



Updated March 2011

Staying Safe

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Key messages:

- **Be aware.**
- **Be informed.**
- **Use your common sense.**
- **Get insurance.**

Before you go

- Think about safety before you decide on your destination.
- Check the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office's \(FCO\) security advice](#) **before** you go. Register with the free FCO [LOCATE](#) service.
- Tell friends and family about your travel plans.
- Get comprehensive travel medical insurance. Check what you are covered for. Any existing health problems will not be covered unless you inform your insurance company about them.
- If you visit a country that the FCO advise against going to, your insurance is unlikely to cover you.

Accidents and injuries

For travellers, the most serious hazard is usually not illness, but accidents and injuries. Alcohol is a frequent factor in accidents and risky behaviour. Drink in moderation and never before driving, skiing sports, swimming or diving.

Road and transport safety

Road traffic accidents (RTAs) are a major cause of serious injury and death. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 1.3 million people are killed on roads every year and approximately half of these deaths are pedestrians, cyclists or motor cyclists. So even if you are not planning to drive, you can still be injured as a passenger, pedestrian or cyclist.



Poor roads, bad driving, failure to follow road rules, speeding, poorly maintained vehicles, lack of seat belts, or driving under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol; all increase worldwide accident rates.

Lack of emergency services adversely affects your chance of surviving an accident or injury. About 90% of RTA deaths are in poorer regions of the world, where there may be limited or even no medical services.

Remember – most countries drive on the right hand side of the road, which can be a hazard for UK drivers used to driving on the left.

- Avoid overcrowded, poorly maintained ferries, trains, buses, or minivans.
- Never hitchhike or pick up hitchhikers.
- Try not to travel alone, especially at night.
- Find out about local traffic patterns.
- Only use recommended taxis.
- Check tyres, brakes, lights and safety belts on any hire vehicle.
- Use seat belts and child safety restraints.
- Avoid night driving, especially on poor roads.
- Never drive after drinking alcohol or taking drugs, or if very tired.
- Do not exceed speed limits.
- Wear a helmet if riding a horse, bicycle or motorbike.

Fire

- Check fire exits in clubs, discos and hotels/accommodation.
- Unplug any electrical equipment if it looks unsafe.
- Never smoke in bed and do not leave candles or open flames unattended.

Water

In one study drowning came second to RTAs as a cause of death for travellers:

- Never swim after drinking alcohol or taking drugs.
- Do not swim alone.
- Get advice from locals about tides and safe places to swim.
- **Always** supervise children in or near water.
- Check water depth before diving.

Sports

Some activities, such as bungee jumping, diving, horse riding, jet skiing, paragliding and snowboarding are unlikely to be covered by your insurance, unless you specifically request coverage for these activities.



Training, equipment and maintenance may not meet UK standards.

Crime and personal safety

You can be the victim of crime anywhere in the world, but unfamiliar surroundings and lack of local knowledge increases your vulnerability. Research your destination carefully before you go; follow local and international news and check the FCO website regularly while you are away.

Remember that when you are abroad, you must obey the laws of your destination country, which are often very different from UK law.

Personal safety

- Avoid large crowds and demonstrations.
- Dress modestly and don't wear jewellery or clothes that attract attention.
- Be aware and use common sense. Try not to let your guard down.
- Remember, you may be a target for pickpockets or worse.
- Never take photos of anyone without their permission or of any military or official staff or buildings.
- Do not under any circumstances exchange money illegally – use a bank or official currency exchange.
- Never use illegal drugs or carry them for anyone.
- Do not accept food or drinks from people you do not know.
- Drink alcohol in moderation and never drink in countries where it is banned.
- Avoid talking to strangers who approach you in the street or on public transport.
- Never discuss your travel plans with strangers.
- Resisting muggers is not recommended.
- Public displays of affection are not acceptable in some regions.

Accommodation

- Avoid sharing rooms with strangers.
- Try to book ahead.
- Make sure locks work properly.
- Use a safe to store valuables.

Links

- [Aviation Safety Network: Passenger Safety Information](#)
- [Department of Transport: Road safety](#)



- [Directgov: Travel and Transport. Foreign travel](#)
- [European Commission: Air safety: list of airlines banned within the EU](#)
- [Foreign and Commonwealth Office: What to do when things go wrong](#)
- [Metropolitan Police: Staying Safe](#)
- [Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents: Watersports Safety Abroad](#)
- [Suzy Lamplugh Trust: Worldwide general personal safety travelling advice](#)
- [World Health Organization: 10 facts on global road safety](#)