

June 6, 2006

TRAVEL ABROAD TIPS FROM UAB

The key to traveling abroad safely is preparation. The UAB Study Abroad Program offers the following tips:

- Before your trip abroad, consult travel guidebooks and tourism Web sites, which contain helpful information about the country such as lists of legitimate taxi services or each country's equivalent to emergency 911 phone numbers. The more you know about the country to which you are traveling, the safer and more rewarding your travel will be.
- Make sure your health insurance policy will travel with you. If you are not sure, contact your health insurance provider for details on international health coverage. At a minimum, your policy should include coverage for Emergency Evacuation, Accidental Death and Dismemberment, Repatriation of Remains and Accidental Medical Treatment and Hospitalization.
- Another important phone number to keep on hand is the number to the local U.S. Embassy in the country you are visiting. The U.S. Embassy can provide you with assistance in an emergency. All U.S. citizens traveling abroad can receive emergency assistance via the U.S. State Department's Overseas Citizen's Services Hotline. This information can be found by visiting www.state.gov/travel.
- Write down a contingency plan. Where is the local U.S. Embassy located and how would you get there? What are your plans if telephone service is lost or if a power outage occurs? Do you have your passport, plane tickets and other important travel documents handy in case you need to leave in a hurry?
- Always inform an emergency contact of your travel plans: where and when you are leaving and when you expect to return.
- Invest in a travel pouch that fits inside a suit jacket or shirt where you can keep your passport, currency and other valuable documents hidden from pickpockets.
- If you will be taking medications while traveling, be sure to plan ahead to have enough medication for the duration of your trip.
- Have the phone numbers to your bank and credit card companies in case your wallet is lost or stolen and you need to cancel your cards. Some institutions will even wire money to you in an emergency.
- Never keep all your means of accessing money in one place. Travel with a variety of financial instruments such as traveler's cheques, ATM card and credit card.
- Make at least 2 copies of your passport: 1 to leave at home with an emergency contact and 1 to keep somewhere apart from your passport. Should your passport be lost or stolen, it will be much easier to replace if you have proof of having had a valid passport.
- When withdrawing money from an automatic teller machine, be as inconspicuous as possible. Use ATM's from major banking institutions to avoid the risk of fraudulent transactions. Never carry large amounts of cash on you at any given time.
- When you are abroad, travel with someone you are familiar with at all times.
- When entering a hotel or other buildings, notice where all of the exits and stairwells are located in case of a fire.
- If you are out after dark, stay in well-lit, public areas. Never leave with someone you have just met.
- Keep a low profile. Avoid flashy clothing and jewelry.
- Follow your gut instinct. If you find yourself in a situation where you are uncomfortable, remove yourself from the situation immediately. Ask a restaurant employee or bartender for an escort outside or ask them to call a taxi cab for you.

For more details about the UAB Study Abroad Program, visit the Web site at www.studyabroad.app.uab.edu.