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5 Ways to Stay Safe From Terrorism and Other Threats When Traveling Overseas

Top tips from industry experts on staying safe when traveling abroad this summer.



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I don't know about you, but as a frequent overseas traveler (<https://www.inc.com/paul-metselaar/3-overseas-travel-secrets-from-a-globe-trekking-pro.html?cid=search>), I've been watching the news lately and wondering if I'm taking every precaution I reasonably can to protect my safety when traveling abroad (<https://www.inc.com/amanda-abella/3-things-you-need-to-do-before-traveling-abroad-for-business.html?cid=search>) this summer.

I reached out to some industry experts and full-time travelers for their top tips on how you can stay safe from terrorism (<https://www.inc.com/zoe-henry/after-the-attacks-traveling-in-europe-for-business.html?cid=search>), theft and other threats when traveling overseas.

Here are the five best pieces of advice they gave me:

1. Worry more about theft than terrorism.

"While terrorism captures the headlines, you're far more likely to be the victim of petty crime while abroad," says Ian Wright, founder of British Business Energy and a frequent international traveler.

Eva Doyle, who travels extensively for business, recommends the following: "If you need to check a map or the GPS app on your phone, step next to a building. Not only will you not be a target of pickpockets, but you'll also be a target of pickpockets." ✕

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2. Dress the part.

"You may not be able to blend in, but try not to stand out," says Matthew Hulland, who writes *The Travel Blogs*. The key, says Hulland, is to be aware of your surroundings. For example, if you are on a business trip to a developing nation, wearing a \$10,000 watch on your wrist could make you a target of theft.

Other ways to blend in and avoid being robbed, or worse, include:

- Don't advertise yourself as being American. Avoid wearing overly patriotic T-shirts, hats, college sweat shirts, U.S. sports team apparel, etc., recommends FBI Special Agent Executive John Iannarelli, the author of *How to Spot a Terrorist Before It's Too Late* (<https://www.amazon.com/How-Spot-Terrorist-Before-Late/dp/0997601507?tag=wwwinc.com-20>). Yes, we love our country and we are proud to be U.S. citizens, but given the state of the world, all the experts suggested toning down identifying clothing.
- Leave the Louis Vuitton purse at home. Depending on where you are traveling to (i.e., Paris vs. Senegal), expensive designer purses and clothing can highlight you as a target.

3. Duplicate your documents.

Leave a copy of your passport and your itinerary at home with someone safe. Whether it's a colleague or relative, keep your information with a trusted source who can help in times of need, and make a copy of your documents to have with you.

In addition, Sheryl Hill, the Executive Director of Depart Smart, suggests you save a copy of all your documents on a secure cloud drive that you can easily access.

4. Inform your embassy.

Full-time traveler Collette Stohler, co-founder of Roamaroo, suggests applying for the government-run Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (<https://step.state.gov/step/>) (STEP). The site allows you to enter the details of your overseas itinerary on the website, and you will be automatically connected to the corresponding embassy at your destination.

If there are any updates on security, you will receive an email or text with the relevant information. In addition, the in-country embassy will know where you are in case of emergency.

5. Keep score of your travel safety smarts.

Depart Smart, Hill's website, offers a free 10-item quiz (<http://departsmart.org>) that scores your travel safety readiness. I'm sorry to say that despite my worldwide wanderings, I marked no on nine out of ten questions.

Many of the items were things I had never even thought of, including:

- Could you ask for help and identify your location in the local language?
- Is your personal health information translated into the local language?
- Do your emergency contacts have Power of Attorney and active passports good for six months beyond the date of your return?
- In the U.S., the emergency phone number is 911. It is different in most countries and can be separate numbers (e.g., fire, ambulance, police). Do you know the emergency number(s) for your destination country?

Once you've taken the quiz, the site will send you a comprehensive safe travel checklist to fill out along with your packing list to prepare you to have a secure trip.

And finally, almost every expert I heard from gave this sage advice: Don't do drugs or get really drunk. Thanks, Mom. I'll call or text to let you know I've arrived safely.

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