

# Personal Safety Checklists

## Pre-Travel Checklist

- Know before you go—This cannot be emphasized enough. Research your destination before you arrive. At a minimum, check the US State Department’s website to be aware of any potential security issues. Another official site I recommend is Australia’s Smartraveller website.
- Enroll in the State Department’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program to receive security and emergency alerts about your destination. Look up the addresses and phone numbers of the local US Embassy or Consulate and keep them with you at all times.
- Scan and save an electronic copy of important documents, including passports, medical insurance cards, itineraries, travel insurance, and visas before you depart. Email the file to yourself so you have it available if your information is lost or stolen.
- Obtain travel insurance. In the event of theft or robbery, your stolen valuables often are covered and can be replaced. If you are injured or attacked, your medical bills will be covered.
- Ensure you have a cell phone and plan that work in your destination country. Make sure you have the proper chargers/adapters and keep

your phone at full battery. Bring a portable battery charger so you have power for phones on the go.

- Download maps onto tablets and phones so you can view them offline.
- Keep family and friends updated. Ensure they have a copy of your itinerary and you establish a check-in schedule so they can keep tabs on your whereabouts for your safety.
- Don't bring unnecessary items—credit cards that you won't use, identification you don't need—or personal items (such as items you regularly carry in a purse). Only bring documents, identification, cards, etc., that you absolutely must have.
- Diversify your finances. Don't rely exclusively on digital currency. Traveler's checks are out of fashion but can be replaced if stolen. Round them out with some cash for “sketchy” vendors or bargaining on the street. Do not use credit cards if your Intuition is going off.
- Book hotel rooms online. It'll save time when you arrive, and you have to give less information over the counter when checking in.
- Don't carry everything together. Separate monetary and identifying items you must carry on you, and carry them in different places on your person. This will prevent you from losing everything if your wallet or purse gets stolen. Don't ever carry anything in your back pockets, including hotel room keys.

## Hotel Checklists

### *Hotel selection checklist:*

- Is the area crime free or acceptable?
- Are emergency exits and doors locked during the hours the hotel says they are?
- Do you need a key to open them?
- Are exits well lit?
- Do alternate and emergency exits have enough open space that you can't get ambushed using them after hours?
- Are parking areas secure or at least well lit?
- Ensure parking garage elevators do not access room floors directly.
- Ensure room phones can dial outside numbers directly (such as for police).

### *Checking-in checklist:*

- Do not allow your luggage to be separated from you until you've registered or it's signed for by a bellhop or the front counter.
- Don't leave credit cards or wallets on the counter while checking in. Hand over any identification and wait for the employee to take it from you. When they hand it back, put it away, *then* complete any

registration. It's easy to leave a card or wallet behind, especially if you've been traveling.

- Ask for two hotel business cards. Keep them on you to use with taxis or in the event of an emergency while away from your room. This saves you from trying to remember information while under duress or while hailing a taxi in a foreign language or unfamiliar city.
- If you're a woman traveling alone, check in as Mr. and Mrs. so people get the idea that you're not alone. Get two room keys.
- Confirm that the hotel should not forward calls to your room. Instead, ask them to ring you from the front desk with any inquiries.
- If you're a woman traveling alone, feel free to ask someone at the front desk or a bellhop to accompany you in the elevator, especially in large hotels.
- Always enter an elevator last so you can observe everyone else. This also allows you to select your floor last and to see if someone decides to "conveniently" follow you on your floor. If they do, pretend you left something downstairs and get back in the elevator.
- If you feel you're being followed/stalked, go to the floor above your room. That way the stalker will think you're staying on that floor.
- Write down your name and phone number and hand them over with a printout of your reservation, a copy of your passport, and whatever

you're using to pay for the room (e.g., a credit card). This helps prevent eavesdroppers from collecting personal information.

*Hotel room selection checklist:*

- Select a room between the second and sixth floors if possible. If not, go higher, never ground floor.
- Does the entry door have at least two physical locks (in addition to needing a key)?
- Is the door solid?
- Does any adjoining room have at least one physical lock?
- Does your balcony have at least two physical locks?
- Does the balcony prevent someone from climbing onto yours from an adjacent room or different floor? Can they reach your balcony from the ground by climbing up?
- Do any windows prevent someone from climbing through them?
- Do the windows lock securely?
- Sleep with the windows and balcony door closed unless you're 100 percent confident they cannot be used for entry.
- "Do not disturb" should always be on display. Contact the front desk or housekeeping directly and let them know when you'll be wanting service/cleaning.

## **In the Room**

- The dead bolt and the latch bolt should go on as soon as you enter.
- Purchase a safety doorstop you can place against the door, and use it whenever you're inside. A common tactic is for thieves to break in when they hear the shower.
- Turn on the television at low volume but loud enough to hear at the door if someone's listening, when you leave the room.
- When someone comes to the door, never open it to ascertain who it is. If you ordered room service, be sure to ask who the order is for before opening.