

Personal Security – Quick Guide - University of Newcastle

Preparation

Thorough preparation is the most important habit or behaviour that will reduce your risk of exposure to crime both petty and violent. Risks can be substantially reduced by being aware of the threats in your intended destination/s, staying alert to the changing situations around you, and applying simple precautions.

Preparations should include:

- Copies of travel and identification documents (Passport, visas, credit cards, itinerary, contact numbers, vaccination card, prescriptions and license, etc.), one copy should be taken with you and another should be kept with family or emailed to yourself for easy access
- Carry at least four passport photos
- Memorise your passport number and expiry date
- Obtain a lock to secure your luggage – preferably TSA approved
- Any labels on luggage should be covered so as not to display your name or nationality
- Reconsider the need to take high value items, jewellery, tablet PC/laptops and expensive clothing etc.
- Read up on your destination to understand the cultural situation, health and security risks or call International SOS for a pre-trip briefing

Awareness

Be alert to the fact that even when you take precautions there is still a possibility that you will be a target for, or a victim of crime. It is very important to be aware of your surroundings particularly at locations where large groups of people gather such as around outdoor shows, near street performers, transport (airports/bus/train) interchanges and hubs and crowded markets etc. as these areas tend to attract petty crime such as pick pocketing but can also attract scam artists and armed criminals. Avoid situations where you may become isolated and subsequently at risk. Be aware of your surroundings at night and especially after long flights or bus trips when you are tired.

Low Profile

Criminals normally target an individual because that person has come to their attention for some reason. It is fundamental that individuals should attract as little attention to themselves as possible and attempt to follow these simple rules:

- Try to blend in
- Avoid overt signs of wealth, such as expensive watches or jewellery.
- Personal equipment such as tablet PC's smart phones, laptops and digital cameras should be carried in backpacks and hidden from view when not in use
- Avoid talking loudly to the point where people start to pay attention to you, particularly if your accent or language may increase the risk of you being targeted

Avoiding Crime around Town

The following tips should apply in most of the locations that you visit. Petty or violent crime can occur in all countries and these common sense procedures will help you avoid these threats.

- Get into the habit of conducting a check of your essential equipment and items before you head out for the day. At a minimum you should ensure you are carrying:
 - Mobile phone fully charged (emergency numbers saved to the phone)
 - Cash (small denominations)
 - Notebook and pen
 - Watch
 - Pen-light torch
 - Copy of passport and visa
 - Water bottle
 - Hat
 - Sunglasses (preferably non designer brand)
 - Sunscreen
 - Day pack
- Consider carrying a 'robbery' wallet or purse in your pocket or handbag. The robbery wallet should have your daily cash needs, an expired credit cards and old photos. This wallet should be handed over if you are robbed. Keep a credit card and some extra cash in a pocket, but use the robbery wallet as your daily source of cash
- Carry handbags on the opposite side from passing traffic. This reduces the risk of thieves on motorcycles trying to snatch them
- Avoid walking unless you are confident of the security situation
- Don't leave personal items unattended
- Where possible watch your drinks being poured when you are out and do not leave your drinks unattended. Do not accept drinks from strangers
- Know in advance whether it is safe to take taxis or public transport by calling International SOS prior to travel
- If a victim of armed robbery do not resist

Notes: Please note that the above recommendations and advice are not exhaustive and should be coupled with research on your intended destinations, obtaining a pre-trip briefing from International SOS and a common sense responsible approach to personal precautions and behaviour.