

# Staying Safe Abroad

## 10 Safety Tips to Remember When Travelling

Whether you're traveling abroad for a semester, or a week, ensuring your safety is vital. Travelling the world is great, but doing so without considering your security is, well, frankly stupid. Not everyone has good intentions, and some people purposely will take advantage of you if you're not careful. Here's a list of ten tips on staying safe abroad.

**1. Be aware. Always.** It's more fun to walk around blasting your favorite songs and pretending that you're strutting down a catwalk — c'mon, you know you do it, too — but if you're in a new environment set the airpods aside. Not only should you take in the sights and sounds of this new country, but you also need to keep your guard up. Keep an eye on the people around you. Don't let strangers get too close.

**2. Know the law.** Pepper spray is a typical protection measure for women in the U.S. However, many of countries ban pepper spray and other weapons. Do you research before you go (*see number six*) to know how you can protect yourself.

**3. Keep money in more than one place.** That way, if you get pick-pocketed or lose your wallet, you won't be stranded without a cent.

**4. Keep your bag close to your body.** If you're carrying a purse, tuck the strap beneath a sweater or coat so that it cannot be easily grabbed. Or, if you're wearing a backpack, wear it facing forward. Yes, it may look silly, but it's better to look a little strange than to have your items (and money!) stolen.

**5. Avoid walking alone in the dark.** Ladies, we all know this rule. It is true whether you are in Barcelona or Japan or Iowa.

**6. Research, research, research!** Do you need to bring a personal lock to safely store your belongings? How safe is public transportation? What areas are sketchy at night? What areas are sketchy *during the day*? What is the country's emergency call number? Hint: it is probably not 911. You'll want to know these things before you catch your flight.

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**7. Consider buying an international sim card.** Not every phone plan includes international service. Sim cards provide you with internet abroad. Especially if you are travelling alone, this is an option that typically costs between \$20-40 and will allow you to connect with people back home.

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**8. Share your itinerary.** And if you don't have an itinerary, make sure you at least keep someone posted.

Another option is turning on location settings on your phone. The *Find Friends* feature on iPhone allows you to share your location with specific people.

**9. Don't stand out.** Although this may be difficult with your backpack strapped around the front of your body, *try not to stand out*. Professional pickpockets prey on unsuspecting tourists. Learn the culture of the place you're travelling to and try to conform, especially if you are alone. In fact, I once was told a strange piece of advice from an old Irish man in a tiny pub in Galway: "Don't be too American." Immerse yourself in the environment and live like the locals.

**10. Don't be too afraid to have fun.** Okay, no, this isn't really a tip for staying safe. But this is a tip for traveling abroad, so it at least half counts.

While the world can be a scary place, and it's definitely important to keep safety at the forefront of your mind, don't be so worried that you forget to enjoy yourself. You're abroad! Take pictures. Laugh a ton. Meet new people. Take safety seriously, but also take in the place and the moments which will become some of your most cherished memories.

