



## 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, since we are not accustomed, we can find ourselves in vulnerable situations. 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.

### **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 not an invitation for a come-on from men, it might be perceived that way. 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.

## LGBTQ+ Abroad

You will find that attitudes and tolerance toward gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered 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>

## A Few More 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. Stay alert, stay present, 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 from your hotel/hostel, 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.

## Notes