

# Top Ten Ways to Not Become a Victim of Crime Around the World

*By Malcolm Nance and Lisa Hughes  
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## **10. Don't be an obvious foreigner.**

In many parts of the developing world, you'll stand out no matter what you do, but make an effort to blend in as much as you can and respect local norms. The standard advice applies: T-shirts with corporate logos or flashy clothes are better left at home. Loud or boisterous behavior also advertises your presence in a negative way. Be a careful observer before you jump into the game.

## **9. Leave jewelry at home.**

Robert Young Pelton, author of *The World's Most Dangerous Places*, captures perceptions of Westerners in the developing world this way: "as obvious as a naked man with hundred-dollar bills taped to his body." Wear local, inexpensive jewelry if you must look beautiful.

## **8. Keep copies of your passport and hide the original.**

Carry three copies of your passport; keep two in separate areas of your baggage, and carry one on your body. Put the original in the safest place you can find, which will depend upon your living and traveling arrangements. Passports are the hottest commodities in the world, and yours is game for a clever pickpocket.

## **7. Listen to your gut.**

Never ignore your sixth sense. When you get alarmed or spooked, there is probably a good reason for it. Stop and calmly think for a few seconds: observe and assess the situation around you and decide what your options are for getting to a safer place. Then make a decision and act.

## **6. Learn where your embassy or consulate offices are located.**

It's always a good idea to check in with your country's embassy when you're staying in a foreign country, particularly one with a less-developed communications system. As soon as you arrive, look at a map and orient yourself so you can find your country's consular offices. Learn two or three different routes for getting there, as well as the best transportation methods, and stop by! Ask to speak to the Regional Security Officer and get a crime fact sheet for the area. They are there to help.

## **5. Read local English-language newspapers, if possible.**

Local citizens and expatriates who write these papers can be some of the best sources of information about the local scene (although be aware that in some countries, the media are under government control—find out before you depart on your trip).

## **4. Avoid unexpectedly amorous men and women.**

Attractive as you may be, be wary of people who approach and try to woo you the moment you arrive. Most of

the time the real motive is gaining a foreign passport or your wallet, or taking you to a gift shop where you'll be pressured to buy. Listen to what your mother told you when you were 15—it still applies.

### **3. Become aware of real security threats.**

Before you ever set foot out of your home, you should do some research. What is the political climate in the country you'll be visiting? Have there been recent demonstrations against the government? Might there be groups who have expressed strong anti-American sentiment due to political or economic developments? Most countries have some type of English-language media outlets on the Internet that publish local news; wire services such as AP and Reuters often cover such developments (check their archives); and political risk consulting companies often publish some of their assessments online for free.

The point is not to engender fear or find reasons not to go on your adventure. It is simply better to enter a foreign country with your eyes open. For example, Americans traveling to Iran will probably experience magnificent hospitality from Iranians, but sudden turns in political events might increase tensions (also for Iranians, of course—not just tourists) and make travel less pleasant. Be aware and be prepared. In some places it might take keen eyes and ears to detect rumblings of civil unrest that can increase dangers to foreign visitors; in other cases the signs are clear and simply need to be heeded. Not only will a heightened awareness of the political environment shorten your response time to potential warning signs, but gaining an education in local or national politics will demonstrate to those you meet that you have a greater depth of interest in your host country than sampling the local pastries.

### **2. Avoid known hotspots.**

This, of course, follows directly from #3: countries and regions that have experienced severe levels of conflict and violence are probably best left off your study-abroad itinerary for the immediate future. Places that the US State Department advises against travel by US citizens and places that your institution doesn't consider safe or to have appropriate support services—these are places that should have dropped off your travel radar in recent years. Use the advice of campus experts, other study abroad professions, and travel safety experts. Consider the level of risk you are assuming. Others may have reported no problems during travel to the same location, but you want to avoid relying on luck to ensure your safety.

### **1. Control the things you can control and don't panic.**

Choose a place to study and a program provider that can provide you with comprehensive support services abroad. Before you go abroad, learn about the country and in particular the health and safety support mechanisms. Bring an emergency card with a list of contact information for: the equivalent to "911" abroad, a US 24 Hour Contact, Insurance/Assistant Information and 24 Hour Contact, On-Site 24 Hour Contact, Local Medical Care Facility, Local Police Contact Information, US Embassy or Consulate Contact Information, etc. Also, bring a list of help statements translated into the local language.

Don't take unnecessary risks: This includes limiting unsafe activities like bungee jumping, river rafting, and mountain climbing. Don't get intoxicated by using alcohol or drugs that will limit your control over yourself and your interactions with others. Try to have others travel or explore with you so that if something happens to you, they can assist to avoid or respond to an emergency. Things happen in the world, some good and some bad. While your travels overseas are likely to create some of the most valuable and positive experiences of your life, maintain a common-sense expectation that things may not always go as planned, and react as calmly as possible if they do not. In a crisis situation, panicking only leads to more confusion and potentially poor decisions. Think carefully and watch cautiously everything around you.

# Sexual Harassment and Prevention In College Students Studying Abroad

*(Comments adapted from article by Nancy Newport, RN, LPC –Licensed Professional Counselor, Consultant to Peace Corps)*

## **Cultural Sensitivity**

We all want to be culturally sensitive, to get along, to be respectful, to fit in, to not offend. In training, cultural sensitivity is emphasized and highly valued. It can be the doorway through which a college student studying abroad gains entry to and acceptance with the community abroad. However, it is very important that the cultural sensitivity training provided never requires that you submit to behaviors that invade your personal boundaries and that feel unsafe or even uncomfortable to you. If it feels inappropriate or makes you uneasy, get yourself out of the situation. Never sacrifice yourself or your sense of safety for the sake of cultural sensitivity.

## **Personal Boundaries**

Personal boundaries are the personal space around us, physically and emotionally, that serves to preserve our physical and emotional integrity. When someone gets "too close", an alarm sounds inside. We need to listen for, respect, and respond to that alarm. We also need to respect the personal boundaries of each other.

## **Concept of Male Friendship – A Boundary Misunderstanding**

American women are accustomed to the concept of male friendship. It has a meaning that may not translate in the new culture. Being seen with a man, talking with a man, going out with a man may have a different "meaning" in the culture than a female student may intend. What does it mean in the culture you are in? Is that your intention? If no, change your behaviors to send the message you intend.

When someone is being approached by a stranger or unwelcome individual, the amount of communication should be kept to a minimum. In Latin culture, for instance, a man may sit next to a female student on a bus and begin an uninvited conversation with "Oh, baby. I love you." There is a tendency on some women's part to give a lecture on love to that individual ("How can you love me? You don't know me.", etc.)— providing a lot of communication, even though it is intended not to be positive. Remember it's the amount of communication that can be important to the harasser, not the quality or content (negative or positive). This woman is then surprised to discover that the man continues and even escalates the harassment rather than moving away.

When confronted by a situation that makes you uncomfortable it is more effective to:

- Ignore the harassment/pretend ignorance
- Feign confusion/lack of understanding
- Move away/remove yourself from the situation

Confrontations of any type serve to encourage harassers who want attention, even negative attention will do. It's important to know about the power of communication. When people come at you with interactions that you don't want, don't give away anything in return. Don't offer explanations. Get up and move, or ignore. Harassment behavior and language varies from one culture to another. How do men harass women in the culture in which you are visiting? How do national women in that culture deal with it? Notice their effectiveness and use their response as a model.

# **ASSERTIVENESS**

## ***Actions***

Actions speak louder than words. Make sure your body language is congruent with your words. If you say no with a smile on your face or in a weak, unconvincing voice, the words lose their force and power. Say no firmly and swiftly and follow that up with removing yourself from the situation and getting assistance if needed to back you up.

## ***Persistent People***

Use the broken record technique when faced with a situation when someone will not take no for an answer. Do not be coerced into backing down from your position by the persistence of the person insisting. Just because they did not accept your "no" does not mean you now need to come up with another reason or excuse. Keep saying the same answer over and over again, without developing a new reason or excuse each time the other person doesn't accept it. You don't have to be creative. Stick to your answer and just don't budge.

## **Trust**

Trust needs to be earned. Many people have the mistaken notion that people should be trusted until proven otherwise. Actually, it is prudent to stay in a neutral position about a person, neither trusting nor distrusting them at first. Gather information from this person that will help you determine the trustworthiness of the person. In a new culture, watch for clues and cues from people who know the person and figure out how trusted he/she is by the community.

## **Making Yourself Less Vulnerable**

In the wild, when an animal is either separated from the herd, is weak, young, injured, or otherwise vulnerable, it is likely that a predator will spot the animal, consider it prey and attack. It is essential to your safety that you never allow yourself to be vulnerable to attack, that you avoid behaviors that can make you prey. You may have the right to walk down the beach at 2:00 in the morning, but if you do, you are making yourself prey to a waiting predator.

You may want to go to a bar or a party and have some fun, let off some steam, kick back and have a good time but if you drink alcohol or use any mood altering substance, you are now potential prey. It's as if you said to the strangers/acquaintances around you, "I'm going to relinquish control of myself/my body now. I put myself in your hands." Being under the effect of substances of any kind sets us up to be vulnerable to the attack of a predator.

It's not fair. Of course, it's not. But it's true—and staying in control of yourself can save your life. Being awake and aware allows you to pick up on warning signs that alert you that something is wrong. In the book [The Gift of Fear](#), Gavin deBecker describes the "gut feeling", the intuitive sense, that something is not right—that some danger may be present—as the gift of fear.

Fear alerts us if we are awake and aware and respectful of the feelings we get. We must not override our sense of fear by saying to ourselves, "I don't know what I'm worried about, I'm sure nothing's wrong here", instead of paying attention to that little voice in our gut that says, "I don't know what's going on here, but something's up". It is really, really important to pay attention to our intuition, that little sense of knowing that something is amiss here, and not to dismiss it or deny it.

## **Progressive Intrusive Invasion of Boundaries**

If in a situation there is someone giving you more attention that you want, or is finding excuses to touch you, this can be potentially dangerous to your safety. For example, a guy comes up to a woman and gently brushes his shoulder up against her, flipping her hair off her shoulder, grazing her hand. She's thinking, "This is creeping me

out, but I'm sure I'm overreacting, I'm sure he doesn't mean anything." This is where danger begins. He is thinking, "How much will she tolerate and allow? How long can I get away with this without her calling me on it? How far can I go?" If this initial touch is not objected to or stopped, often it will progress. Don't be afraid to get up, move, or to say no – be assertive.

There are steps to take to minimize risk in while traveling abroad and maximize fun and a rich cultural experience. It is important for women to:

- Integrate into their community
- Make friends with the women of the city, village, or community
- Learn from the women about self protection and practice what you learn
- Dress according to local customs
- Interact with men according to the local customs
- Behave according to the local customs
- Stay in control; staying sober and alert keeps your senses in place to protect you
- Have a buddy system: having at least one other person with you that you trust can help you in regular circumstances as well as in problematic situations (what if someone spikes your drink). It is generally a good idea to travel in groups
- Pay attention and respond to any inner signal (intuition) that "something isn't right" and remove yourself from the situation

Do not try to behave like you would in the States. You are going abroad to experience a different way of life, one that allows you to assimilate into your city, to "join" the community, to have a full, rich cultural experience. Enjoy it. You are not giving up yourself—you, indeed, are expanding on your choices as a female. This is an invitation to you to be awake and aware and to acknowledge the realities of potential safety issues around you. To live your life as if this isn't so is to deny yourself adequate protection. Treat yourself well.

# Medical Information

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**First stop - <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>**

This indispensable page of resources will answer most of your travel and country specific questions. It is the web site for the Center for Disease Control's National Center for Infectious Diseases/Traveler's Health. It contains information on Destinations, Outbreaks, Diseases, Vaccinations, Safe Food & Water, etc.

## ***Do I need a physical?***

Yes, it is a good idea to have general checkups before you go - medical, dental, optical.

## ***What about vaccines?***

Vaccines can take up to 6 months for a full series, so check now to see if you need any. Again, see [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel) for the most current list of recommended vaccines in your country. Cowell Health Center may be able to help with some vaccinations.

## ***What are my emergency options in a foreign country?***

Obviously, if you are in a true medical emergency, go to the hospital. Most study abroad programs will also have a list of doctors in the area to which you can go. Check with your insurance company before you leave to see what the preferred process is. This should be one of the first things you work out when you arrive in your host country – develop your own personal emergency plan in case the unexpected happens. For more details on how to do this, please see <http://www.lmu.edu/dept/education/globaled/studentsabroad/creatingpeap.html>

## ***What about insurance?***

SCU's Cowell Student insurance policy does cover you overseas. Other insurance companies should be contacted before you go; companies vary widely with their policies. For international study and travel, there are various types of insurance which you should consider purchasing prior to leaving the U.S. These include major medical, emergency evacuation, repatriation of remains, 24 hour emergency help line, legal assistance, baggage, accidental death and dismemberment/life, motor vehicle, and kidnapping and terrorism insurance. For more information see <http://www.lmu.edu/dept/education/globaled/studentsabroad/insurance.html>

## ***How should I handle medications and prescriptions?***

Regardless of your insurance company, it is very important that you take all documentation of your prescription with you. A note from your doctor (signed by him or her) listing the generic names of the medications & prescriptions you take, how often and why may also be helpful. Your insurance may allow for a "vacation" supply of medication, so check with them now. You should also always carry prescriptions in your carry-on luggage, in their original bottles. Some prescriptions may need to be translated if you wish to fill them abroad, so always make sure you know the generic medication name for what you take, as the brand name may not be available abroad. Include your glasses or contact lens prescription. Bring an extra pair of glasses.

**First-Aid Kit:** Consider a well-stocked first-aid kit as a first line of defense. Some items to consider including (depending on where you are going) are: sunscreen, bandages, flashlight, cough/cold medicine (such as Nyquil), sterile pads, insect repellent, adhesive tape, aspirin, antacid, anti-diarrhea tablets, anti-malarial medication, extra bottled water, feminine protection, rubber gloves, etc.

## ***Santa Clara health forms- what do I need?***

Insurance forms are due in May for SCU. Forms are available in Cowell Health Center, or by contacting Cowell from abroad. If you are abroad for the whole year, in March or April you will need to complete these same forms again from abroad so that you can register for Fall quarter.

## **Additional Web Resources: Medical Help and Preparation**

Taken from the Online Version of the Handbook (<http://www.scu.edu/studyabroad/handbook/handbookmain.cfm>)

Cowell Student Health Center: <http://www.scu.edu/cshc>

Center for Disease Control Traveler's Health Site: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>

# Security

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Exercise the same good judgment abroad regarding personal property and safety that you would at home- and then some. The staff at the study abroad program sites are very concerned about security - look to them for advice and assistance.

**Santa Clara University Conduct Code:** SCU reserves the right to review student conduct that occurs on and off campus when one's behavior is inconsistent with the expectations stated in the Student Conduct Code. If you receive disciplinary action for misconduct by your study abroad program you may also receive disciplinary action from SCU upon your return.

**Laws and Codes of Conduct:** Make yourself aware of both the rules and regulations of the study abroad program sponsor, and the local laws and customs of the countries which you will be visiting. Understand that you will not only have to conform to the legal system of the country you will be visiting, but also obey the codes of conduct required of program participants. Always keep in mind that you are a "guest" in someone else's home (their country). This applies to living abroad and specifically to those living with a host family. Any breach of the public order such as intoxication or drug abuse can lead to expulsion from the school, the country, or a very stiff jail sentence. Trust us on this one - the last place you want to be while abroad is in a jail cell! *The fact that you are a U.S. citizen means little when you are subject to the laws of another sovereign state!*

**Drugs in Your Host Country:** Attitudes towards drugs vary greatly in countries all over the world. Do not expect that the common beliefs about drugs in the United States are the same in other countries. While most drugs are illegal in the United States, you may find that in your host country some are legal and are easier to come by. Remember, however, that tolerance of drug use does not equal legality. Once you leave the U.S., you are not covered by U.S. laws and constitutional rights, and the U.S. consular cannot give you legal counsel or pay your legal fees. In many foreign countries, drug use and/or possession equals jail time. In some countries, they even institute the death penalty for drug offenders (in a growing number of countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Turkey, and Thailand). There is very little anyone can do to help you if you are caught with drugs. It is your responsibility to know what the drug laws are in a foreign country before you go, because "I didn't know it was illegal" will not get you out of jail.

**Setting an Example:** Set a good example. Remember you are like an ambassador for Santa Clara University and for American college students in general. Behave in a way that is respectful of others' rights and wellbeing and encourage others to do the same.

# Alcohol, Drugs and International Education

*Used by Permission, Howard W. Henry, Jr., Certified Social Worker-R, ACSW, CASAC  
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These are some thoughts & facts about having a SAFE experience if you choose to drink alcohol. It is important that you are aware of the physical, social, and cultural implications in choosing to drink while you are abroad.

Alcohol is a sedative substance. Different cultures view alcohol and different types of alcohol in a number of different ways—as food, as a privileged drink, as a sacred element, as a complement to a meal, as a social way to unwind, and more. It may be reasonable and indeed can be an enjoyable part of the study abroad experience to consume alcohol in a legal and culturally appropriate manner—if you choose to drink. You do not have to drink; you can still be culturally appropriate and not drink alcoholic beverages. But, if you do drink, here are some reasonable guidelines to keep your drinking safer and culturally appropriate.

**If you drink, do it SLOWLY.** Your body can metabolize about 1/2 ounce of alcohol per hour (one 12 oz. beer at 4% alcohol = one 4 oz. glass of wine at 12% alcohol = one oz. of spirits at 50% alcohol/100 proof). At one drink per hour you will not overdose yourself. If you have never consumed alcohol before, go slow. Just getting sick in itself is no fun and it makes you look like a jerk! Vomit is not socially cool. (Talk this over with your family if you have not previously used alcohol; get their input on it.) Caution: Stay under 4 drinks at any one sitting. See the Warning.

**If you drink, be AWARE.** Know the cultural context in which you are drinking. All countries and cities have places to avoid. Be intelligent and avoid those places and don't drink in them. Know the potency of what you are drinking; U.S. students may find some beer in the host culture which is 8-12% alcohol (two to three times the potency of beer sold in the United States). They may think they are drinking one beer and are actually having the equivalent of two or three. The amount can be different, too—20 oz. to a pint instead of a 12 oz. bottle. The unexpected effect can catch you off guard. The same may go for wines or spirits which also have greater percentage alcohol than expected. Know the law and the drinking age. Do not violate the laws in someone else's home country; they will not take kindly to you.

**If you drink, do it with FAMILY/FRIENDS.** Make your drinking part of a social occasion rather than an endeavor to get drunk. Consuming alcohol with your host family or your friends at a meal and in a social setting can be an enjoyable part of the cultural experience. Stay with your friends. Solitary drinking is a warning sign for escape from problems and your mood can influence how alcohol affects you.

**If you drink, drink WITH MEALS.** Food slows down the absorption of alcohol into the blood stream. Alcohol should complement food rather than substituting for it. Drinking on an empty stomach can lead to an unexpected effect because the alcohol will be immediately absorbed into your blood stream and quickly taken to your brain, where it can lead to unfortunate misjudgment and unintended misbehavior.

**Warnings:** (1) Alcohol is a sedative substance which causes loss of inhibition and loss of fine judgment and fine motor control even at small doses. This can make driving in a strange environment—already difficult—extremely hazardous. Overly rapid consumption of a large amount of alcohol can result in alcohol poisoning and even coma or death through stoppage of the involuntary muscles (heart and lungs). Alcohol may have a greater and more rapid effect on women than on men because of different rates of metabolism. (2) Because the sedating effect of alcohol sometimes overwhelms the individual's judgment—without the person's intent. Almost everyone who drinks will at least once in his or her life wind up do something totally stupid! Four moderate drinks or less at any one sitting minimizes the likelihood of danger to you or to others. Don't do dumb things where you don't have your natural supports of family and friends to help you. (3) If you have current health problems, these conditions can result in a more potent effect of alcohol upon you; cut back or even go without alcohol to prevent complications. Also remember that alcohol can interact with some medications (such as some anti-depressants) so make sure that you are aware of any potential complications and act accordingly and wisely.

**Incidents involving alcohol or drug consumption are among the leading causes of problems in study abroad. Don't let these incidents happen to you. This is something which is totally under your control. Keep study abroad an educational and enjoyable experience, not an ugly one to regret.**