

U. S. State Department

Smart International Travel Advice for Students

Packing. Make copies of all your travel documents. Leave a copy of your passport identification page, airline tickets, driver's license, the credit cards you're taking, serial numbers of your traveler's checks, insurance information, as well as the addresses and phone numbers of the places you will be. Having copies of these documents at home will allow your family or friends to contact you or help you in case of an emergency. Carry additional copies of these documents with you on your trip, separate from the originals.

Luggage. Check with your airline carrier for limits on luggage. Some airlines are charging for bags, others have weight limits. Charges for over-weight luggage can be costly. Know the requirements before you pack.

Valuables. Leave anything at home that you would regret losing.

Toiletries. Check airline regulations for carry on requirements regarding makeup and toiletries. Purchase travel size items when possible.

Handbags and Fanny Packs. Wearing a big purse or a fanny pack is like wearing a sign that says "rob me!" Your passport, cash and credit cards are most secure when locked in a hotel safe. When out and about, carry these items in an inside pocket, or use a money belt worn under your clothing, or a sturdy shoulder bag with the strap worn across your chest.

Electric Appliances. Many countries use 220-volt electricity while U.S. appliances use 110-volts. You will need to purchase a "converter" or a "transformer" to be able to use your hairdryer, laptop or other electronics. Plug prongs can also be different abroad, so you may also need a "plug adapter" as well.

Medications and Prescription Drugs. Make sure you bring a back-up supply in case you are delayed during your trip. Keep essential medication on you when you travel in case you and your luggage get separated. Make sure your prescription medication is not considered an illegal narcotic. If you are going abroad with a preexisting medical condition, you should carry a letter from your doctor describing your condition and medications, including the generic names of prescribed drugs. Any medications carried overseas should be in their original containers and clearly labeled. Check with the foreign country's embassy in the U.S. to make sure your medications are not considered illegal narcotics. Foreign embassy's websites are listed on the U.S. State Department's website.

Also, carry instructions for treating any allergies or other unique medical conditions you might have.

Don't forget the little things like sunscreen, mild pain medication, first aid items, earplugs.

International Calling Card. Purchase an international calling card to make phone calls. It is a convenient and inexpensive way of keeping in touch.

Safety for Women Travelers. Everyone traveling abroad should research safety and local customs, but young women should be especially attentive.

If you are a young woman in a foreign country, even dressing in a burlap sack and sensible shoes may not protect you against unwelcome advances of strangers. Always try to stay with a group when exploring locally and avoid walking alone at night. In addition, 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.

Traveling through foreign lands gives you a unique opportunity to observe a rich tapestry of cultures and customs ---- which may include very different ideas about gender roles. Some countries have much more conservative views about what is appropriate behavior for women. Remember, you're a visitor. Research social mores before you go, and respect the customs of the country where you are a guest. You may not agree with all the cultural practices you encounter, but you should abide by them while in that country.

In some countries, wearing the wrong clothes can get you arrested or lead to a dangerous situation. What you think is casual may actually be considered provocative or unacceptable in other cultures. Know before you go, and pack accordingly. On arrival, note what local women are wearing and try to follow their lead. Stay away from anything too revealing or tight. Don't wear excessive makeup, and keep jewelry to a minimum to avoid attracting attention. Any fashion statement you do make should show consideration for the country you are visiting.

Local Laws. Laws vary from one country to another and your rights as a U.S citizen do not apply outside of the U.S. The most important legal advice when traveling internationally is to obey the laws of the country you are visiting. An arrest or accident during a trip abroad can result in a difficult and expensive experience. Your U.S. citizenship does not make you exempt from full prosecution under another country's criminal justice system, and the U. S. government cannot bail you out. Many countries impose harsh penalties for violations that may be considered minor in the United States, and unlike the U. S., you may be considered guilty until proven innocent. Ignorance of the law is not excuse, so be informed.

Credit Card Limits. Keep track of the credit limits on your credit cards. Not only does this make good financial sense, but also good legal sense. Americans have been arrested for innocently exceeding their limit abroad. Ask your credit card company how to report the loss of your card from abroad. Keep in mind, the 800-numbers do not work from abroad, but your company should have a number that you can call while you are overseas.

Photographs. Take plenty of pictures, but only if you know it is okay. In many countries you can be detained for photographing security-related institutions, such as police and military installations, government buildings, border areas and transportation facilities. If you are in doubt, ask permission before taking photographs.

Buying Souvenirs. Make smart purchases. Americans have been arrested for purchasing souvenirs that were, or looked like, antiques and which local customs authorities believed were national treasures. This is especially true in Turkey, Egypt and Mexico. Familiarize yourself with any local regulations of antiques. In countries with strict control of antiques, document your purchases as reproductions if that is the case

Don't Accept Packages From Anyone. Some Americans think it is a good idea to take advantage of an offer for an all-expense paid vacation abroad in exchange for carrying a small package in their luggage. However, if you are caught, ignorance is not excuse. If the package contains illegal drugs or substances, the fact that you didn't know will not reduce the charges. You could miss your flight, your exams or several years of your life during a stay behind bars.

Illegal Drugs. Don't import, purchase, use or have drugs in your possession. Drug charges can carry severe penalties, including imprisonment without bail for up to a year before a case is even tried. A conviction carries several more years of imprisonment in a foreign jail. In some countries it doesn't matter if you're underage either: you can still be charged as an adult.

Weapons. Do not carry weapons. Even a pocketknife can result in a serious weapons charge while on foreign soil -even if the knife is found during a search or arrest for an unrelated offense. Visitors driving across the border to Mexico should ensure that their vehicles contain no firearms, ammunition, or weapons ---Americans have been imprisoned after one single bullet was found rolling around in the trunk of the car.

Demonstrations. Avoid participating in demonstrations and other political activities. Here in the U. S. we enjoy many liberties. However, 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, and you don't want to be caught in the middle.

If you find yourself in a legal jam, contact the closest U.S. embassy or consulate for assistance. Keep in mind, U. S. Consular employees cannot arrange for local officials to release detained American citizens.