

This document provides travelers with key advice on:

- **HOTEL SELECTION & SECURITY**
- **INCREASING YOUR PERSONAL SECURITY WHILE TRAVELING**
- **TAXI SECURITY**
- **CIVIL UNREST**
- **AVOIDING AND REACTING TO VIOLENT CRIME**

HOTEL SELECTION & SECURITY

The biggest threat travelers face in hotels is property security. Due to relatively uncontrolled access to hotels, would-be criminals can come and go relatively unnoticed. Always watch your luggage carefully when checking in and out, and keep items of high value in your hotel room safe or the front desk safe when you are out. Other top areas of concern are personal security (especially for women traveling alone) and fire safety.

Use the following guidelines when selecting a hotel abroad.

Security Concerns

- Make your own reservations or use a reputable travel agency.
- For business travel to sensitive areas, make reservations using your personal credit card and your employer's street address; do not identify the company.
- The most vulnerable parts of your journey are transfers (to/from the airport, for example). Transfers are often hurried, and you can be easily distracted.
- Verify when making the reservation that your hotel has an active 24-hour security program, including surveillance cameras in key areas such as the garage and vulnerable perimeter areas (for example, if the hotel backs to a dark alley).
- Attempt to select hotels that have optional escort services that can accompany you to your car when you are parked in the garage or off-site.
- Many thefts occur during room cleanings, when persons can quickly enter and leave a room without arousing suspicion (cleaning crews typically do not know who is supposed to be in each room). Never leave valuables - including sensitive business materials - out when you leave the room. If you cannot lock them in a safe, lock them in your luggage and put your luggage somewhere inconspicuous, such as under the bed.
- Select modern hotels that have electronic guestroom locks on the doors. Larger hotels tend to have more elaborate security systems in place.
- If you are particularly concerned about terrorism, select gated hotels with long driveways and multiple security layers between the street and the building. Terrorists, like most criminals, prefer targets of opportunity. A hotel behind a gate with tight security is a less attractive target than a building fronting a busy street downtown, where security personnel cannot possibly keep track of all activity. If you stay in a busy downtown hotel, ask management how they control the pick-up/drop-off zone, and verify that a security guard is on duty at the front door at all times. Remember that the likelihood of a traveler being affected by a terrorist event - at any hotel worldwide - is miniscule.

Fire Safety Concerns

- Modern hotels, especially US or Western-owned luxury hotel chains, are likely to comply with the type of strict fire safety rules observed in the US.
- Stay in hotels where you can request a room between the second and eighth floors. If a fire or explosion occurs on the ground floor, you will still be within the reach of rescue workers. Most fire departments do not have equipment that can reach above the seventh floor.
- Choose a hotel where you can be sure to get a room near an exit; avoid accepting rooms in the middle of a long hallway or on an isolated wing of the hotel.
- Choose hotels that have clearly-marked exits, alarms, and sprinkler systems. Ensure room windows open to the outside and have functioning latches.

Location Concerns

- Select hotels that are not located in a high crime-rate area. Your embassy's security officer can usually tell you which areas to avoid.
- If terrorism against Western targets has been identified as a distinct threat in the area you will be visiting, consider choosing a hotel that is not located on a major thoroughfare or near a Western embassy. If possible, avoid hotels that Westerners are known to use. Instead, select a reputable domestic hotel in a good part of town, but away from popular tourist spots and foreign missions.

Security at your hotel

Many hotels do not provide adequate security for guests, and many are not as secure as they appear. To protect yourself and your property when staying a hotel:

Planning, Arrival and Departure

- Make your own reservations or use a reputable travel agency.
- For business travel to sensitive areas, make reservations using your personal credit card and your employer's street address; do not identify the company.
- Use travelers' programs where available to upgrade to more secure executive or concierge floors.
- Pre-book your first night's stay.
- Arrange transportation from the airport to your hotel.
- The most vulnerable parts of your journey are transfers between your entry/exit point (the airport for example) and your hotel. Transfers are often hurried, and you can be easily distracted.
- Be alert for suspicious persons and behavior.
- Have the concierge hold your luggage. Hotels have a responsibility to protect luggage under their control. Ask for - and protect - luggage claim checks.

On Arrival

- Do not wander in the parking lot, garage, or public space around the hotel; kidnappers and thieves use these areas opportunistically.
- Put your bags against your leg or on your foot during registration; you will feel it if someone moves them. Place your briefcase or purse on the counter in front of you.

- Have the bellman carry your bags and act as security to your room for the first time.
- Allow the bellman to open the room, turn lights on, and ensure that it is vacant.
- Before dismissing him, inspect the door lock, locks on sliding glass doors and windows, door latch and/or chain, room safe, lock on interconnecting doors, telephone, and fire alarm.
- If you find a discrepancy, immediately request a fix or a room change.
- Speak with the bellman, concierge, and front desk regarding safe areas around the city in which to jog, dine, or sightsee. Ask about local customs and which taxis or other public transportation to use or avoid. Ask about the local 911-type emergency number and how to use the local telephone system.
- If you have to use parking stickers in your vehicle, ensure they do not show your name/room number.

When In Your Room

- Keep the door closed and engage the dead bolt and privacy latch or chain at all times. Use a doorstop (bring one with you).
- Keep cash, valuables, tickets, passports and other personal documents in the hotel or room safe. If no safe is available, keep those items with you or lock them in your suitcase.
- Do not leave valuables in the open while sleeping. Stow watches, jewelry, wallets, purses, cameras, and laptops in a nightstand, bureau or suitcase.
- Do not open your door to anyone unless the person is expected or known to you. If you question the authenticity of a hotel service employee, verify it by contacting the front desk before allowing entry.
- Refuse unexpected packages.

At the Hotel

- Be alert for people watching your movements, who look out of place or who follow you.
- Be cautious about discussing personal matters, your itinerary, mode of transportation, or other arrangements with strangers or those who may overhear you.
- Do not accept food or drink from strangers; criminals are known to drug consumables.
- Keep a "do not disturb" sign on your outside door at all times, giving the impression that the room is occupied - whether it is or not.
- When out of the room, always leave the television or radio and a light on.
- Call housekeeping only when you are ready for the room to be cleaned. Be present or nearby, if possible, when the cleaning takes place. Do not place the "Maid Service" sign on the doorknob; this is a signal to thieves that the room is unoccupied.
- Lock personal and business documents, printed stationery, laptops, and other large valuables that do not fit into a safe in your luggage.
- Meet people, especially strangers, in the hotel lobby, not in your room.
- Safeguard your phone credit card numbers. Avoid being overheard when giving them to an operator. Ensure nobody is watching as you enter numbers on a touch-tone phone.
- Charge all food, beverages and services to your room bill, rather than carry cash.

- Be cautious when entering restrooms. Do not hang purses or bags on hooks on the inside of lavatory doors, or place them on the floor in stalls -- two favorite locations for grab-and-run thefts.
- Have hotel management call for a taxi rather than trying to hail one yourself.
- Vary the time and route by which you leave and return to the hotel.
- Use only the main entrance when you return at night.
- When returning to your room, do not unlock the door if a stranger is standing nearby; keep walking past your door and return only when clear. Do not enter if the door is ajar or not locked. Request assistance from someone at the front desk.

INCREASING YOUR PERSONAL SECURITY WHILE TRAVELING

Basic precautions can lessen threats to your personal security.

At All Times and In All Places

- Blend in as much as possible, especially in your dress and appearance. Avoid an obvious tourist appearance.
- When sightseeing, try not to appear overwhelmed by an attraction. Such behavior makes you appear more vulnerable to a criminal.
- Keep cameras and video equipment in a bag when possible; avoid walking around with such items hanging from your neck.
- Avoid viewing maps in plain view; thieves prey on travelers who seem lost or disoriented.
- Do not accept food or drink from strangers; would-be criminals often try to drug their victims through food and drink.
- Ignore attempts by locals to provoke an argument. Change the topic of discussion and, if possible, remove yourself from the situation.

At Your Hotel

- Do not discuss personal matters with strangers, including your itinerary, place of lodging or mode of transportation.
- Lock hotel room, connecting room and balcony doors, and all windows.
- Know the local emergency assistance phone number and how to use the local phone system.
- Store all unneeded personal documents and excess cash in the hotel or room safe.
- Meet people, especially strangers, only in the hotel lobby and not in your room.

Getting Around

- Have hotel management call for a taxi rather than trying to hail one yourself.
- Be knowledgeable of any restricted areas requiring entry permits, and attain these documents before traveling to such locations.
- Do not photograph police stations, military installations, government buildings, airports, ports, or train stations without first determining whether photography is permitted. If in doubt, ask permission from someone in authority before taking any photographs.

On the Street

- Avoid walking alone at night.
- Do not take shortcuts or go off well-traveled roads.
- Stay on well-lit main streets when possible.
- If disoriented, ask for directions only from uniformed officers or individuals of obvious authority.
- Do not accept rides from strangers or new acquaintances.
- Avoid all demonstrations or other civil disturbances; leave the area immediately if caught in an impromptu assembly.
- Seek immediate shelter from violent situations; hotels, large restaurants, museums and police stations are good places to take refuge.
- Withdraw money from ATMs only during daylight hours and preferably only in banks or hotels.
- Report suspicious activity to your hotel's management, the police and/or your embassy or consulate.

TAXI SECURITY**Protecting yourself from crime when using taxis abroad.**

When entering a taxi, you surrender a portion of the control you would have if you were driving your own or a rental car. Take appropriate measures to ensure your personal security.

Fares and Tipping

- To avoid potential disputes with taxi drivers, know the local tipping customs. Ask a hotel staff member, police officer, or your host for the typical price range to your destination and the amount of an appropriate tip.
- Try to get a firm or estimated fare from your driver before you start, and ask if there is an additional fee for luggage.
- Know enough about the local currency to identify the bill or coin you should use for payment. Unscrupulous drivers may attempt to return your change in discontinued and worthless bills.

Before You Get In

- It is always safer to travel with an acquaintance than alone.
- Taxis ordered by phone are safer than those hailed on the street. Ask for the cab number when ordering.
- If you have a choice of taxis, select the largest and safest-looking vehicle.
- Ask about taxi frequency and times of operation between your origin and all destinations. (For example, taxis travel in convoys at night and at irregular time intervals to thwart roadside bandits in Lagos, Nigeria, and Georgetown, Guyana.)
- Take taxis that are clearly identified with official markings.
- If it is a law in country that drivers display their licenses, take only licensed taxis; ensure that you see the license prior to entering the vehicle and closing the door.
- If you place luggage in the trunk, stay outside of the taxi until the trunk is closed and locked.

- Know the route or general direction to your destination.
- Have the address of your destination written in the local language and, if possible, have a name and telephone number of someone at your destination.

Know the Threat

- Pick-pockets and petty thieves target tourists at taxi stands.
- Professional thieves can pose as taxi drivers. Do not accept unsolicited guide offers from taxi drivers.
- Do not enter a taxi if someone is already in the taxi in addition to the driver.
- Do not permit the driver to add passengers during your ride.
- Do not enter a taxi if a hotel doorman has selected it in any unusual way. Hotel doormen are typically bound by rules to place a customer in the next taxi in line if there is an established queue outside the hotel. If the doorman instead selects a taxi in some other fashion, he may be setting you up for a scam or even a kidnapping.

In the Taxi

- As you enter the taxi, ensure that the photo on the displayed license is that of the driver. If it is not, exit the taxi immediately.
- Lock the doors and roll-up the windows.
- If the doors do not lock, sit near the middle of the seat so that thieves outside cannot easily grab your purse, briefcase or wallet.
- If you feel unsafe, ask to be returned to your point of origin, a nearby quality hotel or the closest police station (say you forgot something, need to make a call or feel ill).

At Your Destination

- Ensure that you are at the correct destination before exiting.
- Never exit a taxi in a deserted area.
- Ask for a receipt, and pay the fare in an amount as close to the fare as possible. Taxi drivers often claim that they have no change.
- Pay only after you have retrieved your luggage.

The Good Cabbie

Many taxi drivers are good sources of information about local customs, museums, sporting events, restaurants, and entertainment. They may be authorities on where it is safe or unsafe for foreigners to frequent, what neighborhoods should be avoided and what threats or hazards may lurk near your hotel or your destination. If you feel comfortable and safe with your driver, engage him in conversation about his city.

CIVIL UNREST

Reducing your vulnerability in the event of civil unrest

Civil unrest can range in form from small, organized rallies to large-scale demonstrations and rioting. It is rare that travelers and expatriates are directly targeted during civil unrest, unless they work at or patronize a business or government that is the direct cause of the unrest. People may also be harmed simply by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Most incidents of civil unrest are related to labor disputes or social and political issues.

- Avoid all large gatherings related to civil issues. Even seemingly peaceful rallies can spur violent activity or be met with resistance by security forces. Bystanders may be arrested or harmed by security forces using water cannon, tear gas, or other measures to control crowds.
- Maintain a low profile by avoiding demonstration areas and discussions of the issues at hand, and by dressing conservatively.
- During violent or potentially violent unrest, avoid police stations (unless seeking help), government buildings (including embassies), fast food restaurants, and banks. These establishments are often targeted.
- If violence erupts or is imminent, leave the area as quickly as possible. If you cannot leave the area, seek shelter in large, public buildings such as hotels, churches, hospitals, and museums. Wait until the crowds have dissipated before going back outside.
- If you know of an event ahead of time, plan pedestrian and vehicular routes that avoid the affected areas. Road closures and traffic delays are possible. Give yourself extra time to travel.
- If curfews are imposed, strictly observe regulations, and monitor the media for immediate updates to the situation.
- Tensions can run high during labor strikes. During general strikes most businesses close, and public transportation does not run. Rogue taxis and buses may offer service but should be avoided, as they could be targeted for violence. Maintain a low profile, and avoid using any form of public transportation. Use hotel taxis or private car services.
- During periods of long-term civil unrest, be sure that you have adequate amounts of cash and/or travelers checks in case the banks close. In extreme cases, local currency may not be convertible.
- Severe civil unrest can significantly disrupt businesses, industries, and services. If you must travel during unrest, ensure that hotels and businesses will be open, services will be available, and transportation will be running. Confirm all meetings and reservations.

AVOIDING AND REACTING TO VIOLENT CRIME

In most countries, violent crime targeting foreigners does not occur frequently. Most targets are known to the perpetrator and are not targets of opportunity. Travelers are known to usually submit to criminal demands without the use of force. The following advice should help you if you are threatened by violent crime.

Understand the Criminal, and Reduce Your Vulnerability

- Criminals are frequently desperate individuals with nothing to lose.
- In order to raise their potential for success, violent criminals select the weakest available targets.
- Criminals prefer single targets.
- Criminals look for targets who are out of place and do not fit in, or those with apparent weaknesses. Favored targets include elderly, female, handicapped, and intoxicated foreigners.
- Maintain an appearance of purpose and awareness: Do not look lost or refer frequently to a map in plain view of others; walk as if you know exactly where you are headed, even if you do not

know; keep your eyes off the ground; look directly ahead, with an occasional glance to the sides; periodically survey your surroundings in a 360-degree arc; always carry some cash in small and varied denominations to give to robbers (violence may occur if you have nothing to give on demand).

- Most criminal violence occurs after dark in isolated areas such as side streets and alleys in urban areas, vacant lots, empty buildings, and empty parks.
- Many incidents of criminal violence occur in seedier areas of a city and immediately outside bars, nightclubs, or in the immediate vicinity of ports, train, and bus stations.

What to Do if Threatened

- If confronted by an armed criminal, surrender your valuables incrementally and without hesitation.
- Do not use offensive weapons such as mace or pepper spray. If you miss or the agent is ineffective, you have only antagonized the criminal.
- Give the attacker only what he asks for. In many countries, the criminal may be satisfied with very little.
- Without appearing to do so, study your attacker's appearance, including his face, so that you can aid in identifying him to the police. If you have satisfied the criminal's demand, back away slowly and leave the area as soon as possible.
- Report the incident to your country's diplomatic mission and to the local police. Request a copy of the police report for insurance purposes.