

Before You Go

What to take

Safety begins when you pack. A flashy wardrobe or one that is too casual will mark you as a tourist. To avoid being a target, dress conservatively and don't wear expensive-looking jewellery. Try to avoid the appearance of affluence.

Take the minimum amount of valuables necessary for your trip. If you are forced to carry them, ensure they are not all in the same place. It might be worth considering a second purse or wallet with a small amount of cash in that you can hand over if mugged. Travellers cheques are safer than cash.

Avoid handbags and outside pockets that are easy targets for thieves. Inside pockets and a sturdy shoulder bag with the strap worn across your chest are somewhat safer. One of the safest places to carry valuables is in a pouch or money belt worn under your clothing.

If you wear glasses, pack an extra pair. To avoid problems when passing through customs with medicines, keep them in their original, labelled containers. Bring copies of your prescriptions and the generic names for the drugs. If a medication is unusual, or contains narcotics, carry a letter from your doctor confirming your need to take the drug.

Pack extra passport photos along with a photocopy of your passport, if stolen, it will make it easier to get a replacement. Put your name, address and telephone numbers inside each piece of luggage. If labelling on the outside, use covered luggage tags to avoid casual observation of your identity or nationality. If possible, lock your luggage.

Consider getting a telephone calling card. It is a convenient way of keeping in touch. If you have one, verify that you can use it from your overseas location(s). Check you have the right international dialling codes before you go.

What to leave behind

Make two photocopies of your passport identification page, airline tickets, driving license and the credit cards that you plan to bring with you. Leave one photocopy with family or friends at home.

Do the same with the serial numbers of your travellers cheques.

Ensure you empty your wallet or purse of items you may routinely carry but won't need while travelling. Leave a copy of your itinerary with family or friends at home in case they need to contact you in an emergency. Regularly update them on your movements and plans.

CHECKLIST:

Pack/prepare/check the following:

- Second purse or wallet
- Money pouch
- Extra Glasses
- Medicines and relevant paperwork
- Extra passport photos
- Travellers cheques
- Securely labelled luggage
- Calling/telephone card
- International dialling codes
- Copies of documents/itinerary

Things to avoid:

- Carrying large amounts of cash
- Displaying expensive items
- Revealing identifying information
- Handbags and outside pockets



Before You Go

Local Laws and Customs

When you leave the UK, you are subject to the laws of the country you are visiting.

Therefore, before you go, learn as much as you can about the local laws and customs of where you plan to visit.

Good resources are your library, your travel agent, and the embassies, consulates or tourist offices of the countries you will visit.

Check out the world guides on this website. In addition, keep track of what is being reported in the media about recent developments in those countries.

Your Itinerary

Who knows where you are going and staying? Many holiday companies allocate hotel accommodation on arrival, while backpackers tend to find rooms as they go. When the Tsunami hit in Thailand it was chaos, and many western people are still unaccounted for because no one knew where they were. Ensure you regularly send emails to family and update them.

Credit

Ensure you inform your credit card company that you are going abroad and what countries you intend to visit. If you do not they may block the use of your card as a safety precaution. Make a note of the credit limit on each credit card that you bring. Make certain not to go over that amount on your trip. Ask your credit card company how to report the loss of your card from abroad. Ensure you know the pin number on your cards to use them in foreign cashpoint machines.

Insurance

Always get good insurance that covers everything you are doing - it will probably cost you less than you'll spend in Departures.

Find out if your personal property insurance covers you for loss or theft abroad. More importantly, check whether your health insurance covers you abroad. Even if your health insurance will reimburse you for medical care that you pay for abroad, normal health insurance does not pay for medical evacuation from a remote area or from a country where medical facilities are inadequate.

Consider purchasing one of the short-term health and emergency assistance policies designed for travellers.