

Precautions

Safety On The Street

Use the same common sense that you would at home. Depending on where you are, be especially cautious, or avoid areas where you could be a victim. These could include crowded subways, railway stations, lifts, tourist sites and market places. Avoid public demonstrations and other civil disturbances.

Try not to travel alone at night. Don't use short cuts, narrow alleys or poorly lit streets. Keep a low profile and avoid loud conversations or arguments. Do not discuss travel plans or other personal matters with strangers.

Beware of pickpockets. They often have an accomplice, sometimes children, who will jostle or distract you by asking for directions or the time. Even a mother with baby, and groups of vagrant children can be guilty of picking your pocket.

Wear the shoulder strap of your bag across your chest and walk with the bag away from the curb to avoid drive-by bag snatchers. Try to seem purposeful when you move. Even if you are lost, act as if you know where you are going. When possible, ask directions only from individuals in authority.

Learn a few phrases in the local language so you can signal your need for help, the police, or a doctor. Make a note of emergency telephone numbers you may need: police, fire, your hotel, and the nearest British embassy or consulate. If you are confronted, don't fight back. Give up your valuables. Your money and passport can be replaced, but you can't.

Safety In Your Hotel

Keep your hotel door locked at all times. Meet visitors in the lobby. Do not leave money and other valuables in your hotel room while you are out.

Use the hotel safe. Let someone know when you expect to return if you are out late at night. If you are alone, try not to use lifts when there is only one other occupant especially if they look suspicious.

Read the fire safety instructions in your hotel room. Know how to report a fire.

Be sure you know where the nearest fire exits and alternate exits are located.

Count the doors between your room and the nearest exit. This could be a lifesaver if you have to crawl through a smoke-filled corridor.

Safety On Public Transport

Taxis. Only take taxis clearly identified with official markings. Beware of unmarked cabs.

Trains. Well-organized, systematic robbery of passengers on trains along popular tourists routes is a serious problem. It is more common at night and especially on overnight trains.

Avoid carriages with only one occupant.

Do not accept food or drink from strangers, previously passengers have been drugged and then robbed. If you see your way being blocked by a stranger and another person is very close to you from behind, move away. This can happen in the corridor of the train or on the platform or station. Do not be afraid to alert authorities if you feel threatened in any way.

Extra police are often assigned to ride trains on routes where crime is a serious problem.

Buses. The same type of criminal activity found on trains can be found on public buses on popular tourist routes. For example, tourists have been drugged and robbed while sleeping on buses or in bus stations. In some countries, whole bus loads of passengers have been held up and robbed by gangs of bandits.

Safety Whilst Driving

When you rent a car, don't go for the exotic; choose a type commonly available locally.

Where possible, ask that markings that identify it as a rental car be removed.

Make certain it is in good repair. If available, choose a car with central locking and electric windows, features that give the driver better control of access to the car.

An air conditioner, when available, is also a safety feature, allowing you to drive with windows closed. Thieves can and do snatch purses through open windows of moving cars. Keep car doors locked at all times. Wear seat belts. As much as possible, avoid driving at night.

Ensure you always have more than enough fuel.

Don't leave valuables in the car. If you must carry things with you, keep them out of sight locked in the boot.

Don't park your car on the street overnight. If the hotel or municipality does not have a parking garage or other secure area, select a well-lit area.

Never pick up hitchhikers.

Precautions

Patterns of Crime Against Motorists

In many places frequented by tourists, including areas of southern Europe, victimization of motorists has been refined to an art. Where it is a problem, British embassies are aware of it and consular officers try to work with local authorities to warn the public about the dangers.

Carjackers and thieves operate at petrol stations, car parks, in city traffic and along the highway. Be suspicious of anyone who hails you or tries to get your attention when you are in or near your car. In some urban areas, thieves don't waste time on ploys, they simply smash car windows at traffic lights, grab your valuables or your car and get away.

In cities around the world, "defensive driving" has come to mean more than avoiding auto accidents; it means keeping an eyeout for potentially criminal pedestrians, cyclists and scooter riders.

Avoiding Legal Difficulties

When you are in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws and are under its jurisdiction - you are not simply in an extension of the UK and are not accordingly protected. You can be arrested overseas for actions that may be either legal or considered minor offences in the UK. Be aware of what is considered criminal in the country you are visiting.

Some of the offences for which travellers have been arrested abroad are: Drug Violations. Some countries do not distinguish between possession and trafficking. Many countries have mandatory sentences - even for possession of a small amount of marijuana or cocaine.

A number of travellers have been arrested for possessing prescription drugs, particularly tranquilizers and amphetamines, that they purchased legally in certain Asian countries and then brought to some countries in the Middle East where they are illegal. Others have been arrested for purchasing prescription drugs abroad in quantities that local authorities suspected were for commercial use. If in doubt about foreign drug laws, ask local authorities or the nearest British embassy or consulate.

Photography. In many countries you can be harassed or detained for photographing such things as police and military installations, government buildings, border areas and transport facilities. If you are in doubt, ask permission before taking photographs.

Purchasing Antiques. Travellers 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. In countries where antiques are important, document your purchases as reproductions if that is the case, or if they are authentic, secure the necessary export permit (usually from the national museum.)



Precautions

Terrorism

Terrorist acts occur unpredictably and at random, making it impossible to protect yourself absolutely. The first and best protection is to avoid travel to unsafe areas where there has been a persistent record of terrorist attacks or kidnapping. The vast majority of foreign states have good records of maintaining public order and protecting residents and visitors within their borders from terrorism.

These precautions may provide some degree of protection, and can serve as practical and psychological deterrents to would-be terrorists. Schedule direct flights if possible and avoid stops in high-risk airports or areas.

Consider other options for travel, such as trains. Be aware of what you discuss with strangers or what others may overhear.

Try to minimize the time spent in the public area of an airport, which is a less protected area. Move quickly from the check-in counter to the secured areas. On arrival, leave the airport as soon as possible. Keep an eye out for suspicious abandoned packages or briefcases. Report them to airport security or other authorities and leave the area promptly.



Travel to High Risk Areas

If you must travel in an area where there has been a history of terrorist attacks or kidnapping, make it a habit to:

Discuss with your family what they would do in the event of an emergency. Make sure your affairs are in order before leaving home.

Remain friendly but be cautious about discussing personal matters, your itinerary or plans. Don't leave personal or business papers in your hotel room. Watch for people following you or "loiterers" observing your comings and goings.

Keep a mental note of safe havens, such as police stations, hotels, and hospitals. Let a friend or family member know what your travel plans are. Keep them informed if you change your plans. Avoid predictable times and routes of travel and report any suspicious activity to local police, and the nearest British embassy.

Select your own taxis at random. Don't take a vehicle that is not clearly identified as a taxi. Compare the face of the driver with the one posted on his or her license. If possible, travel with others. Be sure of the identity of visitors before opening the door of your hotel room.

Don't meet strangers at unknown or remote locations.

Refuse unexpected packages. Formulate a plan of action for what you will do if a bomb explodes or there is gunfire nearby. Check for loose wires or other suspicious activity around your car.

If you are ever in a situation where somebody starts shooting, drop to the floor or get down as low as possible. Don't move until you are sure the danger has passed. Do not attempt to help rescuers and do not pick up a weapon. If possible, shield yourself behind or under a solid object. If you must move, crawl on your stomach.