

# Travel Health & Safety

## Why Personal Health & Safety Is Important While Traveling

- Different countries having different laws and regulations governing transport, infrastructure, safety etc, and may be lacking when compared to laws you may have at home.
- The political stability of some of the countries are volatile and lead to state-based violence, rebel violence, and civil unrest.
- Natural events such as hurricanes, earthquakes, storms, flooding etc can happen the world over.
- Most of the people you meet on your travels will be genuine, welcoming and honest. However, as anywhere, there is a small element preying on the unsuspecting tourist.
- Remote locations mean support and assistance are not always readily available.

## Before You Go

- Take copies of your passport and other important documents with you. This way, if you lose your documents, you can at least present a copy to your embassy or consulate while abroad and have replacement or temporary travel documents issued. A tip we received from one of our seasoned travelers was to scan the documents, and send them to your e-mail. That way you have additional access to them on-line.
- We suggest registering your travel plans with your embassy or consulate before leaving home. Should a serious event occur, your Government will be able to make contact and account for you.
- Take out appropriate insurance, travel and medical. No one ever expects an injury or accident to happen. However, we have a number of unfortunate stories from travelers and they usually start with: "I never expected..."
- Leave a copy of your itinerary with friends or family.

## Health Information

Consult your local medical professional well before leaving home. You may need injections to prevent against common diseases', and they may need some time to incubate before they are effective. Your medical professional or travel clinic will advise on what is needed.

## Vaccines

| Vaccine                              | Cost (for US) | No.     | Notes               |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------|---------------------|
| Typhoid                              | \$54          | 4 pills | Pills good 5 years. |
| Yellow Fever                         | \$98          | 1 shot  | Good 10 years.      |
| Polio Booster                        | \$43          | 1 shot  | Locks in for life.  |
| Meningitis                           | \$119         | 1 shot  | Locks in for life.  |
| Hep A+B                              | \$62          | 3 shots | Locks in for life.  |
| Tetanus/<br>Diphtheria/<br>Pertussis | \$58          | 1 shot  | Good for 10 years.  |

|              |              |  |
|--------------|--------------|--|
| <b>Total</b> | <b>\$557</b> |  |
|--------------|--------------|--|

## Avoid Mosquito Bites

Even if you are in a low- to no-risk area, it is still a good idea to prevent mosquitoes from biting you in the first place, even if it is only to avoid the annoyance of painful bites. It should go without saying that the best thing you can do to protect yourself from being bitten is to use preventive measures:

- Air-conditioned rooms are great for minimizing mosquito bites, as they are often better sealed and less likely to let them in.
- Cover up. Wearing the right clothing is essential. Wear light, loose cotton clothing that covers most of your skin, especially around peak exposure times and places, for example, near bodies of water or at twilight or after dark, the peak time for malaria-carrying mosquitoes to feed.
- Sleep under permethrin-coated nets where necessary.
- Use anti-mosquito coils and plug-in devices where appropriate.
- Always apply a good dose of 30–50% DEET spray, and reapply it regularly. Some people prefer more natural alternatives, but these are often not as effective or are often not clinically proven to be effective at all.

## Med Kit Packing List

- All Prescribed Medications
- Ibuprofen
- Antihistamine
- Loperamide/Anti-Diarrheal
- Rehydration Tablets/Electrolyte Packets
- [Moleskin/2nd Skin](#) for Blisters
- Card with Existing Medical Conditions, Allergies, and Emergency Contacts
- Tweezers
- Iodine Pads/Antiseptic Towelettes for Wound Cleaning
- Bandages

## Packing List For Everyday Health

- Sanitizer
- Multivitamins
- Sunscreen
- Insect Repellent
- Probiotics
- Drinking Straw

## Food

Food is an important part of the travel experience, but the wrong food could ruin your trip! Here are some general tips for staying safe while traveling.

*Places where it's generally safe to consume any food and drink:  
Europe, North America (except Mexico), Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.*

## Produce

Surprisingly, produce is often the culprit in sicknesses caught overseas because contaminated water is one of the world's leading causes of illness. Produce is grown using water with that may contain contaminants, then it's cut and prepared at restaurants rinsed in water that may contain contaminated water.

This isn't the rule absolutely everywhere in the world. Countries within Europe, North America (except Mexico), Japan, Australia, and New Zealand generally have safe produce.

- Avoid salads
- Grab something you can peel, wash, or cook yourself.

## Meat and Dairy

- If you want to eat meat, eat it cooked or canned. Don't eat shellfish.
- Check that your dairy is pasteurized. Unpasteurized dairy is 150 times more likely to cause illness.
- Do not eat undercooked eggs or sauces made with egg, like mayonnaise, unless it comes in a sealed container.

## Drinks

### Water

Contaminated water is one of the world's leading causes of illness. Buy bottled water. Check the cap before you buy it. I would even suggest opening it while standing in front of the person you bought it from.

- If the cap is separated from the ring - don't drink it.

- If the ring is a different color than the cap - don't buy.
- If there are signs of super glue sticking inside the cap - well I guess you already bought, hopefully you didn't drink any.

If you see any signs of tampering at all, and you already paid for the water trade out bottles. But if you opened one already, show it to the people running the store. They know what they did! It's usually possible to get a bottle that looks safer or get your money back.

## Where water contaminates hide:

There are places that many travelers forget to be careful around water. Like, in the head of your toothbrush when you wash it in the sink. If you don't drink sink water then don't brush with sink water. Fruit juices and smoothies can also have contaminates. Another common culprit is ice. While it is possible to boil contaminates out of water, it's not possible to freeze them out. The same applies to popsicles.

## Bottled Drinks and Alcohol

If you are a big drinker, take a few minutes to research the alcohol in the countries you'll be visiting. Home brewed concoctions and unregulated bottling could cause illness. In certain countries you'll need to stick to drinking imported alcohol from a brand you trust.

## Consuming Drugs

If you want to have fun while impaired, protect your documents and money. Hide your money in many different pockets. Stick it under the mattress.

It is important to consider your surroundings. In many countries, there are people who would love for you to be drugged enough to be able to take things from you.

In terms of sacred rituals involving drugs - do your research. If tripping on ayahuasca is a big reason for your travel, research travel forums to find out where to find the authentic stuff, and definitely ask other travelers when you arrive at your destination.

It's not recommended to try drugs overseas. Drugs are a huge risk and aside from jeopardizing your immediately safety, many countries have such harsh laws against drug consumption you could end up in prison for a long time.

## Getting Some Booty

Again, protect your documents and money. Hide your money in many different pockets. Stick it under the mattress. Handle your own condoms - either bring them from home or purchase them yourself. Remember, it is your responsibility to keep yourself safe in these situations, and sometimes an exotic one-night-stands is actually an opportunity to get robbed.

## Transportation

The travel experience will expose you to many different types and forms of transport, and many risks and rewards. Some of these may be familiar to you and just a matter of commonsense, and some may not.

**\*\*SCAM ALERT: Fake tickets to avoid line – Always buy transportation tickets from the official ticket office or website.\*\***

### Air Travel

- Pay attention to the in-flight briefing. It may seem monotonous or boring to those who travel often, but in the event of an emergency, you will need to know it instantly.
- Count the rows to the emergency exit. In an emergency, lighting may be reduced.
- Don't drink too much alcohol. Cabins are pressurized so the effect of alcohol is stronger than normal.
- Listen to the flight attendants. They are primarily there for your safety.
- Keep your seatbelt fastened. Turbulence can occur at anytime.

### Buses and Trains

- Keep your personal belongings in your sight, or preferably on you.
- A lock placed on zippers is a good deterrent to a would-be thief.
- Watch for uneven, slippery surfaces or other obstacles as you enter and exit the vehicle.
- Remain alert to surroundings. Be aware of distractions, as they may be opportunities for pickpockets.
- Know your stop. Google Maps should tell you how many stops there are before you get off as well.

### Taxies

- **\*\*SCAM ALERT: Broken Taxi Meter\*\*** – Negotiate rates ahead of time, or ensure the meter is in fact working before you get in the car. If the taxi driver refuses to turn on the meter, or tells you it's cheaper without the meter, get out and opt for another driver.

- If you are staying at a hotel, have them call you a taxi, rather than waive one down on the street.
- Use taxis from a taxi stand where possible. Typically only registered operators may use a taxi stand.
- Keep your belongings at your side or feet. If you need to exit quickly they will be easily accessible.
- If in an emergency situation, leave the bags. You can run faster without it and items can be replaced.
- Check the Identification of the driver before getting in. It should be prominently displayed in the vehicle if it is a legitimate taxi.

## Water transport

- Listen to the safety briefing. You will need to know what to do in an emergency.
- If lifejackets are supplied – use them.
- Always have at least one hand free to hold onto something to help with your balance.
- The sun reflects up off the water. Ensure you have adequate sunscreen protection.
- Take medication for seasickness prior to boarding – it may take some time to become effective.

## Accommodation

Accommodation is generally considered a safe haven for weary travelers. However the reality is it is often the most likely place that accidents and thefts occur. The following things can be done to increase your personal safety as told to us by fellow travelers:

- **\*\*SCAM ALERT: Driver says hotel is bad or booked\*\*** – Call your hotel in advance and make sure they're open. Ask if they offer shuttle service and then schedule a pickup. If your taxi driver still tells you the hotel is not available, insist that he take you there anyway. Tell him you already have a reservation (even if you don't).
- When arriving, stay with your bags until they are transferred from the taxi or bus to the Lobby. Lobbies can be chaotic places with many people coming and going. Keep an eye on your bags at all times when checking in and out. The busy atmosphere is a welcome distraction to opportunists.
- When you enter your hotel room, make sure the door closes firmly behind you and it locks.
- When in your room lock the door, use the security latch, lock windows, and connecting room doors. If you are scared of a thief or another criminal entering your room, it might be a cheap, lightweight [door stop alarm](#).
- Always use the 'spy hole' to see who is at the door before opening it.
- Know the emergency assistance number, and how to operate the phone system.

- Store all unneeded personal items, cash, valuables and travel documents in the in-room safe or your locked bag.
- Take note of the emergency plan on the back of the hotel door. You will need to know it in an emergency.
- Place your room key in the same place each time. It avoids losing it, and you will know where it is in an emergency situation.
- Use the non-slip mats in the showers if provided.

## Sightseeing and Daytripping

One of the great ways to experience a new destination is to simply immerse yourself into it! However, as with anywhere, there are select elements of the local community who prey on the vulnerable. Some of these ideas may be simple common-sense, while others you may not have thought about.

- **\*\*SCAM ALERT: People putting bracelets/necklaces on you\*\*** Don't allow anyone to put anything on your body, and be extremely wary of accepting anything for free unless there is a good reason for it. Especially in very touristy areas. Ignore them and keep walking.
- Blend in as much as possible, especially in your dress and appearance. Try to avoid an obvious tourist appearance.
- View maps discreetly. A map identifies you as a tourist, and unfortunately, a target.
- If disorientated, only ask for directions from uniformed officers or persons of obvious authority.
- Stay on well lit or well trafficked areas and roads. Danger often lurks in dark and less populated areas.
- Photos are a must when traveling. However, keep the camera discrete. Many 'point-and-shoot' cameras will fit in your pocket out of sight when not in use. Do not leave larger ones dangling around your neck, or other places in plain view.
- When withdrawing money from ATM's try to do so during daylight, in well trafficked areas and use machines that are associated with a recognized bank where possible. As with anywhere, protect your personal pin number by covering the keypad from prying eyes with your other hand. Once the cash is withdrawn, take time to ensure it is stashed away safely. Do not do so while walking down the street advertising the fact you are carrying amounts of cash with you.
- Leave excess cash, travel documents, jewelry in the hotel safe, or better yet at home if you don't need it while away.
- An experienced pickpocket can usually pick a tourist out in a crowd. Wear your purse over one shoulder with the opening flap against your stomach so that it's impossible to get into. If you're carrying a daypack wear it in front, kangaroo style.
- Where possible avoid walking alone – especially at night. Traveling with friends makes you much less of a target.
- Take something with the hotel name and address on it with you like a notepad or matchbox. This way, even if you do not speak the language, a taxi will be able to take you back to the hotel.



## Final Tips On Alertness and Preparedness

Paranoia replaces your perception of what actually is happening with imaginings of what could happen. You are far more open to every signal when you don't focus on the expectation of specific signals.

Precautions like the ones described in this guide are constructive, whereas remaining in a state of fear is destructive. It can also lead to panic, and panic itself is usually more dangerous than the outcome we dread. Rock climbers and long-distance ocean swimmers will tell you it isn't the mountain or the water that kills—it is panic.

While it is important to remain aware of your surroundings, over-alertness and fear-based reactions can make you seem like the perfect target for thieves and criminals.

**Good Luck!**