

Columbia University
OFFICE of GLOBAL PROGRAMS
General and Personal Safety Precautions for Students

- Register yourself with the American embassy or consulate or your home country embassy or consulate. If you travel to countries beyond your program site and expect to be there for more than a week, register upon arrival at the U.S. consulate or embassy having jurisdiction over the location.
- Maintain regular contact with your family and make sure to contact them immediately if a situation does arise.
- Maintain contact with the Program Director and make sure that you can be reached (provide ALL your new contact information: landline, cell phone address, e-mail).
- When you travel, even if only overnight, leave your itinerary.
- Remain alert about your local surroundings.
- Keep a low profile and try not to identify yourself by dress, speech, or behavior as a targetable individual. Do not draw attention to yourself through expensive dress, personal accessories (cameras, radios, sunglasses, etc.) or careless behavior. Be aware that baseball hats, sneakers, college sweatshirts, and the like may identify you as an American.
- Try to avoid public visibility (ie: talking to the local or international press).
- Crowds, protest groups, and the like may be associated with potentially volatile situations. Restaurants and entertainment places where Americans are known to congregate may be easy targets.
- Keep abreast of local news. Read local newspapers and speak with local officials to learn about any potential civil unrest. In the event of disturbances, do not get involved “unthinkingly”: make your own informed, ethical and moral assessment of the situation.
- Be wary of unexpected packages and stay clear of unattended luggage or parcels in airports, train stations, and other areas of uncontrolled public access.
- Report to the responsible authorities suspicious persons loitering around residence or instructional facilities, or following you; keep your residence area locked; use common sense in divulging information to strangers about your study program and your fellow students.
- Know local laws. Laws and systems of justice are not universal. Do not assume that because something is legal in the United States, it is legal abroad.

- Use banks or cash machines to exchange money. Do not exchange it on the black market.
- Do not carry on your person more money than you need for the day. Carry your credit cards in a very safe place.
- Do not impair your judgment through excessive consumption of alcohol, and do not take illegal drugs.
- Make a photocopy of the official pages in your passport; carry them with you and leave the original in a safe place (except when traveling outside of your host country).
- Female travelers are sometimes more likely to encounter harassment. Take some extra precautions when overseas. Dress conservatively. Although short skirts and tank tops may be comfortable, they may also encourage unwanted attention. Avoid walking alone late at night or in questionable neighborhoods. Do not agree to meet a person whom you do not know in a secluded place. Be aware that some men from other countries tend to mistake the friendliness of American women for romantic interest.

Please note the following information sites:

- Travel advisories for all countries may be viewed on the State Department's website, http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html. This is the State Department's website for ALL types of advisories, whether "consular information sheets", "public announcements", or "travel warnings". But please note that the term "Caution" (as in this "Worldwide Caution") should not be confused with a "Warning", which is the State Department's strongest category of advisory.
- You can find much additional information on health, safety and security in education abroad by going to the SECUSSA Health & Safety website, <http://www.secussa.nafsa.org/safetyabroad/default.html>