

## General Safety Tips for All Travelers Abroad

### **In your surroundings, all travelers should:**

- **regularly monitor the U.S. State Department's website** for current Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and the Worldwide Caution and country-specific information, referring to the "Traveler's Checklist" for additional information.
- **be vigilant in public areas** and places that attract foreigners, such as embassies, hotels, restaurants, bars and businesses.
- **look out for anything suspicious**, and if you see anything, report it to the local police immediately (*many potentially dangerous situations are foiled by the vigilance of ordinary people*);
- **keep your mobile phone charged and with you, with emergency numbers programmed in;**
- **consider the extent to which you might stand out** from the crowd before deciding on places to visit;
- **be discreet on social media** about yourself and your plans;
- **inform group leaders**, on-site program partners, fellow students, or hotel staff about where you're going and when you intend to return;
- **identify places like police stations**, hospitals, official buildings along your route where you could seek refuge in an emergency;
- **understand the important cultural norms affecting women** travelers, paying careful attention to local laws and customs that may be quite different from those in the United States;
- **avoid participating in demonstrations** and other political activities:

*Political activities in other countries can result in detention and/or deportation by officials. Even demonstrations that are intended to be peaceful can sometimes turn violent. Innocent bystanders can be hurt or arrested.*

- **be cautious when sharing information** about your plans and itinerary with strangers:

*Don't feel the need to be overly polite if you are bothered by someone. While it may seem rude to be unfriendly to a stranger, creating boundaries to protect yourself is important. Use facial expressions, body language, and a firm voice to fend off any unwanted attention.*

- **use caution and common sense.**

### **In your accommodations, all travelers should**

- **keep your room door locked** at all times;
- **meet visitors in a public place;**
- **do not leave money and other valuables out** and visible in your room, using a safe, when available;
- **let someone one know**--if you are out late at night--when you expect to return.
- **not get on an elevator** if there is a suspicious-looking person inside
- **read the fire safety instructions** for your accommodation.  
*Know how to report a fire and be sure you know where the nearest fire exits 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.*
- **know the identity of any visitors** before opening the door. Do not invite strangers into your room.

### **In general, the most important factor of safety abroad is BEHAVIOR, so all travelers should follow these general tips:**

- **Be aware of your surroundings** at all times; don't wander through unfamiliar areas alone, and always remain alert.
- **Be careful with alcohol.** If you drink, make sure it is only with people you know and trust.
- **Don't go out alone at night.** Even when you're with friends, stick to well-lit streets where there are a lot of people.
- **Don't flash jewelry,** expensive cameras, or electronic equipment.
- **Keep in mind, when crossing streets,** that pedestrians may not be given the right of way.
- **Don't attract attention** to yourself; observe local behavior and try to mimic it.
- **Use only official taxis;** unless meters are used, agree on the fare before you get in.
- **Find out,** if possible, where high crime areas are and whether civil unrest is brewing.
- **Protect your passport.** If it must be with you, keep it in a front pocket or secure area of your purse/baggage. Be careful when displaying it.
- **In general, avoid being engulfed in a crowd.** It can compromise your ability to seek safety in case of an incident.

*The above information was compiled by Seminars International with content from Bill Hoffa, StudyAbroad.com, and the US Department of State. 2015; it is borrowed with permission by North Central College.*