

Traveling Abroad Safely

Before You Go	1	While You're There	9	Returning Home	18
Money	3	Embassies/Consulate	9	More Resources	18
Documents	4	Hotel Safety	11		
Medical	5	Transportation	12		
Airport Security	9	Emergencies/Legal	15		

Before You Go

Read as much as possible about the countries in which you plan to travel. Informing yourself about a nation's history, culture, customs and politics will make your stay more meaningful. Such information can be found in most libraries, bookstores, tourist bureaus local newspapers and The Internet.

Although English is spoken in many countries, it is a good idea to learn what you can of the language of the country in which you will be traveling or living. Learning basic phrases, how to call for help, counting from 1 to 10 and a basic understanding of the country's currency will be of great benefit to you when you first arrive at your destination.

Most international airlines can supply you with travel brochures about the countries that they serve. Many countries have tourist information offices in main cities around the world where you can obtain travel brochures and maps.

Security – Your corporate security department can help you with information and bulletins before you travel. As well, The Department of State's Consular Information Sheets are available for every country of the world. They describe unusual entry, currency regulations or unusual health conditions, the crime and security situation, political disturbances, areas of instability, special information about driving and road conditions and drug penalties. In general, the sheets do not give advice. Instead, they describe conditions so travelers can make informed decisions about their trips.

Public Announcements are a means to disseminate information about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term and/or trans-national conditions posing significant risks to the security of American travelers. They are issued when there is a perceived threat. In the past, Public Announcements have been issued to deal with short-term coups, pre-election disturbances, and violence by terrorists and anniversary dates of specific terrorist events.

Information about travel and consular services for US citizens is available on the Bureau of Consular Affairs' World Wide Web home page. The address is <http://travel.state.gov>. It includes Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings and Public Announcements, passport and visa information, travel publications, background on international adoption and international child abduction services and international legal assistance. In the UK, visit MI5's Security Service site at <http://www.mi5.gov.uk/> and in Canada, visit Foreign Affairs Canada at <http://www.fac-aec.gc.ca/menu-en.asp>.

Be Prepared

Have your affairs at home in order. If you leave a current will, insurance documents, and power of attorney with your family or a friend, you can feel secure about traveling and will be prepared for any emergency that may arise while you are away. If you have minor children, consider making guardianship arrangements for them.

Travel Light

Always try to travel light. If you do, you can move more quickly and will be more likely to have a free hand. You will also be less tired and less likely to set your luggage down, leaving it unattended. Safety begins when you pack. To avoid being a target, dress conservatively. A flashy wardrobe or one that is too casual can mark you as a tourist. As much as possible, avoid the appearance of affluence

What To Leave Behind

Don't bring anything you would hate to lose. Leave at home:

- Valuable or expensive-looking jewelry,
- Irreplaceable family objects,
- All unnecessary credit cards.

Leave a copy of your itinerary, airline tickets, driver's license, traveler check numbers, credit card information (photocopy the front and the back), visa and other necessary documents with family or friends at home in case they need to contact you in an emergency or help you in the event your possessions are stolen or lost. Bring an extra copy with you and store them in a safe place apart from your original documents.

Mark Your Luggage

Put your name, address and telephone numbers inside and outside of each piece of luggage. Use covered luggage tags to avoid casual observation of your identity or nationality and if possible, lock your luggage.

Communicating with Home

If you take your cell phone, make sure it can be used internationally and guard it well. A thief can find out valuable information from your phone and can ring up a substantial bill before you can cancel the phone. Consider getting a telephone calling card. It is a convenient way of keeping in touch. If you have one, verify that you can use it from your overseas location(s). Access numbers to operators are published in many international newspapers. Find out your access number before you go.

Bringing Money

Currency

Local banks usually offer better rates of exchange than hotels, restaurants, or stores. Rates are often posted in windows. Above all, avoid private currency transactions. In

some countries, you risk more than being swindled or stuck with counterfeit currency _ you risk arrest. Avoid the black market --- learn and obey the local currency laws, wherever you go.

Before leaving on your trip, you may wish to check with your bank to see if the country or countries that you plan to visit have Automated Teller Machine (ATM) service. The bank should be able to tell you if you can use your ATM card during your trip abroad.

Prepare for Emergency Funds

It is a good idea to keep the telephone number for your bank in the United States with you, in case you run out of cash and need to transfer money. In some countries, major banks and certain travel agencies can help arrange a transfer of funds from your account to a foreign bank. If you do not have a bank account from which you can obtain emergency funds, you should make arrangements in advance with a relative or friend to send you emergency funds should it become necessary. If you find yourself destitute, contact the nearest embassy or consulate for assistance in arranging a money wire transfer from a relative or friend in your home country.

Foreign Currency

Before departing, you may wish to purchase small amounts of foreign currency to use for buses, taxis, phones, or tips when you first arrive. Foreign exchange facilities at airports may be closed when your flight arrives and they don't offer the best rates. You can purchase foreign currency at banks and at foreign exchange firms.

Some countries regulate the amount of local currency that you can bring into or take out of the country; others require that you exchange a minimum amount of currency. For currency regulations, check with a bank, a foreign exchange firm, your travel agent, or the embassy or consulate of the countries that you plan to visit.

Traveler's Checks

It is wise **not** to carry large amounts of cash. You should take most of your money in traveler's checks and remember to record the serial number, denomination and the date and location of the issuing bank or agency. Keep this information in a safe and separate place so, if you lose your traveler's checks, you can quickly get replacements.

Credit Cards

Some credit cards can be used worldwide, even for cash advances. Keep track of your credit card purchases so that you do not exceed your limit. Travelers have been arrested overseas for mistakenly exceeding their credit limit! Leave all unnecessary credit cards at home. Record the numbers of the credit cards that you do bring, and keep the list separately from the cards.

Valuables

Carry the minimum amount of valuables necessary for your trip and plan a place or places to conceal them. Your passport, cash and credit cards are most secure when locked in a hotel safe. When you have to carry them on your person, you may wish to conceal them in several places rather than putting them all in one wallet or pouch. Avoid handbags, fanny packs and outside pockets, which are easy targets for thieves. Inside pockets and a sturdy shoulder bag with the strap worn across your chest are somewhat safer. One of the safest places to carry valuables is in a pouch or money belt worn under your clothing.

Passports

Your passport is the most valuable document that you will carry abroad. It confirms your citizenship. Please guard it carefully. Do not use it as collateral for a loan or lend it to anyone. It is your best form of identification. You will need it when you pick up mail or check into hotels, embassies or consulates.

Carelessness is the main cause for losing a passport or having it stolen. You may find that you have to carry your passport with you because you need to show it when you cash traveler's checks or the country that you are visiting requires you to carry it as an identity document. When you must carry your passport, hide it securely on your person. Do not leave it in a handbag or in an exposed pocket. Whenever possible, leave your passport in the hotel safe, not in an empty hotel room, and not packed in your luggage. One family member should not carry all the passports for the entire family.

If your passport is lost or stolen abroad, you should report the loss immediately to the local police and to the nearest embassy or consulate. If you can provide the consular officer with the information contained in your passport, it will facilitate issuance of a new passport. Therefore, it is a good idea to make two photocopies of the data page of your passport. Keep one copy separately from your passport to take with you on your trip, and leave the other copy with a relative or friend at home. It is also a good idea to carry two extra passport size photos with you.

Tourist Card

If the country that you plan to visit only requires a tourist card, you can usually obtain one from the country's embassy or consulate, from an airline serving the country, or at the port of entry. There is a fee for some tourist cards.

Visas

A visa is an endorsement or stamp placed in your passport by a foreign government that permits you to visit that country for a specified purpose and a limited time - for example, a 3-month tourist visa. It is advisable to obtain visas before you leave because you may not be able to obtain visas for some countries once you have departed. You should apply directly to the embassy or nearest consulate of each country that you plan to visit, or consult a travel agent. Passport agencies cannot help you obtain visas.

Because a visa is stamped directly onto a blank page in your passport, you will need to give your passport to an official of each foreign embassy or consulate. You may also need to fill out a form and submit one or more photographs with the form. Many visas require a fee. The process may take several weeks for each visa, so it is wise to apply well in advance of your trip, if possible.

Allow plenty of time to apply for visas. An average of two weeks for each visa is recommended. When you inquire, check the following:

- Visa price, length of validity, and number of entries;
- Financial data required
- Proof of sufficient funds, proof of onward/return ticket;
- Immunizations required;
- Currency regulations;
- Import/export restrictions; and
- Departure tax. If required, be sure to keep sufficient hard currency so that you may leave the country on schedule.
- HIV clearance certification. Some countries require travelers to submit certification or be tested upon arrival for HIV.

Restricted Areas

A visa is good only for those parts of a country that are open to foreigners. Several countries have areas of civil unrest or war zones that are off-limits to visitors without special permits. Others have similar areas that are open but surrounded by security checkpoints where travelers must show their passport, complete with valid visa. When traveling in such a country, keep your passport with you at all times. No matter where you travel, do not overstay the validity of your visa; renew it if necessary.

If stopped at a roadblock, be courteous and responsive to questions asked by persons in authority. In areas of instability, however, try to avoid travel at night. If you must travel at night, turn on the interior light of the car when stopped.

In some areas, when foreigners are arrested or detained, police or prison officials have failed to inform the person's embassy. If you are ever detained for any reason, it is your right to speak with a consular officer immediately. Always keep their phone number on your person, in some countries you are not allowed to phone your office but are allowed to phone your embassy.

Medicines and Prescriptions

To avoid problems when passing through customs, keep medicines in their original, labeled containers. Bring a copy of your prescriptions and the generic names for the drugs. If a medication is unusual or contains narcotics, carry a letter from your doctor attesting to your need to take the drug. If you have any doubt about the legality of

carrying a certain drug into a country, consult the embassy or consulate of that country first.

If you have allergies, reactions to certain medicines, or other unique medical problems, you may consider wearing a medical alert bracelet or carrying a similar warning.

Immunizations

Under international health regulations adopted by the World Health Organization, a country may require international certificates of vaccination against yellow fever and cholera. Typhoid vaccinations are not required for international travel, but are recommended for areas where there is risk of exposure. Smallpox vaccinations are no longer given. Check your health care records to ensure that your measles, mumps, rubella, polio, diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis immunizations are up-to-date. Medication to deter malaria and other preventative measures are advisable for certain areas.

It is not necessary to be vaccinated against a disease to which you will not be exposed, and few countries refuse to admit you if you arrive without the necessary vaccinations. Officials will vaccinate you, give you a medical follow-up card, or, in rare circumstances, put you in isolation for the incubation period of the disease that you were not vaccinated against. It is a good idea to check immunization requirements before you depart.

If vaccinations are required, they must be recorded on approved forms, such as those in the booklet PHS-731, International Certificates of Vaccination as Approved by the World Health Organization. You should keep the booklet with your passport.

An increasing number of countries require that foreigners be tested for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) prior to entry. Testing is usually required as part of a medical exam for long-term visitors (i.e., students and workers). Before traveling abroad, you can check with the embassy or consulate of the country that you intend to visit to learn about the latest information concerning entry requirements and, particularly, whether or not an AIDS/HIV test is a requirement.

Health Insurance

Obtaining medical treatment and hospital care can be costly for travelers who are injured or who become seriously ill overseas. Before you leave you should be informed about which medical services your health insurance will cover abroad.

If your health insurance policy does not provide coverage for hospital or medical costs abroad, you are urged to purchase a temporary health policy that does provide this type of coverage. There are short-term health and emergency assistance policies designed for travelers. You can find the names of companies that provide such policies from your travel agent, your health insurance company, or from advertisements in travel publications.

In addition to health insurance, many policies include trip cancellation, baggage loss, and travel accident insurance in the same package. Some traveler's check companies have protection policies available with the purchase of traveler's checks.

Information About Physicians and Hospitals Abroad

Several private organizations provide listings of physicians abroad to international travelers. Membership in these organizations is generally free, although a donation may be requested. Membership entitles you to a number of traveler's medical aids, including a directory of physicians with their overseas locations, telephone numbers and doctors' fee schedules. The physicians are generally English-speaking and provide medical assistance 24 hours a day. The addresses of these medical organizations are in travel magazines or may be available from your travel agent.

Embassies and consulates abroad usually keep lists of physicians and hospitals in their area. Major credit card companies also can provide the names of local doctors and hospitals abroad.

Medical Evacuation

Although some health insurance companies may pay "customary and reasonable" hospital costs abroad, very few will pay for medical evacuation back to your home country. Medical evacuation can easily cost \$10,000 or more, depending on your location and medical condition.

Even if your regular health insurance covers you for emergencies abroad, you should consider purchasing supplemental insurance to cover medical evacuation.

Whichever health insurance coverage you choose for travel overseas, remember to carry with you both your health insurance policy identity card and claim forms.

Do You Need Travel Insurance?

You may not need travel insurance, if you are already adequately covered by other insurance policies. If you're traveling for business, check with your human resources department for more information.

Depending on the travel insurance plan, travel insurance usually promises to cover you for cancellation or interruption of your trip, some form of emergency medical care while you are traveling, lost or stolen luggage, and various other troublesome occurrences.

Before you decide on a travel insurance plan, it is wise to investigate the plan carefully and read the fine print. You should closely check any agreements with your travel agent, tour operator, airline, or other companies involved with your travel plans. The agreements may include written guarantees.

If you have a fully refundable airline ticket, you may decide that you would not need trip cancellation/interruption insurance.

On the other hand, it may be worthwhile noting that certain insurance plans can protect you by covering the financial costs in case of the following situations:

- A sudden, serious injury or illness to you, a family member, or a traveling companion.
- Financial default of the airline, cruise line or tour operator.
- Natural disasters or strikes that impede travel services.
- A terrorist incident in a foreign city within 10 days of your scheduled arrival in that particular city.
- The fact that you, a traveling member of your family, or a traveling companion were quarantined, served with a court order or required to serve on a jury.
- A circumstance in which you were directly involved in an accident enroute to departure for your trip.

It is a good idea to check your other insurance policies. For instance, your homeowners or tenants insurance may cover the loss or theft of your luggage. Certain credit cards may also provide additional travel insurance, if you have used them to purchase the ticket for your trip.

Charters & Airlines

There have been occasions when airlines or companies that sell charter flights or tour packages have gone out of business with little warning, stranding passengers overseas. If you know from the media or your travel agent that an airline is in financial difficulty, ask your travel agent or the airline what recourse you would have, if the airline ceased to operate. Some airlines may honor the tickets of a defunct airline, but they usually do so with restrictions.

If you are flying to places other than the major tourist destinations, you may have difficulty securing and retaining reservations and experience long waits at airports for customs and immigration processing. If stranded, you may need proof of a confirmed reservation in order to obtain food and lodging vouchers from some airlines. Flights are often overbooked, delayed, or cancelled and, when competing for space on a plane, you may be dealing with a surging crowd rather than a line. All problems cannot be avoided, but you can:

- Learn the reputation of the airline and the airports you will use to forestall problems and avoid any unpleasant surprises.
- Reserve your return passage before you go; reconfirm immediately upon arrival.
- Ask for confirmation in writing, complete with file number or locator code, when you make or confirm a reservation.
- Arrive at the airport earlier than required in order to put yourself at the front of the line - or the crowd, as the case may be.
- Travel with funds sufficient for an extra week's subsistence in case you are stranded.

Airports & Security

Because take-off and landing are the most dangerous times of a flight, book non-stop flights when possible. When there is a choice of airport or airline, ask your travel agent about comparative safety records. Post 9/11, airport security is at an all time high – be sure you know the rules regarding what you can bring aboard. Check with your airline for a specific list of what you can and cannot carry on your person, in your hand luggage, and in your check baggage. Never leave your luggage unattended or out of your sight, even for a moment. Because of increased security, be sure to arrive at least two hours before your flight. Westerners, especially Americans are now being targeted for additional security checks in some countries - be aware of what is expected of you.

Immigration and Customs

If a passport was required for your trip, have it ready when you go through Immigration and Customs. If you took other documents with you, such as an International Certificate of Vaccination, a medical letter, or a Customs certificate of registration for foreign-made personal articles, have them ready, also. Have your receipts handy, in case you need to support your customs declaration. If returning to the United States by car from Mexico or Canada, have your certificate of vehicle registration available. It is a good idea to pack your baggage in a way to make inspection easier. For example, pack the articles you acquired abroad separately, if possible.

While You're There

Register With the Embassy or Consulate

You should register at the Consular Section of the nearest embassy or consulate as soon as possible particularly if:

If you find yourself in a country or area that is experiencing civil unrest, has an unstable political climate, or is undergoing a natural disaster, such as an earthquake or a hurricane.

If you plan to go to a country where there are no officials from your home country. In such cases, you should register at the embassy or consulate in an adjacent country, leave an itinerary with the Consular Section, ask about conditions in the country that you will visit, and ask about the third country that may represent your countries interests there.

If you plan to stay in a country longer than one month. registration at the Embassy or Consulate makes your presence and whereabouts known, in case it is necessary for a consular officer to contact you in an emergency. During a disaster overseas, consular officers can assist in evacuation were that to become necessary. But they cannot assist you if they do not know where you are. Registration also makes it easier to apply for a replacement passport, if yours is lost or stolen.

What Consuls Can Do To Help You

In the Case of Illness or Injury

If you become ill or injured while abroad, you can contact the nearest embassy or consulate for a list of local doctors, dentists, medical specialists, clinics and hospitals. If your illness or injury is serious, the consul can help you find medical assistance and, at your request, will inform your family or friends of your condition. If necessary, a consul can assist in the transfer of funds. Payment of hospital and other expenses is your responsibility.

During an emergency, if you are unable to communicate, the consul will check your passport for the name and address of any relative, friend, or legal representative whom you wish to have notified.

Marriage Abroad

Diplomatic and consular officials do not have the authority to perform marriages overseas. Marriage abroad must be performed in accordance with local law. There are always documentary requirements, and in some countries, there is a lengthy residence requirement before a marriage may take place.

Before traveling, ask the embassy or consulate of the country in which you plan to marry about their regulations and how to prepare to marry abroad. Once abroad it is your responsibility to deal with local civil authorities.

A Variety of Non-Emergency Services

Consular officers provide non-emergency services as well. These include information about, travel safety information and information on how to obtain foreign public documents.

What Consuls Cannot Do

Consular officers will do their best to assist citizens abroad. However, they must devote priority time and energies to those individuals who find themselves in the most serious legal, medical, or financial difficulties.

Because of limited resources, consuls **cannot** provide routine or commercial-type services. They cannot act as travel agents, information bureaus, banks, or law enforcement officers; get you visas, residence permits or driving permits; act as interpreters; search for missing luggage; call your credit card company or bank; replace stolen traveler's checks; or settle disputes with hotel managers. However, they can tell you how to get assistance on these matters, as well as other issues.

Legal Aid

Because you are subject to local laws abroad, there is little that a consular officer can do for you, if you encounter legal difficulties, a consular officer cannot get you out of jail. What officials can do is limited by both foreign and your countries local laws.

Although consular officers cannot serve as attorneys nor give legal advice, they can provide a list of local attorneys and help you find adequate legal representation. The lists of attorneys are carefully compiled from local bar association lists and responses to questionnaires, but embassies or consulates abroad cannot assume responsibility for the caliber, competence, or professional integrity of the attorneys.

If you are arrested, you should ask the authorities to notify a consular officer at the nearest embassy or consulate

When alerted, officials will visit you, advise you of your rights according to local laws, and contact your family and friends, if you wish. They will do whatever they can to protect your legitimate interests and to ensure that you are not discriminated against under local law consuls can transfer money, food, and clothing to the prison authorities from your family or friends. They will try to get relief, if you are held under inhumane or unhealthy conditions or treated less favorably than others in the same situation.

Hotels

Many travelers wait until they reach their destination before making hotel reservations. Some train stations and airports have travel desks to assist you in finding lodging. However, when you arrive, you may be tired and unfamiliar with your surroundings, and could have difficulty locating a hotel to suit your needs. Therefore, when possible, reserve your lodging in advance and confirm your reservations along the way. During peak tourist season, it is important to have a hotel reservation for at least the first night that you arrive in a foreign city. As much as possible, plan to stay in larger, chain hotels that have more elaborate security such as a Marriott or Hilton.

Safety experts recommend booking a room from the second to seventh floors above ground level to deter easy entrance from outside, but low enough for fire equipment to reach. Keep in mind in some emerging countries fire fighting equipment and personnel do not meet the standards of developed countries- never assume that your safety is as well protected as it is at home. Always take the extra time to insure you know the location of fire exits and make that they are operational. In addition:

- Don't answer the door without verifying whom the person is. Call the front desk to confirm the person is to have access to your room.
- Keep your hotel door locked at all times – close the door securely behind you.
- Meet visitors in the lobby.
- Do not leave money and other valuables in your hotel room while you are out. Use the hotel safe.
- Do not carelessly leave or display your key or access card in public.

- Let someone know when you expect to return if you are out late at night.
- If you are alone, do not get on an elevator if there is a suspicious-looking person inside.
- Don't wear expensive jewelry or flash large amounts of cash – they'll attract unwanted attention.
- Check all sliding doors and windows to ensure they are locked.
- Read the fire safety instructions in your hotel room. Know how to report a fire. Be sure you know where the nearest fire exit 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.
- If you see any suspicious behavior, report it immediately to hotel management.
- If you're returning late in the evening, use the main entrance of the hotel. Be aware of your surroundings in parking lots.

When entering some countries or registering at hotels, you may be asked to fill out a police card listing your name, passport number, destination, local address, and reason for travel. You may be required to leave your passport at the hotel reception desk overnight so that local police officials may check it. These are normal procedures required by local laws. If your passport is not returned the following morning, immediately report the impoundment to local police authorities and to the nearest embassy or consulate.

Guard Against Thieves

Coat pockets, handbags, and hip pockets are particularly susceptible to theft. Thieves will use all kinds of ploys to divert your attention just long enough to pick your pocket and grab your purse or wallet. These ploys include creating a disturbance, spilling something on your clothing, or even handing you a baby to hold!

You can try to prevent theft by carrying your belongings in a secure manner. For example, consider not carrying a purse or wallet when going along crowded streets. Women who carry a shoulder bag should keep it tucked under the arm and held securely by the strap. Men should put their wallets in their front trouser pockets or use money belts instead of hip pockets. A wallet wrapped in rubber bands is more difficult to remove without notice. Be especially cautious in a large crowd _ in the subway, on buses, at the marketplace, at a festival, or if surrounded by groups of vagrant children. Do not make it easy for thieves!

Transportation

Taxis

In certain countries taxi drivers are, or are in league with kidnappers and thieves. Express kidnapping is where the passenger is taken to an ATM and forced to withdraw funds. This often happens close to midnight when the thieves can use the card again to draw the maximum amount the next day.

- At airports, use the taxi stand or ask your hotel to send a car.
- If you don't feel comfortable getting in a certain taxi, don't.
- Avoid flagging down taxis on the street.

- Use taxis recommended by your hotel.
- Ask the driver how much the ride will be before you get in.
- Make sure the taxi has seatbelts that work and then use them.
- Know where you're going, at least generally so you'll know if you're being taken for a ride.

Driving Abroad

If you can avoid driving in a foreign country, do so. Hire a recommended driver or take a taxi, but if you can't, you can minimize the risk by following these guidelines:

- Obtain an International Driving Permit (IDP). Although many countries do not recognize your local driver's licenses, most countries accept an international driving permit (IDPs). IDPs are honored in more than 150 countries. They function as a legal identification document that translates your driver's license information into 11 foreign languages. IDPs are not valid in an individual's country of residence.
- Obtain road maps of the countries that you plan to visit before you go.
- Carry both your IDP and your local driver's license with you at all times.
- As many countries have different driving rules. If possible, obtain a copy of the foreign country's rules before you begin driving in that country.
- Some countries have a minimum and maximum driving age.
- Certain countries require road permits, instead of tolls, to use on their divided highways, and they will fine those found driving without a permit.
- Always "buckle up." Some countries have penalties for people who violate this law.
- Many countries require you to honk your horn before going around a sharp corner or to flash your lights before passing.
- Before you start your journey, find out who has the right of way in a traffic circle.
- If you rent a car, make sure you have liability insurance. If you do not, this could lead to financial disaster.
- If the drivers in the country you are visiting drive on the opposite side of the road than in your country, it may be prudent to practice driving in a less populated area before attempting to drive during the heavy traffic part of the day.
- Always know the route you will be traveling. Have a copy of a good road map, and chart your course before beginning.
- Do not pick up hitchhikers or strangers.
- Never leave valuables in your vehicle.
- When entering your vehicle, always be aware of your surroundings and check the back seat in case someone is hiding there.
- Don't get out of the car if there are suspicious looking individuals nearby. Drive away.
- Don't park your car on the street overnight. If the hotel or municipality does not have a parking garage or other secure area, select a well-lit area.

Patterns Of Crime Against Motorists

In many places frequented by tourists, including areas of southern Europe and South Africa, victimization of motorists has been refined to an art. Where it is a problem, U.S. embassies are aware of it and consular officers try to work with local authorities to warn the public about the dangers. In some locations, these efforts at public awareness have paid off, reducing the frequency of incidents. You may also wish to ask your rental car agency for advice on avoiding robbery while visiting tourist destinations.

Carjackers and thieves operate at gas stations, parking lots, in city traffic and along the highway. Be suspicious of anyone who hails you or tries to get your attention when you are in or near your car.

Criminals use ingenious ploys. They may masquerade as good Samaritans, offering help for tires that they claim are flat or that they have made flat. Or they may flag down a motorist, ask for assistance, and then steal the rescuer's luggage or car. Usually they work in groups, one person carrying on the pretense while the others rob you.

Other criminals get your attention with abuse, either trying to drive you off the road, or causing an "accident" by rear-ending you or creating a "fender bender."

In some urban areas, thieves don't waste time on ploys, they simply smash car windows at traffic lights, grab your valuables or your car and get away. In cities around the world, "defensive driving" has come to mean more than avoiding auto accidents; it means keeping an eye out for potentially criminal pedestrians, cyclists and scooter riders.

Renting a Car

The standard insurance included with many car rental contracts in some countries provide only nominal liability coverage, often as little as the equivalent of \$200. Because the laws in some countries permit the jailing of drivers after an accident until they have met their obligations to third parties and to the rental company, renters should read their contracts carefully and purchase additional liability and comprehensive insurance if necessary. In general, your local countries auto insurance does not cover you abroad.

When you rent a car, don't go for the exotic; choose a type commonly available locally. Where possible, ask that markings that identify it as a rental car be removed. Make certain it is in good repair. If available, choose a car with universal door locks and power windows, features that give the driver better control of access to the car. An air conditioner, when available, is also a safety feature, allowing you to drive with windows closed. Thieves can and do snatch purses through open windows of moving cars.

Trains

Well-organized, systematic robbery of passengers on trains along popular tourists routes is a serious problem. It is more common at night and especially on overnight trains.

- If you see your way being blocked by a stranger and another person is very close to you from behind, move away. This can happen in the corridor of the train or on the platform or station.
- Do not accept food or drink from strangers. Criminals have been known to drug food or drink offered to passengers. Criminals may also spray sleeping gas in train compartments.
- Where possible, lock your compartment. If it cannot be locked securely, take turns sleeping in shifts with your traveling companions. If that is not possible, stay awake. If you must sleep unprotected, tie down your luggage, strap your valuables to you and sleep on top of them as much as possible.
- Do not be afraid to alert authorities if you feel threatened in any way. Extra police are often assigned to ride trains on routes where crime is a serious problem.

Buses

The same type of criminal activity found on trains can be found on public buses on popular tourist routes. For example, tourists have been drugged and robbed while sleeping on buses or in bus stations. In some countries whole bus loads of passengers have been held up and robbed by gangs of bandits.

Emergencies/Legal Problems

How to Deal With the Unexpected

If you change your travel plans, miss your return flight, or extend your trip, be sure to notify relatives or friends at home. Should you find yourself in an area of civil unrest or natural disaster let your relatives or friends at home know **as soon as you can** that you are safe. Furthermore, upon arrival in a foreign country, you should contact the nearest embassy or consulate to register your presence and to keep them informed of your whereabouts.

Obey Foreign Laws

When you are in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws. It helps to learn about local laws and regulations and to obey them. Try to avoid areas of unrest and disturbance. Deal only with authorized outlets when exchanging money or buying airline tickets and traveler's checks. **Do not deliver a package for anyone, unless you know the person well and you are certain that the package does not contain drugs or other contraband.**

Before you think about selling personal effects, such as clothing, cameras, or jewelry, you should learn about the local regulations regarding such sales. You must adhere strictly to local laws because the penalties that you risk are severe.

Some countries are particularly sensitive about photographs. In general, refrain from photographing police and military installations and personnel; industrial structures, including harbor, rail, and airport facilities; border areas; and scenes of civil disorder or other public disturbance. Taking such photographs may result in your detention, in the confiscation of your camera and films, as well as the imposition of fines. For information on photography restrictions, check with the country's tourist office or its embassy or consulate in your home country. Once abroad, you can check with local authorities or with the Consular Section of the nearest embassy or consulate

Possession of Firearms.

Sentences for possession of firearms can be up to 30 years. In general, firearms, even those legally registered in your home country, cannot be brought into a country unless a permit is first obtained from the embassy or a consulate of that country and the firearm is registered with foreign authorities on arrival.

You should immediately report the loss or theft of your credit cards or traveler's checks to the credit card companies and to the local police. If you plan to stay in one place for some time, you might consider opening an account for check cashing and other transactions at a bank that has an overseas affiliate. Embassies and consulates **cannot** cash checks for you.

Drug Arrests

Thousands of foreigners are arrested abroad each year. Of these, approximately one-third are held on drug charges. Despite repeated warnings, drug arrests and convictions are still a common occurrence. Many countries have stiff penalties for drug violations and strictly enforce drug laws. If you are caught buying, selling, carrying or using any type of drug - from hashish to heroin, marijuana to mescaline, cocaine to Quaaludes - you will be arrested. You are subject to foreign laws overseas, **not your local countries**, and, if arrested, you will find that:

Few countries provide a jury trial.

Trials are often long, with delays and postponements.

Most countries do not accept bail.

Pre-trial detention, often in solitary confinement, may last for months.

If you are convicted, you face a possible sentence of:

2 - 10 years in many countries

A minimum of 6 years hard labor and a stiff fine in some countries

The death penalty in a number of countries (e.g. Malaysia, Pakistan, Turkey, Thailand, Saudi Arabia)

During recent years, there has been an increase in the number of women arrested abroad. These are usually women who serve as drug couriers or "mules" and who believe that they can make fast money and have a vacation at the same time, without getting caught. Instead of a vacation, they receive a permanent residence in an overseas jail.

Foreigners have been arrested abroad on drug charges because they possessed just one ounce or less of marijuana. The risk of being jailed for just one marijuana cigarette is simply not worth it! Once you are arrested, the embassy **CANNOT** get you out of jail or out of the country! **Likewise, the embassy CANNOT**

Represent you at trial or give you legal counsel.

Pay legal fees and/or fines.

PLEASE REMEMBER!

If someone offers you a free trip and some quick and easy money, just for bringing back a suitcase...SAY NO!

Do not carry a package for anyone, no matter how small it may be.

Do not let anyone pack your suitcases for you while you are abroad.

If the drugs are in your suitcase, you will be caught.

Do not get involved with illegal drugs overseas! It can spoil more than your vacation. It can ruin your life!

Drug Violations.

More than 1/3 of foreigners incarcerated abroad are held on drug charges. Some countries do not distinguish between possession and trafficking. Many countries have mandatory sentences - even for possession of a small amount of marijuana or cocaine. A number of foreigners have been arrested for possessing prescription drugs, particularly tranquilizers and amphetamines, that they purchased legally in certain Asian countries and then brought to some countries in the Middle East where they are illegal. Other foreigners have been arrested for purchasing prescription drugs abroad in quantities that local authorities suspected were for commercial use. If in doubt about foreign drug laws, ask local authorities or the nearest embassy or consulate.

Documentation for Medications

If you go abroad with preexisting medical problems, you should carry a letter from your doctor describing your condition, including information on any prescription medicines that you must take. You should also have the generic names of the drugs. Please leave medicines in their original, labeled containers. These precautions make customs processing easier. A doctor's certificate, however, may not suffice as authorization to transport all prescription drugs to all foreign countries. Travelers have innocently been arrested for drug violations when carrying items not considered narcotics in the United States or other western countries. To ensure that you do not violate the drug laws of the countries that you visit, you may consult the embassy or consulate of those countries for precise information before you leave.

Returning Home

Transportation

You should confirm your return reservation at least twice, and at least 72 hours before your scheduled departure. Whenever possible, obtain a written confirmation. If you confirm your return reservation by phone, record the time, day, and the name of the agent who took your call. If your name does not appear on the reservations list, you have no recourse and may find yourself stranded.

Departure Tax

Some countries levy an airport departure tax on travelers, which can be as high as \$50. Please ask the airline or a travel agent about this tax. **Make certain to have enough money at the end of your trip so that you will be able to get on the plane.**

Resources

US: www.state.gov

UK: www.mi5.gov.uk

Canada: www.fac-aec.gc.ca/menu-en.asp