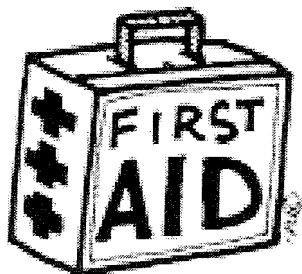


SAFETY

Protecting your health is only one part of being safe on a vacation. There are pre-travel and travel safety issues that must be addressed before going on any trip.



PRE-TRAVEL:

If you live on your own in an apartment or residence then you need to prepare your place to keep 'sticky fingers' off of your stuff. What could be worse than going on the trip of a lifetime and returning home to find out that you haven't got a thing left?

I am sure you are asking "But what about Campus Security? Don't they take care of that?" The truth is that campus security can't be everywhere all of the time and when the campus shuts down for break, Campus Security slows down. Many Campus Security guards are students and they want a vacation as much as you do.

The *worst thing* anyone can do in terms of security is hand over the responsibility for their personal safety to someone else. Always take personal responsibility for your own safety whether you are walking down the street at home or travelling the globe. I can not guarantee that will be 100% effective,

bad things happen to us all, but it is far more effective than waiting for someone else to look after you. So how do you prep your place? Well there are eight steps that I recommend:

1. Lock up all of your valuables. If you have small stuff, like jewellery, take it to your bank and get a safety deposit box. These are not very expensive and will be secure until you return.
2. Large stuff, such as televisions and stereo's and computers should be locked if at all possible. In any case you should engrave a small code onto the device and it should be something that will uniquely identify it for you in case it is stolen. The code should be placed on an area of the device that is not very noticeable so that thieves will be less likely to see it and scratch it off. One note of warning however –**NEVER** use your Social Security Number as an identification number! That is tantamount to giving thieves permission to stealing your identity.
3. Make sure that all of your doors and windows are securely locked before you leave. If there are certain window curtains that you leave open all the time make sure that they stay that way. Suddenly shutting every curtain in the place is a sure sign of an empty house. Curtains such as those in your bedroom or others that you shut on a regular basis should be shut and left that way during the duration of your trip. This shows that someone may be home.

4. If you can afford it, purchase a timer that will turn things such as the lights or the TV on for a while each day and will confuse anyone who might be watching your place to see if you are home.
5. Make sure that your answering machine does not say that you are on vacation right now. That is a sure invitation for crime.
6. If your mail comes to your door then you should either have it stopped or make arrangements for someone you *trust* a great deal and will be in the area for the entire time you are away to come by and pick it up.
7. Have the person that you trust stop by and spend some time in your place regularly. This will also confuse those who might be watching your place and show them that someone is in resident there. This person should plan to spend about an hour at least three times a week in your place.
8. Never brag about leaving for your trip in class or at the campus pub. You never know who might overhear your conversation and interpret that as an invitation to help themselves to your belongings.⁹

DOCUMENTATION

These days you simply **MUST** have a passport – it is just far too dangerous to not have one. Did you know that the United States government is planning on

making it mandatory for *ALL* visitors to the U.S. to show their passports if they wish to enter the country? Well they are and that will be in place shortly.

A valid passport is essential for travelling even within North America. This little book will act as your identification for travel and it will provide you with access to the Canadian Consulate when you are in a different country.



Don't have a passport? Any Canadian citizen can apply for a passport, and if you are over 16 you can apply for one for yourself. You will need to provide the following to the Canadian passport office in your home city:

1. Complete and sign all pages of the application form.
2. Provide two identical passport photos taken within the last 12 months.
3. Have the application form and one photo signed by an eligible guarantor.
4. Provide original proof of Canadian citizenship.
5. Provide any previous Canadian travel document issued to you within the last five years such as a passport, a certificate of identity or a travel document.
6. Provide at least one document to support your identity with your current name and signature, such

⁹ Adapted from: CollegeSafe.com. Student Travel Safety Guide. LLC & R.M. Shields, c.2004.

<http://www.collegesafe.com/pdf/student_travel_safety_guide.pdf> (2005-04-05).

as a driver's licence, a provincial health care card, an old age security card, etc.¹⁰

You can also apply on-line for your passport but you will still need to go and see your local Canadian passport office. You can find the forms, the fees and the location of the nearest Canadian passport office on the Passport Canada website: http://www.ppt.gc.ca/menu_e.asp

You can also obtain important information about what to do should your passport be stolen while you are travelling. It is important for you to review this information before travelling so that you will know what to do ahead of time. When you are upset and lost in a foreign country without identification is NOT the time to be trying to figure out what to do.

After you obtain your passport make at least 2 copies of it. The first copy you should leave with your parents or a very close and trusted friend. This is to ensure that if you lose your passport that a copy can be sent to you right away. The other copy you should bring with you. It should be kept separate from your actual passport so that if one does get stolen you will have the other. This will help you get a replacement passport at the Canadian consulate.

You should do the same with your credit card(s) and any traveller's checks you are bringing with you. Remember: document, document, and document! You WILL be turned away at the point of entry if you do not show your

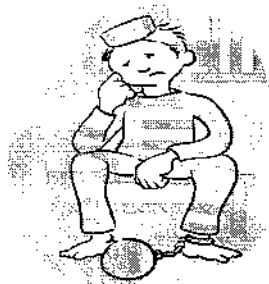
passport, regardless of the country you are trying to enter, so remember that a passport is cheaper than travelling somewhere and then being turned away – you will have to find your way back on your own time so the place to skimp is NOT the passport!

Don't forget your Canadian health care card, your proof of insurance –all of it including travel insurance, and your doctor's note for any medical prescriptions.

Why do you need a note for these prescriptions? The fact is that some medicines that are legal in Canada are actually illegal in other countries. Without a doctor's note proving that you need these medications you could be arrested for drug smuggling. An arrest for drug smuggling in another country will cause you repercussions at home as well as in your host country. That is of course after you have had the 'lovely' experience of residing in a foreign jail for a few months before you can be extradited by the Canadian government.

Did you know that Canada does not have extradition treaties with all of the countries of the world? If you happen to get arrested in a country where one of these treaties does not exist then you will most likely spend your full sentence in jail. Think I am kidding? Don't. This is the truth about travelling: **you are** subject to the laws and regulations of the country you are in regardless of your citizenship.

¹⁰ Passport Canada. "Welcome to Passport Canada." Canadian Government. Updated 2005-03-31.
< http://www.ppt.gc.ca/menu_e.asp >
(2005-04-05)



If you are still not sure what you might need to enter another country or if you think there may be a risk in going to a country then you need to check out: <http://www.voyage.gc.ca/dest/ctry/report-page-en.asp>. This is the English version of the website of the Canadian Consular Affairs. This site provides country information for travellers, travel updates, further pre-trip preparation lists and other tips for travellers including the location of the Canadian Consulate at your destination. You can also access the French language version of the site. Bookmark this site and check it often before you head on for the trip of a lifetime!

DRINKING & PARTYING

Let's face it – if you are old enough to travel by yourself or with friends without your parents, you are probably old enough to go drinking and partying on your vacation. There are a few things we need to talk about for you to be safe while drinking and partying on your special trip. (If you aren't old enough then maybe you should just skip this section)

So first things first – find out what the legal drinking age is. Do not assume that it is the same everywhere as it is in your home town. In Canada the drinking age varies from 18 -19 depending on the province. In the United States the age is usually around 21 before you can purchase alcohol. Other countries can

vary greatly so it is always best to find out what the legal drinking age is in your destination. If you are considering using fake id or trying to sneak in anyway please go back and check the section on “prescription medicine and documentation.”

Now if you are over the legal drinking age, well the temptation is to party, right? There is nothing wrong with partying and having a good time but drinking until you pass out and find yourself robbed, raped, beaten and raped, or even worse (yes there really are worse things) is not the way to spend your holiday.

Remember what we said about taking personal responsibility for your safety? Well the same goes for drinking. Having a few drinks rather than getting blitzed is the best when you are in other country. It is ok to go to bars or other social events but make sure that you **stay** with your friends – **DO NOT ever leave with strangers**, you can not trust their intentions.

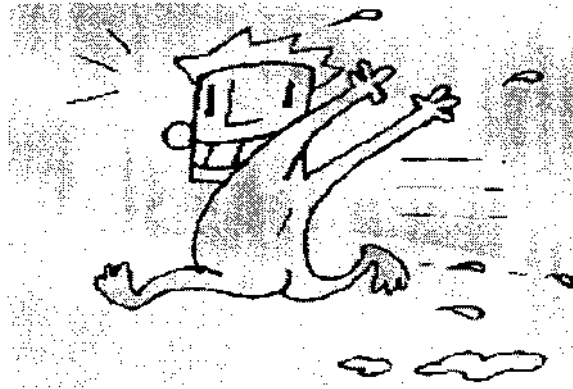
There is not as much prevention information available in these other countries in the same way that there is in Canada. Going home with a guy while drunk is bad enough in Canada but it can be literally life-threatening in a foreign country. Please never ever leave your drinks unattended or accept drinks from strangers. **Ladies:** the date rape drug exists and is never to be laughed off. **Guys and girls** should make sure that their friends do not leave with strangers either – don't think for a second that just because you are a big guy that you can not be robbed or assaulted.

Safety Tips for your hotel

Your hotel can be just as dangerous as the streets sometimes but there are some things that can be done to safety-proof your hotel. They do not take very long and they will help make sure you have the trip of a lifetime – for all the right reasons.

- Keep your door locked and use all of the locks that are on the door. If the door has a chain make sure that it is pulled tight.
- Double check using the peephole whenever ANYONE comes to your door. If it is a staff member and you are not expecting one then call down to the front desk and double check. Try to get the employees name off of their name tag. The hotel will be more than willing to confirm whether or not they have sent someone so do not feel embarrassed about calling. A hotel employee, just like the police in Canada, will be more than willing to wait while you call down and confirm.
- Do not keep your valuables out on display in your room. If you trust the hotel then you can have them place your valuables in the hotel safe. If not then either bring them with you in a hidey travel pouch that is worn under your clothes (hint, hint this is a very good place to keep your passport and your cash while travelling) or you can purchase a small portable safe that you can bring with you and won't take up very much space. If you do keep valuables in your room keep them hidden under your clothes in your suitcase or someplace that the cleaning staff or other 'visitors' are not likely to see or have immediate access.
- Always lock up your suitcase even when it is empty – that is a good place to keep your valuables when you are not present. Even when you are travelling to your destination keep your suitcase locked – that will keep sticky fingers out of your stuff. A good suitcase lock can be purchased relatively inexpensively from any travel store. You can also pick up a hidey pouch while you are at it.
- **Especially for Ladies:** Ladies keep a close eye around you when you are in the hotel and out on the street especially if you are travelling alone. Rape is a serious issue that can not be ignored. It **can** happen to anyone so take proper precautions.
- Always have whoever booked your hotel for you try to get a room that is not on the first floor. This will help deter thieves or rapists who like to come through easy accessible windows.
- No matter how hot it is –keep your windows and doors locked. This will also help to keep out intruders.
- When you go to book into your room, if the desk clerk shouts out or speaks very loudly either your name or your room number then DEMAND to see the manager immediately. When the manager comes ask to speak with him or her in private, then ask for a different room. This procedure will keep uninvited 'guests' from tracing your room and putting you at risk.
- Everyone should avoid carrying items with their name visible on it, first or last. This allows people

- to pretend they know you and put you into dangerous situations.
- Never walk around with headphones or other devices. Know who is around you and walk with confidence, this will show those who would try to talk advantage of you that you know where you are going and that you are not an easy target.
 - If you get lost ask a police officer, an official or a shop clerk for directions. It is not a good idea to ask strangers on the street – that makes you vulnerable and being vulnerable is what makes you a target.
 - Remember the most important thing is to study the local customs and be prepared to adapt to them. Do not expect that country to adjust to you. Violating a cultural taboo is at best going to get you kicked out of the country and worst –well jails are fun, right?



I hope I have given you some safety tips that you can use for your travels. Ladies – remember that in some countries rape is seen as the victim's fault and the police will do nothing to help you so make sure you do everything you can to avoid being assaulted. Keeping your personal security in mind and following the tips above as well as the health tips will help to ensure that you really do have the most fantastic trip of a lifetime. Bon Voyage!