



SAFE TRAVELS

Safety Tips for Traveling Off Campus

This Student booklet, developed by the Crisis Management / Safety and Security Department, is intended to serve students as a helpful resource for traveling off-campus.

Whether you are traveling for business reasons, spring break, personal vacations, or any other reason there are some precautions you will want to take. Criminals know that most tourists don't pay enough attention to their surroundings. They also know that even when they are arrested they will probably never even see a courtroom, because most travelers will not return to prosecute.

We have made every effort to insure the accuracy of this resource. Please note that it is advisory in nature and not a definitive statement of the circumstances and laws of each particular place that you travel. Specific questions about the places where you travel should be directed to a respective specialist.

Take a few moments to read over this publication.

Relax, enjoy, and come back to us safely!

Booking Vacations

1. Be skeptical if travel appears too good to be true. When in doubt book travel for your vacation through a local travel agent.
2. Ask for a full disclosure of the cancellation policy, including timing and special conditions during the sales pitch.
3. Ask about extra charges, including port taxes, service charges or single supplements.
4. Insist upon receiving written verification of all aspects of the travel package before you book. Read the small print and asterisks. This documentation will be helpful if a dispute arises.
5. Ask if the company participates in a consumer protection plan through such organizations as the United States Tour Operator Association or the American Society of Travel Agents.
6. Be skeptical of any travel "prize" that requires you to pay a fee or processing charge.
7. Reconfirm the arrangements with the hotel, airline or cruise line to verify funds have been received and reservations are confirmed in your name.

If You are Renting a Car

1. Make your reservation early and watch for deals! If the rates go down after you make the reservation, you can call the company and ask for the lower rate -- but if the rates go up, you're locked in at a better price!
2. Don't assume the lower rates will be advertised! Ask about deals when you make the reservation, and then follow up a few times before actually picking up the car.
3. Watch out for surcharges. Paying for a 'basic rate' or an 'all-inclusive rate' will save you time, but it may also cost you money in the form of little extras you don't need.
4. Find out what your present insurance covers when renting a car, then you'll be better informed about what, if any, additional insurance you may need.
5. If traveling by rental car, make sure to ask if it is possible to get one without rental car markings (license plate frame/placard with the rental company name etc.).
6. Some people will rent the cheaper, smaller car because there's a chance the lot will be out of smaller cars and will offer a free upgrade. However, this is not recommended because chances

are very good that renting a car which doesn't suit your needs will leave you with a car which doesn't suit your needs.

7. Know your driving record. Some companies will refuse to rent to people with any of the following convictions on their record: (a) three or more speeding tickets (b) driving while intoxicated (c) reckless driving.
8. Always rent a car from a reliable company that provides 24 hour roadside assistance.
9. Make sure you obtain instructions on what to do if your car breaks down.

Prior to Leaving

1. Plan to have the post office suspend your mail and newspaper deliveries, or have them collected by a neighbor.
2. Leave a car parked in your driveway.
3. Ensure you schedule regular gardening, lawn and home maintenance.
4. Keep a list of credit card and travelers check numbers and a photocopy of your passport with a business associate, relative or friend in case your wallet or cards are stolen.
5. Never carry large amounts of cash: use traveler's checks or credit cards. Do not display cash openly.
6. Have the telephone numbers to call in case your checks or credit cards are lost or stolen.

When Traveling by Car

1. Let someone know your route before you leave.
2. Check your vehicle's fluid levels and make sure the tires, including the spare, are in good condition and properly inflated.
3. Have your route well-planned in advance. Keep a map handy.
4. When approaching the car be aware of your surroundings. Put extraneous thoughts out of your mind for the moment.
5. Don't take precious time fumbling for keys when you try to unlock the door. This gives an attacker the perfect opportunity to strike. Prior to entering a parking lot or ramp, take a few seconds to position your door key between your thumb and forefinger. Make sure the key is protruding so you can use it as a weapon if you are attacked.

6. Before you enter your car, take a glance of the interior to make sure someone is not hiding inside. Once inside the car, immediately lock the doors and do not roll down your windows.
7. Carry emergency items in your car including a flashlight with fresh batteries, blankets, jumper cables and a flare or reflective triangle.
8. If driving in cold weather, travel with warm clothing, an ice scraper and a small shovel.
9. If you become sleepy while driving, find a safe place to park for a short nap. Caffeine-containing beverages may improve alertness, but only for a short time.
10. You should always allow yourself a quarter-tank of gas or more.
11. Remember, traveling in a strange area can be confusing. Plan and double-check your route. If you are lost, go to a well-lighted area with human activity such as a convenience store, gas station or police station.
12. When passing an exit, repeat the name of the exit showing on the sign. This will help you to remember the proximity of the nearest crossroad if you need to call for help. The easier you make it for the police or an emergency road service to find you the less time you leave yourself vulnerable.
13. A foremost recommendation for anyone traveling alone is to have a cellular phone with you.

If You Break Down on the Road

1. Do not get out of your car.
2. If you have a cell phone, call for assistance immediately.
3. Lock your doors and keep your windows closed.
4. If you do not have a cell phone, place a "Call Police" sign in one of your car windows.
5. If someone does stop and offer assistance, only roll down your window approximately 1 inch to speak. More than this gives a potential attacker an opportunity to attempt entry. If you must roll a window down for fresh air, be alert. If you see someone approaching your car, immediately roll up the window.

If Traveling by Air

1. Travel with a photo identification card at all times. Have it handy in case you're asked.
2. Reconfirm your flight directly with the airline 24 to 48 hours prior to departure.

3. Use public transportation or arrange to have someone drive you to the airport to avoid traffic and parking delays (unless you are traveling at a non-peak time of day.)
4. If you must drive, consider off-airport, park-and-ride arrangements that may be provided by the hotel, airport, or a private company.
5. Plan to arrive at the airport at least an hour to an hour-and-a-half prior to departure for domestic flights; at least two hours ahead for international flights.
6. Use luggage tags to clearly identify your bags. Use only your surname, first initial and business address and phone number.
7. Don't pack valuables in checked luggage. Always carry valuables along with some overnight necessities in a carry-on bag.
8. Never leave your luggage unattended. Not only can they be stolen; bombs, drugs and other items can be placed in them making you an unwitting courier and placing you in grave danger.
9. Watch out for "staged" distractions in the airport, e.g., people arguing, people asking you questions, jostling, etc. These distractions create opportunities for pickpockets.

When Using Taxis

1. Use only designated licensed taxis.
2. Make sure your taxi driver is the person pictured on the license.
3. Inquire about the fare prior to embarking to your destination.

If Traveling Abroad

1. Check out State Department travel advisories before deciding on your vacation. These advisories and other valuable information can be found on the web at: <http://travel.state.gov> This information can also be obtained by calling the Office of Overseas Citizens Services (202) 647-5225.
2. U.S. Passport information is available at:
<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/passports.html>
3. If you are in a foreign country, please familiarize yourself with the location and telephone number of the nearest U.S. Embassy (or Embassy of your Country of Origin).

4. Make photocopies of the first two pages of your passport to carry with you. Some countries require you to carry your passport with you, but most police departments will accept a copy until you can retrieve the original. Keep it in the hotel safe.
5. Use traveler's checks or a credit card whenever possible. Carry only a small amount of local currency for taxis, gratuities and local purchases.
6. Be especially careful in "well-to-do-areas". Thieves know that's where you're most likely to let down your guard.
7. Ask the hotel concierge which parts of the city should be avoided, particularly after daylight hours.

When at Your Hotel

1. Use the valet or bellhop service. It will save you from carrying your luggage from a parking lot. Check your room for before the bellhop departs and always keep your door closed / locked.
2. Check your room phone to ensure it is working.
3. Use a travel door alarm. If someone knocks on your door, and claims to be maintenance, housekeeping or security, do not open your door. Call the hotel desk to verify the person's business.
4. Be sure you know two fire exit locations from your floor in the event you need to escape in an emergency.
5. Never leave valuables in your car or the trunk, always take them with you.
6. When parking in an underground parking lot, park as close as possible to an elevator. Be sure to park in well-lit areas. Park where there are numerous other vehicles.
7. Use valet parking when available.
8. If you lose your key, please notify the front desk immediately.
9. Ensure that all windows and sliding doors are locked. And always close your drapes at night.
10. When alone, do not enter elevators with strangers if you do not feel comfortable. Wait for another elevator.
11. Never announce your hotel room number or invite strangers to your room.
12. Always keep cash and valuables in the room safe. If there is no room safe, safety deposit boxes are often provided at the front desk.
13. Unpack and place belongings in the closet and dresser. Arrange your things so you'll know if anything is missing. (Suitcases should always be locked so they cannot be used to carry your property out of your room).

14. Report any lost or stolen items to the hotel/motel management and to the police.
15. Report to the management any suspicious movements in the corridors or rooms.

When Sightseeing

1. Ask for directions at a hotel/motel on how to get to those attractions you want to visit.
2. Try to travel with a group or companion. Select tour guides carefully.
3. Ask if there are any areas in town you should avoid. Always use well-lighted main streets and public areas.
4. Do not advertise that you are a tourist. Place maps and travel brochures out of sight.
5. Looking lost (stopping and looking at addresses or staring at street signs) may make you look like an easy target for crime. If you do get lost, find an open business and ask for directions.
6. Only carry with you the cash you will need, and only in small denominations.

Arriving Home

1. Remember to take safety precautions on your way back and after you arrive.
2. If there is any sign of a forced entry into your home or room upon arrival, do not enter. Go directly to a neighbor, call the police and wait for their arrival.

For more information:

Safety and Security for US Students Traveling Abroad, FBI
<https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/student-travel-brochure-pdf.pdf>

US Passports and International Travel: Bureau of Consular Affairs – U.S. Dept. of State
<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/go/checklist.html>

Students Abroad: U.S. Dept. of State
<http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>

Top Ten Tips for Safe Overseas Travel for Students: Associates of the American Foreign Service
Worldwide
<http://www.aafsw.org/articles-advice/foreign-service-kids/top-10-tips-for-safe-overseas-travel-with-students/>