

Safe and secure away from home

Americans stationed in Europe can take precautionary steps to minimize their chances of being victimized while on vacation. This pamphlet aims to improve your personal security while traveling. You can never be too careful, prepared or aware.

While you are traveling, it's important to remember that American tourists make tempting targets for thieves and anti-U.S. militants. The best advice for you and your family is to blend in with the crowd.

Traveling safely with your family also means sticking together and keeping an eye on your children at all times. Make sure they know where you're staying (name and address) and teach them what to do if they get lost or separated. Agree on a meeting place, just in case. And make sure your kids know not to accept rides or favors from strangers.

Packing your bags

Planning what to take on your journey can decrease your chances of trouble. Here are some tips on what to take:

- ❑ Clean out your wallet or purse before you go, take only essential credit cards. Plan to use credit cards or traveler's checks instead of cash whenever possible.
- ❑ Carry your purse close to your body, or wallet in an inside front pocket. Better yet, take a "fanny pack" or wear a money pouch under your clothes.
- ❑ Keep a separate record of the contents of checked luggage and keep anything of value such as cash, medicine and jewelry in a carry-on that stays with you.
- ❑ Pack as lightly as possible. Lots of heavy, cumbersome bags will slow you down and make you more vulnerable to getting robbed.
- ❑ Pack your things in inconspicuous baggage. Expensive, designer cases, military bags or luggage with unit logos can draw unneeded attention to you.
- ❑ Don't pack items of uniform or clothes that have military logos or slogans.
- ❑ Band your luggage to safeguard against in-transit pilferage and provide adequate identification on the outside and inside of your luggage using your civilian address but not your rank.

Driving tips

Keep a record of the make, model, year, color and license number of your POV in a safe place. It will help you find your vehicle if it is lost, stolen or impounded. Never advertise that you are a tourist or associated with the military. Remove any stickers indicating a military connection if traveling in your POV. Ensure any vehicle you rent is nondescript and free of rental agency stickers or logos. Also:

- ❑ Keep away from drivers behaving erratically.
- ❑ If another car harasses you on the highway, stay cool. Keep your eyes on the road, avoid eye contact with the aggressive driver and don't react to provocation. Get the license plate number, a description of the driver and vehicle, and go to the nearest MP or police station to file a complaint.
- ❑ Avoid driving alone or at night. If you must shop at night, park in a well-lighted area.
- ❑ Park as close as you can to your destination and make a note of where you parked.
- ❑ Keep all car doors locked and windows closed while in or out of your car. Set your alarm or use an anti-theft device.
- ❑ Never leave your car unoccupied with the motor running or with children inside.
- ❑ Keep a secure hold on your purse, handbag and parcels. Do not put them down or on top of the car in order to open the door.
- ❑ When approaching and leaving your vehicle be aware of your surroundings. Do not approach your car alone if suspicious people are in the area. Locate your keys before going to your car.
- ❑ Always lock your car when it's parked, even if the stop is brief. Keep packages or valuables out of sight, preferably locked in the trunk. Maps and guidebooks on the seat or dashboard advertise that you're a tourist - keep them in the glove compartment.
- ❑ Never pick up hitchhikers.

Helpful hotel hints

Never make bookings using your military rank. Never leave 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. Use the luggage check in service,

normally located at the front desk. Never leave valuables in your hotel room but use the hotel's 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. Use them while you are in the room for extra security. If additional security is desired, buy a portable travel lock.

Never automatically open your door. If your door has a peephole, use it. Before 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. Call 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 TV 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 safely

Whenever you go into town, don't let your dress or mannerisms identify you as military. Be anonymous and avoid loose talk that gives away your military connections. Make a note of your passport number. If it is lost or stolen, knowing the number will help get a new one.

Before you go sightseeing, get directions at the hotel for the attractions you intend to visit or check maps so you can tour confidently. 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, well-traveled streets - no shortcuts.

Pickpockets 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 as a distraction. Once you are distracted, another pickpocket steals your valuables and walks away.

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

Family Vacation Tips

*A SNAP pamphlet on making
your vacation safe and secure*



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