



Safe Travel Abroad

It is your responsibility to know what to expect and behave safely so that your trip isn't ruined by one bad decision. Be aware: Missouri State University students have had computers, cameras, passports, and a number of other belongings stolen while abroad. As an American traveller, you make an easy target, so use common sense.

MONEY, PASSPORT, and PERSONAL BELONGINGS

- Do not carry large amounts of cash around with you. Keep your passport and money in a money belt or small pouch that can be worn *underneath your clothing*. Wearing a bag on the outside highlights where you keep money and valuables; moreover, it can easily be cut or ripped from your shoulder. If possible, don't carry a handbag at all.
- Develop a plan for receiving emergency money abroad. For example, if your wallet (with your debit card) is stolen, will your family be able to wire you money?
- Guard carefully at all times your passport, visas, and other documents that you carry with you, and do not leave them in the outer flaps of your bags. Before leaving, make a copy of the identification page of your passport. Keep this copy separate from your passport and carry it with you at all times. **If local law does not require you to keep your passport with you, carry only the photocopy of your passport when you are out and about and leave your passport in a secure place in your room.**
- Make photocopies of all important papers and documents. Keep a copy of your passport and credit cards at home with someone you can contact. Also, if you travel away from your host country, leave a copy in your apartment/room and take a copy with you in your luggage.
- **Know what to do you if lose your passport or it is stolen.** You must report it immediately! If you are abroad, you will need to contact your onsite program coordinator and then go to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. If you are in the United States or need help finding the nearest consulate abroad, call **1-877-4-USA-PPT** (1-877-487-2778) TDD/TTY: 1-888-874-7793 Passport Information is available **24 hours, 7 days a week**. Speak with a representative **Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., EST**, excluding federal holidays. *Once you report your passport as lost or stolen, it cannot be used, even if you find it later!*
- Do not take valuable items on your trip. Leave expensive jewelry and irreplaceable keepsakes at home with someone you trust.
- Be sure to lock your windows and doors if you leave your apartment/room, even if you remain in the building.

Keep in Mind:

- **The same common sense you use at home applies "writ large" while you are abroad.** Be aware of your surroundings and keep your valuables concealed. Many foreign travelers fall victim to crimes simply because it is assumed they are carrying cash.
- Always be weary when meeting strangers. Listen to the safety advice of your program coordinator and local residents. They will know the area better than any other source.
- If you should fall victim to crime, remember that your embassy is there to help you. Every embassy and consulate has a duty officer on-call around the clock to assist in an emergency.
- Never assume the safety precautions don't apply to you...they most definitely do!

WHEN TRAVELING

- Make sure someone else knows your itinerary.
- Keep your eyes and hands on your bags at all times. When you're distracted, you're an easy target for thieves. Do not leave your bags unattended. When you're on the phone, reading a sign, or train schedule, do not forget to keep an eye on your bags.
- Be especially alert in crowds at train stations, crowded shopping areas and tourist spots. Any place with a crowd is likely to be a place for thieves, pickpockets, and muggers as well.
- Lower the volume or remove your headphones, so you can hear what is happening around you.
- Be careful to whom you give your luggage. Sometimes thieves pose as porters or taxi drivers.
- Plan your trip so that you do not arrive at an unknown town late at night without having made arrangements for spending the night.
- When traveling, always sleep with your money belt or wallet hidden under your clothing.
- When you stay at a hotel, make use of the safety deposit boxes that many hotels have. Leave your passport and any money you don't expect to need that day safely locked away.
- If driving, keep your car doors locked and suitcases out of sight. Thieves target rental cars and cars with out-of-town or foreign license plates.

OUT ON THE TOWN

Always stay with a group of friends you are comfortable with. However, large groups of foreigners do attract more attention. At the same time, two is safer than one. NEVER go with any strangers if you are alone. Find out which parts of town are considered risky by the locals. As at home, always stay in well-lit and well-traveled areas. Don't take short cuts through alleys or unsafe areas.

AVOIDING SEXUAL ASSAULT

We often let our guard down when we're with people we know. Unfortunately, most sexual assaults involve people who know each other. These tips can help you identify danger and protect yourself in any situation.

- Stay alert.
- Trust your intuition. If you feel you might be in danger, you probably are.
- Avoid secluded or unknown places.
- Learn how to shout for help in your host country's language (i.e. "Help, I'm being attacked! Call 911!") and don't be afraid to use it. Learn the emergency services number of your host country.
- Be aware of the effects of alcohol and drugs. Alcohol and drugs impair judgment and increase violent behavior and also make you a target for predators.



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IN SOCIAL SITUATIONS

- Do not go off alone with someone you don't know well or who makes you feel uncomfortable. Suggest staying with a group or going to a public place.
- Don't leave friends alone at parties, bars, or clubs. Remember, there is safety in numbers.
- Beware of selfish and aggressive comments or behavior. If a person does not listen to you, stands too close, or seems to enjoy your discomfort, she or he may not respect your limits or desires.
- If you feel you may be getting into an uncomfortable situation, try to get to a safe place as soon as possible.
- Always bring money for taxi fare to a safe place. Change for a phone call in case of a change of plans can be helpful as well.
- Be aware of what you are drinking and how much you are drinking. Never leave your drink unattended. Be supportive of other people's limits.
- Be aware that signals may not be interpreted clearly across cultures. Communicate your limits clearly. If someone is pressuring you to have sex when you don't want to, be very direct in saying NO.

AT YOUR RESIDENCE

- Always keep windows and doors locked. Never prop open doors or windows at night.
- Don't let strangers into your room or apartment. If your roommates bring people over who make you feel uncomfortable, don't hesitate to talk to your residence coordinator or program coordinator.
- If you observe a suspicious person, notify the police immediately.
- Never give your home address to a stranger...period. Be cautious about posting personal information on the Internet.

Keep in Mind:

While it's alluring to want to see what "all the noise is about down the street," avoid local demonstrations at all costs. These situations are highly volatile and can become violent and dangerous. Sometimes, anti-American sentiments may be expressed, at which time you could become a visible target to an unruly mob.