



## Street smarts in a foreign country

No matter where we live or how long we've lived there, we need street smarts – possessing the knowledge to avoid or manage potentially dangerous situations. We all walk a little faster across deserted parking lots, avoid dark alleys, listen for footsteps behind us on empty streets and avoid public confrontations. However, the precautions we take in our home country are often not adequate in other areas of the world. Pickpockets, beggars, disease, kidnappings, robberies, terrorism, civil unrest and especially skilled and well-organized scam artists, can put foreigners at risk. Does that mean never seeing the world and having new experiences? Of course not. It just means we need to be prepared.

### Before leaving

Safety begins at home. Before travelling to any country – on a short vacation, a lengthy work assignment or a permanent relocation - spend time preparing. For example:

- Learn the basic language requirements – at least enough to get around.
- Research your destination:
  - Understand the local laws. You might be surprised what can get you in trouble. For example, chewing gum is banned in Singapore and bringing it into the country is illegal.
  - Take note of significant dates such as national holidays, religious festivals and political events (such as elections). These can be occasions for violence, terrorism, and increased crime.
  - Get a lay of the land – where you are staying, working or studying and how to get around. Know what areas, locations or events may be unsafe for foreigners.

Let us help. Access your Expatriate Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) 24/7 by phone, web or mobile app.

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- Check government sites for travel advisories and information.
- Have an emergency plan. Do you know where your embassy or consulate is located? Keep telephone and emergency contact information with you at all times. If you're travelling with others, make sure there's a pre-arranged meeting spot in case communication lines fail.

### Out and about

One of the best ways to stay safe is by not drawing attention to yourself. For example, dress appropriately. You don't have to dress like the locals, but understanding that what is okay at home, such as sleeveless t-shirts, baseball caps and knee-length shorts, may mark you as a foreigner elsewhere.

Here are some other things to keep in mind:

- **Be wary of strangers.** Criminals working individually or in teams often target foreigners, creating distractions in order to steal their belongings. Foreigners are also the target of scams. If you see money on the ground, ignore it. If someone wearing plain clothes stops you and asks for your papers, ask for their identification. And never disclose where you are staying to a stranger.
- **Protect your valuables.** Never carry anything of value in your back pocket or in a back pack. Keep wallets and phones inside jacket pockets and carry purses across and in front of your body. Don't wear expensive watches or jewelry and try to limit using your smartphone in public.
- **Don't carry a lot of cash** and go out with just one credit card (if t's is stolen, you have others). Never let your credit card out of your sight and if you use an ATM, do so during business hours inside a bank or large commercial building.
- **Know where you're going** – or look like you know where you're going by walking assertively and confidently. Giving the impression that you're lost or nervous makes you vulnerable.
- **Have a plan.** When in restaurants, shopping areas or any public buildings, identify emergency exits and have a plan in place in the event of a security threat.
- **Watch your alcohol consumption** and never take your eyes off your beverage in bars and clubs.
- **Stay away from all drugs – legal or illegal.** Being a foreigner does not protect you from often severe penalties. Be sure to have the proper documentation for any prescription drugs or syringes used for legitimate medical purposes.
- **Don't overshare on social media.** You want to share your experiences with your family and friends at home, but at the same time you don't want to let criminals know where you are every minute of the day. Use caution.

Finally, as the saying goes, "listen to your gut." If something feels wrong, don't do it or leave immediately. For more information about staying safe at home and abroad, contact your Employee Assistance Program.

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