Staying Safe While Studying Abroad

**Tips & tricks for having an enjoyable - and safe - time abroad**

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Studying abroad is an experience that can satisfy twofold: it encourages a sense of wanderlust while still enabling you to receive an education—oftentimes providing much more than can be found inside the confines of a normal classroom. And while it’s exciting to imagine the possibilities of your trip, it’s also prudent to be prepared for what you don’t want to happen. Read on for tips to help you stay safe while studying abroad.

**Be Well-versed in an Area and its Laws**

Make sure to review the [State Department’s information on specific countries](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html), heeding travel warnings and familiarizing yourself with local laws. Register at the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate (available 24 hours a day, seven days a week), note their address and phone number, and carry this info with you; in case of an emergency or crime, contact them immediately.

**Stay Attentive and Informed**

Research local customs, being aware of behavioral and social norms, and use discretion with dress and specific male-versus-female expectations. Understand and respect these cultural boundaries, but remember, never sacrifice your own safety to appease these differences.

**Circumvent Unsafe Areas and People**

Travel in groups or at least with a trusted buddy, or make same-sex friends in the community who are able to offer guidance on making wise choices within that region. Be aware of your surroundings and never get to the point when you’re too incapacitated to know what is going on around you. (Which ties into our next point…)

**Avoid Being Vulnerable**

Remain alert, keeping equal tabs on your friends and drinks at the bar. Leave important or showy jewelry at home. Wear a purse or wallet close to your body, especially while in large crowds. (The unsightly “fanny packs” of yesteryear are gone and have been replaced with the more streamlined money belts, which fit smoothly and discreetly under clothes, making it harder for foreign hands to pilfer.)

**Use Long-standing Pointers That Work**

As you may have heard at the airport or train station, never leave your baggage unattended or accept packages from strangers. Be wary of those asking too many questions or offering unsolicited help. Be confident when saying “no,” and, if needed, keep saying “no”—even at the cost of sounding like a broken record.

**A Few Final Tips**

All in all, avoid circumstances that put you in peril. Don’t reward aggressive behaviors with aggressive behavior—if you don’t feel right about something, keep your composure and remove yourself from that situation. Pay attention to any warning signals that may be going off in your head.

Once you’ve  acknowledged the world is an interesting yet capricious hodgepodge of cultures, you’ll find using common sense and your best judgment is often the best way to make studying abroad a fun, and, more importantly, safe experience.

For additional reading on this topic, please visit the following links:
[Sexual Harassment And Prevention In College Students Studying Abroad](http://globaled.us/safeti/v1n22000ed_sexual_harassment_and_prevention.asp)
[Tips for Traveling Abroad](http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html)

Read more: <http://www.studyabroad.com/articles/staying-safe-while-studying-abroad.aspx#ixzz3M8VnPb51>