



SAFETY ADVICE FOR YEAR ABROAD TRAVEL

As you embark on a Year Abroad you will no doubt be excited and a little apprehensive and there is good reason for both. It is important not to let one emotion override the other. This is an adventure and like all adventures it needs careful consideration. Don't be disabled by fear of new places, foreign languages, and strange customs. Your best equipment is *COMMON SENSE* and *AWARENESS* in every sense—go with these and you'll have a great time.

We have put the following advice together as a back-up to your own preparations for a safe and successful Year Abroad. Please read through this advice carefully and think about how you will ensure your safety as you travel around.

Some of this information duplicates advice given in the International Office Handbook. It doesn't hurt to be reminded, though, and you may not have considered some of these things as safety issues before.

The following things should be ticked off your list to ensure as little stress as possible:

BEFORE YOU GO:

- Read all documentation carefully and make sure you have:
 - Signed up for the University's health and travel insurance policy
 - All required documents
 - Everything you will need when you get there
 - Enough money for your first few days [see MONEY below]
 - Emergency contacts
 - A local guide book (if available)

PACKING AND TRAVEL:

- Ensure you have signed up for the University's compulsory (and free) travel and health insurance at least 10 days BEFORE you travel
- Ensure you have your tickets, passport, etc, BEFORE you get to the airport!! Then:
 - DON'T leave baggage unattended
 - DON'T accept anything from anyone you don't know
 - DON'T talk about bombs or terrorism or anything of that nature – remember jokes aren't funny in airports...
 - DON'T take anything in hand baggage that isn't permitted
 - DO ensure that if you are on prescription drugs you have checked that they aren't prohibited in your country of destination. If they are, or you have a large quantity, you will need to obtain a personal licence. See HOME OFFICE regulations here: <http://drugs.homeoffice.gov.uk/drugs-laws/licensing/personal/>
 - It is safer not to travel alone if you can help it
 - Pack locks for suitcases / doors, and a personal alarm.

- Give copies of travel documents to family members.
- Take out good travel insurance

MONEY:

- Organise your MONEY: This may mean changing money beforehand. You can do this in the airport for most destinations these days but bear in mind that you might not get the best exchange rate.
- Take TRAVELLERS CHEQUES as well as cash/credit card, and store them separately from your money/passport etc.

ACCOMMODATION:

- Organise your ACCOMMODATION in advance
- If accommodation is not going to be available immediately make sure you pre-book a hotel or hostel for this time. Research beforehand is essential – you are safest somewhere central, close to the amenities you will need.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY:

- Cultural sensitivity: this can't be stressed enough—in the words of a major UK bank, “NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL KNOWLEDGE”! Be aware of local customs:
- Dress modestly
- Respect local sensibilities if you want to be respected in turn

GETTING AROUND:

- Take licensed taxis and sit in the back, preferably behind the driver
- Know the way to your hotel or accommodation
- Tell people where you are going.
- Try not to arrive in a place after dark.
- Don't share lifts with people you don't know. If you don't like somebody's driving make sure you tell them and seek alternative transport.
- Don't wait in dark or deserted places – always arrange to meet in busy spots or on neutral territory if meeting for the first time

OUT AND ABOUT:

- Trust your instincts (men and women alike)
- Think about how your behaviour may be read.
- Say a firm 'No, thank you' to unwanted advances.
- Respect a firm 'No, thank you' to your unwanted advances.
- Keep your drink in sight.
- Make friends but BE VIGILANT
- Remember the legal drinking age may be different!

ALSO:

- Don't let people into your house/flat/room who you don't know personally – even if you know who they are.
- Make sure you have numbers / addresses for
 - The local embassy
 - The nearest police station (as well as the emergency number for that country)
 - Other people you know are travelling to that country.
- Don't give away personal information to anyone you don't know well:

- Unless to someone in an official capacity (check their credentials first)
- Even on Facebook or MySpace.

The following websites are useful sources of information for further safety advice and technical information:

The Safety Abroad Website:

<http://www.thesite.org/homelawandmoney/law/staysafe/safetyabroad>

The Centre for Global Education:

<http://www.studentsabroad.com>

The Foreign Office:

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029390554>

Country by country travel advice from the Foreign Office:

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029390590>