

## GUIDE TO SELECTING OVERSEAS ACCOMMODATION

University travelers should remember the importance of choosing secure accommodation in a safe area. While this is the case for all trips, this is particularly important in higher-risk destinations and for solo travelers. Special attention should be paid to accessibility and safety features as they can vary considerably. Travelers should consider the following guidance – which is not exhaustive – in relation to the health, safety, and security risks present at their destination and their specific needs.

### Finding Accommodation

To support their search for suitable accommodation in their destination, University travelers should:

- ✓ Determine accommodation requirements and priorities.
- ✓ Identify relatively safer versus relatively higher-risk neighborhoods.
- ✓ Ask the local embassy, consulate, or police services for guidance for travelers.
- ✓ Leverage in-country contacts.
- ✓ Research the main safety and security risks present in the destination.

Location needs will vary between travelers and destinations. Some general guidance on selecting the location of accommodation includes consideration of the proximity of the accommodation to:

- ✓ Local amenities, particularly if accessible after dark (e.g., grocery stores, pharmacies).
- ✓ Major roadways, particularly if local driving conditions and standards are poor.
- ✓ Neighborhoods at increased risk of crime.
- ✓ Neighborhoods at increased risk of attacks/unrest (e.g., areas by government buildings).
- ✓ Safe and secure transportation options.
- ✓ Your place of study, research, or work.

### Assessing Accommodation

Before selecting their accommodation and paying any fees or a deposit, travelers should view the accommodation, ideally in person. This will help to mitigate the risk of housing scams. If this is not possible, travelers should consider making a plan in case they find – on arrival – that the property was misrepresented, is unsafe, or is unsuitable. For example, travelers may consider options in advance if they need to book a room in a local short stay lodging, such as a hotel, while they consider the suitability of their lodging and plan to find alternative long-term lodging.

### Pre-Arrival

When assessing the suitability of an accommodation – whether before or on arrival – travelers should consider several key features. Travelers should research whether features such as a 24-hour staffed front desk, a walled or fenced exterior, CCTV (closed circuit television) systems, secure lockers and/or safes, and security personnel, who may be armed or working in cooperation with local police forces, are present in hotels or serviced apartments. Armed security personnel are more common in high-risk destinations.

For all accommodation types, travelers should also consider access controls for entry and exit points, notably doors and windows. Deadbolts, chains, door viewers, window locks, and burglar alarms are all features that are likely to increase the security of an accommodation, as is the presence of several barriers to access, such as multiple doors requiring fob or key access.

## Selecting a Room

Travelers should balance their individual needs with the health, safety, and security conditions in their destination when selecting a room. For instance, female travelers in shared accommodations may wish to select women's-only rooms or floors, if that has been identified as an option. Overall, rooms between the third and sixth floors are typically less attractive for potential criminals, while being more accessible for emergency services in a fire. Travelers should also, where possible, avoid rooms positioned at ground or first-floor level and rooms with balcony access.

## Post-Arrival

Travelers should consider the above guidance regarding assessing the suitability of their accommodation upon their arrival and ensure that it aligns with their expectations and research. Travelers staying in hotels should mind their luggage in lobbies, be discrete with their room number, ask about how to dial the front desk, and ensure the hotel phone number is entered into their phone. Travelers staying in apartments should ensure that they have all the required points-of-contact saved, whether that be a landlord, estate agent, property manager, or front desk clerk.

Upon arrival, travelers should check their entire room or residence. A key priority is to check the locks on all windows and doors – even those that may appear decorative or out of use – and to make sure they are locked. Inform the front desk if anything is not working. It is also important to check the locks on all windows and doors each time upon return. Consider using a door wedge as an additional precaution, especially for interconnecting rooms, if non-interconnecting rooms are not available.

## Fire Safety

Fire safety standards vary significantly across destinations. Travelers should research standards and best practices before their trip, which include the presence of working carbon monoxide/smoke detectors, fire alarms, and fire extinguishers. If carbon monoxide/smoke detectors are not common in their destination, or if unsure, travelers should consider packing an inexpensive portable detector.

Upon arrival, travelers should familiarize themselves by walking through their nearest emergency exit points and fire escapes and note where the escape exits on the ground floor (e.g., main lobby, side street, kitchen). Travelers should know the plan of action for if the alarm is activated. Travelers should report any fire safety concerns to the front desk, their landlord, or their property manager immediately.

## **Further Resources**

The guidance provided in this explainer document is not exhaustive. Travelers are encouraged to carry out further research on how to find and select lodging that supports their health, safety, and security (HSS) needs. One reputable resource is the U.S. Department of State's [Lodging Safety](#) guidance. Selecting suitable lodging in line with destination-specific risks is particularly important for travelers preparing to visit high-risk destinations. For instance, crimes such as burglary targeting private residences and even hotels may be common in one destination. In another, there may be an increased risk of terrorist attacks on targets of perceived Western influence, including international hotels.

An in-depth knowledge of the risk environment is required, with resources also made available by the U.S. Department of State for [High-Risk Area Travelers](#). Travelers wanting to discuss specific safety and security risks in their destination, including additional guidance on selecting secure accommodations in high-risk areas, can schedule a travel risk consultation with Global Safety & Security by emailing [globalsafety@princeton.edu](mailto:globalsafety@princeton.edu).