



Surviving International Travel

By Lisa Burkard

EVERY YEAR THOUSANDS of American business women travel to destinations all over the world. Surviving international travel, as well as the destination itself, has become a strategic process that incorporates preparation, common knowledge, and gut instinct.

Pre-planning is the single most important safe travel tip.

- Print out your itinerary. Take photos of important travel documents such as passports and visas.
- Keep all directions, important numbers, passports, and visas in your carry-on luggage.
- Become familiar with the currency and exchange rates in the countries you are visiting. Know what the currency looks like and what it's worth before you leave home.
- Reserve your rental car and hotel ahead of time. Stay at internationally recognized hotels as they have better and more consistent safety standards.
- Ensure all prescription drugs are clearly marked and professionally labeled.
- Be aware of health advisories and recommended or required vaccinations. The World Health Organization (WHO) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) are excellent sources for medical information.
- Bring an extra pair of glasses or contact lens.
- Inform your credit card company of your travel plans and share your itinerary.
- Purchase an international phone data plan. Download travel apps prior to your trip.
- Enroll in the Smart Traveler

Enrollment Program (STEP) through the Department of State in case an embassy or consulate needs to contact you in an emergency.

- Apply for TSA pre-check or Global Entry to save time going through security and immigration.
- Pack lightly — bring only what you can easily lift yourself so you can move quickly if needed.
- Leave your jewelry at home!

While at the airport, consider these safety tips:

- Keep your valuables in a secure, concealed place and never pack in your checked baggage.
- Go through security immediately. It's safer to check emails or eat a meal in the secured portion of the airport.
- Keep your ears open for announcements. Departure times and gates can change at any time.
- Educate yourself on how to safely use the washrooms in the country you are visiting. After a long flight, you're most likely going to head straight for the restroom. In some countries the toilets can be an interesting experience.

Because cultures and religious beliefs may differ significantly from country to country, it's wise to educate yourself on appropriate dress and behavior. Every culture has gestures and body language that could be offensive. Do your homework to avoid misunderstandings and be respectful of other cultures.

No matter where you are it's wise to always be aware of your surroundings. Don't wear headphones and definitely

trust your instincts. Tourists can usually be spotted a mile away. Try not to make it obvious as it will make you a target.

You did it, you made it to your hotel!

- Request a room with an interior entrance. Although having a sliding door to the outside world is nice, it's also an entrance for uninvited guests.
- Use a rubber doorstop at night along with any other locking devices to secure your door.
- Avoid the ground floors but don't stay on floors higher than the sixth floor. Fire ladders generally can't reach higher than the sixth floor.
- Avoid going to bars and clubs. Tourists are often taken advantage of by scammers and thieves at these locations.

Make your trip as seamless as possible, enjoy your journey, and avoid becoming a victim of crime by using these tips to have a safe travel experience. ➡



Lisa Burkard is the Managing Director of Spectrum Group Consulting Services, LLC, specializing in global mobility and international benefits for corporations with employees working in other countries. | 678-638-6168
SpectrumGroupConsulting.com