



## Staying safe abroad

Expats face a lot of challenges: an unfamiliar culture, a new city, separation from family and friends, language issues and even extreme weather. These challenges are not only stressful and frustrating, they can also cause safety concerns. Foreigners often stand out, potentially putting them more at risk in dangerous situations, and more likely to be victimized by criminals. Expats need to invest as much time understanding how to stay safe in their new location as they do in preparing for their new professional role.

### Before leaving

Before travelling or moving to any country, make sure to spend time researching your destination. Government sites are a great place to start, especially for recent or impending travel advisories. Other ways to prepare include:

- **Know the geographic threats.** Is your new location prone to earthquakes or typhoons? Is there dangerous terrain? Do you know what to do if a natural disaster strikes?
- **Learn the language** – at least enough to get around.
- **Know 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.
- **Learn your new location's national holidays, religious festivals and political events** (such as elections). These can be exciting events but also occasions for violence, terrorism and increased crime – especially towards outsiders.

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

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- **Get your bearings.** Know how to get around before you arrive. Where is your office located, where will you be living, where are your children's schools and where is your embassy or consulate located? Is public transportation safe? If it is, how does it work?
- **Have an emergency plan.** Keep telephone and emergency contact information with you at all times and know what to do in case of natural disaster, terrorist attack or other crisis. If you are on assignment with a spouse and/or children, ensure they are aligned with your emergency plan.
- **Copy important documents.** Have printed duplicates and electronic copies of everything – your passport, visa, tickets, driver's license, credit cards, insurance, etc. If anything is stolen or lost, having copies will make it easier to replace them.
- **Secure your electronic devices. Make sure smartphones, tablets, and laptops are password protected and back up all data.**

### After arriving

It takes time to acclimatize to a new country. But there are steps you can take immediately to help you stay safe. For example:

- **Dress appropriately.** You don't have to dress like the locals, but understand that what is okay at home, such as sleeveless t-shirts, baseball caps and knee-length shorts, may mark you as a foreigner elsewhere.
- **Stay alert in public.** Foreigners may be targeted by pickpockets, thieves and scam artists. If you see money on the ground, ignore it. If someone wearing plain clothes stops you and asks for your papers, ask for his identification. It may be hard to do, but if children ask you for money, ignore them.

When in restaurants, shopping areas or any public building, identify emergency exits and have a plan in place in the event of a security threat. Remember to watch your alcohol consumption and *never* take your eyes off your beverage in bars and clubs.

- **Protect your valuables.** Keep wallets and phones in 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 and never disclose where you live or work to a stranger.
- **Don't carry a lot of cash** and go out with just one credit card (if it'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.
- **Stay on main, well-lit roads.** It's never a good idea to venture off the beaten track on foot or by car, especially in unfamiliar territory.

And 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 and Family Assistance Program.

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