

Tourist Crime Prevention Tips

A few tips can help protect tourists against the occasional pitfalls that can occur, even to the most experienced traveler. Tourists can take precautionary steps to minimize their chances of being victimized. Consider the following:

Cash: Do not carry large amounts of cash. If you must carry cash, never display large bills. When possible, carry cash substitutes such as traveler's checks or credit cards. Keep a written record of your traveler's checks and credit card numbers, and keep them separately in a safe place.

Several varieties of money belts and ankle wallets can be purchased to safely carry your cash, cash substitutes and identification. Never carry your wallet in your rear pants pocket. Women should carry their billfolds or coin purses in coat pockets. If you must carry a purse, firmly grasp the top portion of the purse while shopping, waiting for, or riding a bus.

Luggage: Remove old flight tags from your luggage. Old flight tags can cause confusion and misdirect your luggage. Band your luggage as a safeguard against pilferage while in transit. Locked luggage can be easily opened by luggage handlers or professional thieves. Placing a band, strap or tie around luggage, or a seal on the zipper, is an effective deterrent against theft. Be sure to provide adequate identification on the outside and inside of your luggage. In the event your luggage is misdirected, proper identification will ensure prompt recovery and forwarding.

Never leave your luggage unattended, not even for a brief moment, and beware of distractions. While waiting for a room reservation or departing to another destination, keep all of your property in plain view. Designated hotel personnel are usually available to assist you with your luggage. Use the luggage check-in service, normally located at the front desk. Never store cash, jewelry, medicine or other valuables in your luggage.

Hotel Tips: Never leave valuables in your hotel room. Hotel management encourages guests to use their safe-deposit box services.

When you get to your room, determine the most direct routes to the elevator, stairs and fire escapes. Most room doors are equipped with

interior locking devices that can be used while you are in the room. Use of interior locking devices affords you extra security. If additional security is desired, purchase a portable travel lock.

Never automatically open your door. If your door has a peephole, use it. Prior to opening your door, always know the identity of the caller. Hotel employees should have identification. If someone claims to be a maintenance or repair employee, ask to see identification. Telephone the front desk for verification if you have any questions or doubts. Never invite strangers to your room, no matter how helpful or charming they appear.

When leaving your room, lock the door, even if you are briefly darting down the hall for a towel or ice. If you leave your room in the evening, turn on a light and leave a radio or television on to make it seem that the room is occupied. Always pull the door shut by hand and double check it. When you retire for the evening, make sure your key is not outside in the door lock.

Sightseeing Crime Prevention: Make note of your passport number. If it becomes lost or stolen, knowing your passport number will facilitate getting a new passport. Prior to your day of sightseeing, obtain directions at the hotel for those attractions you intend to visit. Never discuss your sightseeing schedule in the presence of strangers. When possible, travel with another person or group while sightseeing or shopping. During the evening, always travel on well-lighted streets.

Be aware of your surroundings and watch for suspicious people or vehicles. When driving, keep your vehicle doors locked at all times and windows rolled up. Keep your vehicle and house keys on separate key rings. Never pick up hitchhikers.

Pickpockets: Pickpockets usually work in teams of two or three people. They take their time, stalk their victims, and strike when the victims are most vulnerable. Always be aware of staged distractions. Pickpockets may drop something in front of you, or cause a loud commotion near you, as a distraction. Once you are distracted, the other pickpocket steals your valuables and walks away.

If you are jostled, bumped, or crowded by anyone, consider that a pickpocket may be in action. If your pocket is picked, call out immediately for assistance and warn others.

Vehicle Tips: Record the make, model, year, color and license number of your personal or rental vehicle. Keep this information in a safe place. This will assist in locating your vehicle if it is lost, stolen, or impounded. Never advertise that you are a tourist. Ensure any vehicle you rent is nondescript. The exterior of the vehicle should be free of rental agency decals, stickers or other company logos. These visual cues can alert criminals to your visitor/tourist status. Place all maps and travel brochures in the glove compartment.

Never leave your vehicle with the engine running or keys in the ignition. Always lock your vehicle, close the windows, and take the keys with you. Avoid leaving an extra set of keys in a secret hiding place. Never leave your wallet, credit cards, registration or driver's license in your vehicle. Remember that any expensive items left in plain view invite theft.

Your vehicle trunk is not completely secure, but it is the safest place to store your valuables while traveling. Lock luggage, packages or other valuables, including citizen band radios and tape decks, in the vehicle trunk. Avoid transferring items to the trunk of the vehicle at the location where it is parked. Someone may be watching you.

Park in well-lighted areas and use valet parking whenever possible. Always take your parking lot ticket with you. Leaving it in the vehicle allows thieves to exit the parking lot without being challenged. Thieves know if they attempt to exit a lot without a ticket, the parking lot attendants will demand proof of vehicle ownership. Always check your vehicle before entering to ensure no one is hiding inside.