Did You Know?

Groups of children and teens may swarm you and forcibly steal your personal belongings.

“Act Smart. Be Safe.”

SAFETY AND SECURITY
for US Students Traveling Abroad

Living and studying in another country will be an enriching and rewarding experience, especially if you are prepared and take certain precautions. This brochure will introduce you to threats you may face and provide tips on avoiding unsafe situations. Following these precautions will reduce your risk of encountering problems.

Important Numbers

US Embassy/Consulate Phone & Address:


POC in country:


Reminder

Our country will be judged by the impression you make. As an American abroad, you serve as a spokesperson for the United States.

Additional travel security tips and country threat assessments are available from the FBI upon request.

Your local FBI office:

www.fbi.gov

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.
Before You Go

Familiarize yourself with local laws and customs in the areas you plan to travel. You are expected to obey their laws, which may include dress standards, photography restrictions, telecommunication restrictions, curfews, etc.

Plan your wardrobe so that it does not offend the locals, nor draw unwanted attention to yourself. Americans are perceived as wealthy and are targeted for pick pocketing and other crimes. Do not wear expensive-looking jewelry and avoid wearing American team sports shirts or baseball caps that might indicate you are an American.

Do not take any unnecessary identification or credit cards in case they are stolen. Take only what is necessary. Obtain traveler’s checks and do not carry a large amount of cash.

During Your Stay

Protect your passport! Theft of American tourist passports is on the rise. It is recommended that you carry your passport in a front pants pocket or in a pouch hidden in your clothes, and that it remain with you at all times. Some hotels require you to leave it at the desk during your stay and they may use it to register you with the local police—a routine policy. Ask for a receipt and be sure to retrieve your passport before continuing your trip. If your passport is lost or stolen, report the situation immediately to the nearest US Embassy or Consulate.

Do not invite strangers into your room.

Be courteous and cooperative when processing through customs. Do not leave your bags unattended. Stay alert.

Establish points of contact for your family to contact and for your foreign hosts to contact in the event of an emergency.

Make copies of your passport, airplane ticket, driver’s license, and credit cards that you take with you. Keep one copy at home; carry a second copy with you but separate from the originals. This will help speed the replacement process if they are lost or stolen.

Take any necessary medications with you in their original containers and keep them in your carry-on luggage (not checked baggage) during the flight.

Avoid long waits in lobbies and terminals, if possible. These areas may be full of pickpockets, thieves, and violent offenders. Laptop theft is especially common in airports.

Do not leave drinks unattended—someone could slip a drug into it that causes amnesia and sleep.

Avoid civil disturbances and obey local laws. If you come upon a demonstration or rally, be careful: in the confusion you could be arrested or detained even though you are a bystander. Be mindful that in many countries, it is prohibited to speak derogatorily of the government and its leaders. It may be illegal to take photographs of train stations, government buildings, religious symbols, and military installations.

Avoid any actions that are illegal, improper or indiscreet. Avoid offers of sexual companionship; they may lead to a room raid, photography, and blackmail. Do not attempt to keep up with your hosts in social drinking. Do not engage in black market activities. Do not sell your possessions. Do not bring in or purchase illegal drugs or pornography. Do not seek out political or religious dissidents. Do not accept packages or letters for delivery to another location.

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Keep a low profile and shun publicity. Do not discuss personal or family information with local news media, and as a general rule, be careful what information you share with foreigners. They may have been directed to obtain information about you for duplicitous purposes and may use what they learn to target or use against you.

Evade criminals and terrorists by being aware of your surroundings and alert to the possibility of surveillance. Do not challenge your followers, but make mental notes about them. Promptly report such incidents to appropriate security officials and/or the US Embassy or Consulate. In general, criminals will strike where their target seems most vulnerable and lax about his/her security. If you are kidnapped, remain calm and alert; comply with orders, be non-threatening, avoid arguments, and establish a program of mental and physical activity for yourself.

“Turkey drop” scam in Russia: a person drops money in front of a victim while an accomplice waits for the money to be picked up and suggests splitting it. The first person returns and accuses both of stealing the money. This usually results in the victim’s money being stolen.

Beware of new acquaintances who probe for information about you or who attempt to get you involved in what could become a compromising situation.

Do not gossip about character flaws, financial problems, emotional relationships, or other difficulties of your fellow Americans or yourself. This information is eagerly sought by those who want to exploit you or your fellow travelers.

Beware that your conversations may not be private or secure. Unlike the United States, most other countries do not have legal restrictions against technical surveillance. Most foreign security services have various means of screening incoming visitors to identify persons of potential intelligence interest. They also have well established contacts with hotels and common hosts that can assist in various forms of monitoring you.

Do not carry large amounts of cash. Always deal with reputable currency exchange officials or you run the risk of receiving counterfeit currency. Keep a record of your financial transactions.

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Use only authorized taxis. Passengers have been robbed or kidnapped when using “gypsy” taxis.

Avoid traveling alone, especially after dark. Be conscious of your surroundings and avoid areas you believe may put your personal safety at risk. Be wary of street vendors and innocent-looking youngsters. It has been reported that while one person has your attention, the other is picking your pocket.

Avoid any actions that are illegal, improper or indiscreet. Avoid offers of sexual companionship; they may lead to a room raid, photography, and blackmail. Do not attempt to keep up with your hosts in social drinking. Do not engage in black market activities. Do not sell your possessions. Do not bring in or purchase illegal drugs or pornography. Do not seek out political or religious dissidents. Do not accept packages or letters for delivery to another location.

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In an international airport, a thief positioned himself to walk in front of a traveler who was walking with his roll bag. The thief stopped abruptly in front of the traveler causing the traveler to also stop. A second thief was following and quickly removed the traveler’s laptop from his roll bag and disappeared.

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Beware that theft from sleeping compartments on trains is common.