



HEALTH & SAFETY WHILE ABROAD

Use your best judgment and gut feeling in uncomfortable situations - "Street-smarts" are fundamental. Your health and safety are key components to your well-being and overall experience abroad. New environments bring great opportunities. However, being in new environments we are not accustomed to can also make us vulnerable. This doesn't mean we should fear the unknown, it means we just need to be more prepared and attentive in new environments. Be observant of your surroundings.



Avoid Travel Theft

CARRY A LIGHT

Consider avoiding deserted streets after dark. If you can't, carry a small, heavy flashlight in your hand. Be careful on dark streets even if you have a companion. Consider carrying pepper spray if it is legal in your host country.

SOME THIEVES PREFER CROWDED AREAS

Stay alert in places like bus stations and during street celebrations, where you are likely to be jostled (*pickpockets use these circumstances to grab your belongings*). Avoid keeping your wallet in your back pocket, since you do not have eyes behind your head pickpockets can easily take it. Same goes for backpacks and purses—keep them in front, especially in crowded places like public transportation. At restaurants, do not leave your purse or backpack hanging on the chair. Instead keep in on your lap and with a strap attached to you.

KEEP YOUR MONEY STASH SAFE

Sew pockets into your bra where you can keep some folded cash. If you do get mugged, having a secret stash will prevent from you being left helpless. A money belt works, too, but thieves know all about them. You can also stash a couple of bigger bills in a sock after dark. Avoid keeping anything of value in easily accessible pockets.

DON'T BRING THE BLING

Avoid ostentatious jewelry—you could be injured if a thief yanks a bracelet from your wrist or a necklace from your throat. Big bling will attract more attention.

LET YOUR BAG GO

Most experts say not to resist—let your bag go and then shout for help rather than risk assault. Opening your wallet and handing over your money may be enough for the thief and you can keep your bag. However, it also may make a thief think you're reaching for a weapon. Better to hand over the bag.

Consider Your Attire

It's already pretty clear that you're a Westerner—avoid looking like a rich Westerner to avoid unwanted attention.

A solution... Dress like a local.

Learn the local dress code when you arrive—buy appropriate clothing locally if necessary. In some countries, some typical American attire, like a shirt that shows your belly may be offensive. And although your clothing choices are not an invitation for attention, they might be perceived that way in some cultures. In Islamic countries, lay aside your own opinions and wear a headscarf to show respect of their culture.

Cultural, Legal, and Social Issues

It is important for students to recognize how behavioral signals may be perceived differently in other cultures. Depending upon the situation, the consequences could potentially be dangerous. Physical harassment, and sexual assault are issues to consider when interacting with various cultures due to chance of misinterpretations of behavior or speech.

Furthermore, the legal system in the country may not offer protection for victims facing sexual assault or sexual orientation. You are encouraged to explore and research the cultural, legal, and social issues relevant to the country where you plan to study and travel.

LGBTQIA+ Abroad

You will find that attitudes and tolerance toward queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people and issues vary from country to country, and even within the U.S. Some countries are more welcoming and legally protective than the U.S. while others may be less accepting or more restrictive. All students need to be aware of the legal issues related to sexuality in other countries of where they plan to travel. LGBTQ students need information regarding the receptivity and social climate of the host country.

For more information, please visit:

- <https://www.diversityabroad.com/guides/diversity-and-inclusion-abroad-guide/lgbtq-students-abroad>
- <https://www.iesabroad.org/student-diversity-access/resources/lgbtq>

Helpful Tips

ALWAYS STAY ALERT

Use common sense and be aware of your surroundings.

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

If you feel like you're in danger, you might be. Trust your gut if you feel uncomfortable or a situation doesn't feel right.

SMART DEVICES

Although smart phones, tablets, etc. are useful, they can also disconnect you from your surroundings and put you at greater risk of accidents or incidents. Write down directions before you go out. Stay alert, stay present, and enjoy the moment.

BE CONFIDENT

Look, act, and move as though you know where you're going and what you're doing. This will prevent you from looking like an easy target and may help you avoid potential danger.

ASK FOR DIRECTIONS

Before you set out, ask the concierge or other hotel/hostel staff for directions to the places you plan to visit each day. This will help you avoid unsafe areas and also prevent you from looking confused and potentially vulnerable.

Physical Health

Find out where to go if you get sick or injured before you are in either of those situations. Know how and where to see a physician or receive medical attention.

Review your insurance coverage before you need to use it so you understand what it does and does not cover (for example, your insurance may not cover accidents that occur while intoxicated or high-risk activities)

Research the safety of the water in your host country before you go and be sure to bring a water bottle with a filter if needed.

Get enough sleep. Sleep deprivation can make you more vulnerable to illness, injury, or poor decision making.

Strive for a balanced diet. Access to fresh fruits and vegetables may differ from what you are used to.