be checked in.
- Never leaving your luggage unattended.

Safety in the Skies

- Try to book a non-stop flight to your destination, as these have fewer takeoffs and landings. If this is not possible, try to get a stopover in airports that have high security standards.
- Choose an airline with a good safety and on-time record.
- Try to fly wide body planes, and reserve a window or center seat, as hijackers tend to view wide body planes as having too many passengers, and being seated in the center or by the window will keep you away from hijackers and any action that may be occurring in the aisle.

Plane Hijacking

- Stay calm, and encourage others around you to do the same.
- If shooting occurs, keep your head down and drop to the floor.
- Prepare yourself mentally and emotionally for the ordeal.
- Do not attempt to hide your passport or other belongings.
- If addressed by hijackers, respond in a regulated tone of voice. Be responsive, but do not volunteer information.
- If a rescue force enters the plane and forces passengers to move, do so quickly, with your hands in the air or behind your head. Do not attempt to make any sudden movements.
- If fire or smoke appears during the rescue attempts, try to get the emergency doors open and use the inflatable slides or exit onto the wings.
- Once you have departed the plane, follow the instructions of the rescue force or local authorities. If no one is there to assist you, move as quickly away as possible from the aircraft and eventually move towards the terminal or control tower area.

Hotel Safety

- When you arrive or depart from a hotel, don't linger or wander unnecessarily in the parking lot, indoor garage or public space around the hotel.
- If you arrive by auto, park as close to the hotel access point as possible, and park in lighted areas. Remove all property from the car interior and place it in the trunk.
- Female travelers should consider asking for an escort to their vehicles whether parked in the lot or garage.
- If using valet service, leave only the ignition key, and take trunk, house, or office keys with you. should be hand carried and personally protected.
- Do not needlessly display guest room keys in public.
- Do not answer the door in a hotel or motel room without verifying who it is.
- Do not invite strangers to your room
- Protect personal travel documents, lap tops, jewelry, and other valuables and sensitive documents in excess of \$1000 in value.
- Place all small valuables in the room safe, or in a hotel's or motel's safe deposit box.
- When returning to your hotel or motel late in the evening, use the main entrance of the building.
- Do not draw attention to yourself by displaying large amounts of cash or expensive jewelry. Be careful not to needlessly display credit cards, or to carelessly leave the cards at the vendor's desk.
- When out of your room, leave the television or radio playing low. At night leave your room lights on.
- Promptly report suspicious activity to the management.

Tourist Safety

- Plan your excursions.
- Ask for directions at your hotel or motel on how to get to those attractions you want to visit.
- Select tour guides carefully.
- Ask if there are any areas in town you should avoid. Stick to well-lighted main streets and public areas.
- Only carry with you the cash you will need, and only small denominations.
- Do not leave maps or obvious travel books in plain view in your car.
- If you get lost, find an open business and ask for directions. Stopping and looking at addresses or staring at street signs may make you look like an easy target for crime.

Arrests Abroad

- Ask to contact the nearest embassy or consulate representing your country. As a citizen of another country, you have this right. If you are refused or just ignored, continue to make a request periodically until they accede and let you contact your embassy or consulate.
- Stay calm. Do not do anything to provoke the arresting officer(s).
- Do not admit anything or volunteer any information.
- Do not sign anything. Decline politely until such time as the document is examined by an attorney or an embassy/consulate representative.

- Do not accept anyone at face value. When the representative from the embassy arrives, request some identification before discussing your situation.
- Do not fall for the ruse of helping the ones who are detaining you in return for your release. Contact the consulate or your embassy for protection and assistance in getting out of the country once released.

Kidnapping

- Do not struggle in your confined state; calm yourself mentally, concentrate on surviving.
- Employ your mind by attempting to visualize the route being taken, take note of turns, street noise, smells, etc.
- If you are interrogated, be cooperative, do not volunteer information, nor antagonize your interrogator with obstinate behavior.
- Keep track of time.
- Know your captors, their schedule, patterns of behavior, weaknesses or vulnerabilities.
- Seek opportunities to escape.
- If you are able to escape, attempt to get first to a U.S. Embassy to seek protection.

Rape and Sexual Assaults While Traveling

- Before leaving, take the time and initiative to learn as much as possible about your host country's language, religion, customs, and appropriate dress.
- Talk to local women. Follow examples of culturally appropriate dress and demeanor. A smile, hairstyle, the way you carry yourself, eye contact, the distance between people talking can have profoundly different interpretations from culture to culture.
- Cultural differences, however, should not be an excuse to endure verbal or physical abuse.
- Do not go to a secluded area (or even be alone in your room) with a person that you do not know well.
- Immediately report a sexual assault or rape to local authorities and contact the United States embassy or consulate in the country you are traveling in for further assistance.
- If you are victimized and traveling with others, have a companion stay with you.

Resources for Additional Information on Rape and Sexual Assault

- Education Abroad Program (EAP) reciprocity students are an excellent source of information. For information contact EAP at (310) 825-4995.
- UCLA Center for Women and Men at (310) 825-3945.
- Rape Treatment Center at Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center at (310) 319-4000.
- Visit <http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/globaled/safeti>