

Free Guide Travel Safety Tips eGuide

2015 EDITION

What To Be Aware Of
How To Research Destinations
Practical Safety Tips List

travelfy 

Introduction

Travel safety starts with a traveler's wellbeing. When it comes to your health and your physical security, you need to be proactive, prepared, and with a clear action plan if something bad should happen.

To be proactive, a traveler can take some easy steps before the trip that can save you the pains once you're on the road. Remember this: the more prepared you are before the trip, the less worried you'll be during the trip and the more you can focus on enjoying your vacation.

This eGuide breaks down the most important steps to take toward personal safety and provides tips for getting organized and efficient.

About the author

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Before you leave

Before you leave your country, be sure to thoroughly research your travel destinations. It's important to do this initial basic research prior to committing to your trip. Also, have your health status checked by a medical professional to determine if you are fit to travel and to take necessary steps to ensure you can maintain your health quality and needs. When all is settled, be sure to make, store, and share records of your final travel plan and itinerary. It's easy to do this with [online itinerary tools like Travefy](#).

Researching your travel destination

Except for the occasional wander, preparation is key when planning any serious travel. Don't be the guy that thinks planning takes out all of the fun and the excitement from the adventure. In fact, mapping down a clear itinerary and researching every destination will ensure:

- **Low travel costs:** finding the best hotel deals, booking the lowest fares will keep your travel costs to a minimum and maximize your pocket money so you can put it to better use.
- **Increase productivity & experience:** don't you hate being lost in a foreign destination or, worse, missing out on free events? Itinerary planning will help you coordinate your visit with events that you have interest in and would love to take part in—and cut down on the amount of time wasted being stuck in a cab or at a rail transfer.
- **Reduce travel risks:** the only way to avoid popular scams is to research your destination and hear what other recent and experienced travelers are saying about it.
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These days, Ebola is just as much—if not more concerning—than Boko Haram terrorist activities in the same region. It illustrates the fact that travel research is a significant travel planning step that should not be minimized. The information you should gather should ideally cover **health risks, safety and security concerns**, as well as **local laws and culture**.

Travel advisories and alerts are available, from governments or from other travelers like you.

Fortunately, there are a number of readily-available, up-to-date, and free databases of travel advisories for travelers to dig into. Below is a non-exhaustive list of such resources.

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC)
- [World Health Organization](#) (WHO)
- [Travel Resources of the Department of State](#)
- The [CIA's World Factbook](#)
- [Lonely Planet's Thorn Tree forum](#): Stay ahead of scam trends and check out or post questions
- [Trip Advisor](#)
- [Association for Safe International Road Travel](#) (ASIRT)

Ensure your health¹

Check if you are fit to travel: Whether you are going to relax on a tropical beach or take on the ascension of the tallest peaks in the world, you should always check with a medical professional to make sure that

¹ <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/survival-guide>

² <http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/malaria/en/>

you are fit to travel. Also know to recognize illness symptoms (especially the symptoms associated with illnesses typical of your destination) before and during your trip to see to them as soon as possible. Here is a non-exhaustive list of the travel illness symptoms as defined by the CDC:

- Severe headaches, yellowish eyes and skins, tiredness;
- Skin rash;
- Fever of 100 F or greater;
- Severe, long-lasting cough, and difficulties to breath;
- Vomiting and diarrhea;

For the complete CDC resource related to travel illnesses screening and prevention, visit [the CDC webpage](#).

Make the required and recommended vaccinations: According to WHO, 3.4 billion people, i.e. half the world's population are at risk of contracting malaria. This discrete subtropical disease infects more than 200 million people, each year, and kills about 600,000 of them².

Malaria, Dengue, and other area-specific diseases are deceptive because they escape the media limelight, but luckily can be easily prevented with a vaccine. Be a smart traveler, help combat the spread of such diseases by doing your research and getting the necessary vaccination shots.

Travel health insurance and emergency evacuation: Even the most minor injuries can ruin your vacation if you have to spend your travel budget on hospital costs and treatments. As a traveler, you are solely responsible of medical expenses occurring during your trip.

- Check with your current health insurance provider to see if you are covered abroad and to which extent.
- Purchase additional travel insurance – should you need extra insurance while you travel
- Have a plan for emergency medical evacuations—especially if you have sensitive health needs. Even if you are healthy before your trip, it is recommended to have plans for an emergency medical evacuation. There are specialized insurance companies that cover such a scenario. Check out a list of [US based travel medical insurance providers](#).
- Always have cash on you to take care of basic medical charges even if you are insured.

Share your travel plans and itinerary

Make a clear and honest estimation of your travel plans and share them with your loved ones and authorities in charge of travel safety.

US citizens traveling abroad are encouraged to register with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). According the Department of State, the benefits of the program are three-fold:

1. **Keeping travelers updated** with travel advisories, warnings and alerts about the destinations they plan to visit.
2. **Ensuring traveler's safety** with emergency messages and, if necessary, evacuation in cases of natural disaster and civil unrest.
3. **Connecting families with loved ones.** The program makes it easier for travelers to stay connected with their loved ones.

² <http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/malaria/en/>

Once on the road (Quick tips)

Once your trip has started, whether you are traveling solo or in a group, you will need to be responsible for yourself and everyone in your travel party. The key is to steer clear of unnecessary dangers and avoiding bad crowds. Follow these 10 simple tips every smart traveler should abide by:

1. Common sense prevails

It is not because you are abroad that you should forget everything your parents and life have taught you so far. Even if locals don't, you should never forget your seatbelt and other safety gear; neither should you "drink and drive"—even more important in countries where penalties are quite serious.

2. Be clever and aware of your surroundings.

You do not have to be paranoid but be street-smart. Be aware of your surroundings at all times, research your destinations and familiarize yourself with the immediate streets and maps. Ask hotel staff or locals you've met where to go and what places to avoid at all cost.

3. Be mindful of local culture and customs

When in Rome, do as the Romans do. One way to quickly make enemies of the natives of the places you visit is to disrespect their culture or traditions. Rules of conduct are often not clearly stated in a book for you to read. Your best bet is to refer to tip no. 2: watch and learn! Be mindful of dress codes and recognize what locals highly value.³ You'll also be surprised how well locals react when they see you trying to respect and honor local culture.

4. Keep an eye on your health gauge

Be careful and understand your limits if illness arises. . Refer again to the CDC's travel illnesses checklist (above) to see the most common travel sickness symptoms and learn to recognize them as soon they appear.

5. Be careful with strangers

Local experience is fun, but not foolproof. Do not be the fool. It is OK to mingle with natives, but it should not be at the expense of your safety. Be careful if strangers take you somewhere or what food and drink they hand to you. For the former, you should always research your destinations beforehand and always take a well-lit road to get to your areas of interest. As for the latter, a good "rule of thumb" is to avoid anything the locals are not eating or drinking themselves.

6. Avoid hazardous activities

It is OK to be adventurous but there is a limit to your abilities and a proper place to test that limit. If you have never motor biked in your life, although most parts of India are best explored on motorcycle, it is not the wisest time to become a daredevil. Getting hurt away from home can be quite expensive and dangerous, especially without a travel medical insurance. Not to mention some countries do not have nearby or advanced medical facilities.

7. Extreme tourism done with caution

Adventurous? Adrenaline-packed adventure leaves long lasting memories as long as they do not leave you as a memory as well. Be sure to check the certificates of instructors if you are taking specialty

³ <http://solotravelerblog.com/solo-travel-safety-cultural-respect/>

courses like scuba diving, bungee jumping, etc. Also be sure to check site advisories. For instance, the Diver's cemetery in Egypt is a very popular diving site for the scenic landscape and the diversity of the marine ecosystem. Despite its popularity, every year, misguided and unprepared divers fall victim to this blue hole.⁴

8. Do not pet random animals

Animal lover? Good for you—but stay away from animals you do not know. Some might be a health risk – illnesses and other infections-, others might not be as friendly as your grandparents' shih tzu.

9. A strong group with smart individuals

There is safety in numbers, but only if everyone in the group is individually safety-conscious. In this sense, in the words of Bob Marley, “your worst enemy could be your best friends”; and in this case, your travel buddies.

10. Value your life more than your belongings

How much do you value your life? Is it worth more than the stuff you carry? Because, in case of mugging, you will only have a split second to decide, you should give it a thought now. Still undecided? Here is a quick tip: if you get mugged, give away whatever you are asked. If you have all your valuables at home, secured your travel documents away, and have travel insurance, this shouldn't be a major problem.

Also, do not forget to remain health-vigilant even after you return home. Remember the recent case of the Australian traveler who returned to his country from a vacation in Bali only to realize that he brought back a spider that was nesting under his skin.⁵

Safe travels!

A traveler's personal safety depends on both his ability to prepare effectively for the trip and to stay away from danger once on the road. While there are no magic tricks to stay safe, following these simple steps, tricks and tips will ensure you safe and rewarding travel.

Do you still have questions about your upcoming trip? Send us a message!

[@Travefy](#) or [Travefy.com](#)

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http://www.slate.com/blogs/atlas_obscura/2014/03/04/diver_s_cemetery_the_blue_hole_of_dahab_on_the_red_sea_in_egypt.html

⁵ <http://www.buzzfeed.com/richardhames/a-spider-lived-inside-this-tourists-body-for-3-days-after-bu>

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