GS&S
GLOBAL SAFETY
& SECURITY

GUIDE TO TRAVEL SAFETY BEST PRACTICES

All destinations are different and come with a variety of health, safety, and security (HSS) risks. HSS risks vary by country, but also across the regional and even city level. Despite these differences, there is an expansive set of travel safety best practices that University travelers should consider adopting in preparation for and during their trip. Travelers should consider the following guidance – which is not exhaustive – in relation to their destination and their specific needs. University travelers should follow these best practices in addition to their responsibilities under the Global Safety & Security (GS&S) Travel Policy to enroll their travel and to follow any further necessary steps.

Research and Resources

Preparation is a key element for any travel plans, including University travel. There is a wide range of resources available to support travelers in preparing for their trip, including those provided by the U.S. Department of State, such as Travel Advisories and the multiple resources for travelers on the Traveler Information page, including one specifically for U.S. Students Abroad. Travelers are strongly encouraged to enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) before traveling abroad (non-U.S. passport holders may enroll but should leave the passport information section blank).

Some governments (not all) publish similar information and advice to the U.S. that may help travelers prepare for their journey, some with specific guidance for its citizens. Travel advice published for each destination, for example, by the Government of Canada and the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth, & Development Office (FCDO) is often comprehensive and detailed.

Packing and Preparation

After researching their destination and identifying requirements for – or any restrictions on – travel, travelers should prepare all necessary documentation, such as medication, passports, and visas. Travelers should prepare a packing checklist for their trip and only pack what they can physically carry themselves in an emergency. Clothing or accessory requirements will vary according to traveler needs, planned trip activities, and the local climate and dress norms. The specific HSS risks in the destination may also impact decisions on what to bring. As highlighted in the **GS&S Guide to Selecting Suitable Accommodation** (see Travel Safety Toolkit), travelers visiting destinations in which fire safety standards are poor should bring a portable carbon monoxide/smoke detector. Other useful items include a portable charger for electronic devices and personal hygiene products.

Technology Checklist

✓ Determine your communication needs.
✓ Determine communication availability (e.g., cellular or data coverage in a location).
✓ Determine the need to download a specific app (e.g., WhatsApp, Signal) and ensure pre-departure functionality, for you and relatives/friends back home.
✓ Determine the need for, and if so, how to purchase a travel or local SIM card.
✓ Download a translation app if required, especially an app with offline functionality.
✓ Identify any restrictions on digital devices or applications (e.g., social media).
✓ Consider using a virtual private network (VPN).

Additional information security resources are available via Princeton University's Office of Information Technology (OIT), such as on OIT's Safe Computing and Travel Guidelines web pages.

Finance Checklist

✓ Consider how you plan to make payments abroad.
✓ Determine whether to obtain a travel card.
✓ Tell your bank(s) and credit card company(s) that you plan to travel overseas.
✓ Familiarize yourself with the local currency.
✓ Determine if you need cash, and if so, whether you can exchange currency before travel.
✓ Determine if payment apps are widely used and if so, download the app before travel.

Air Travel

Travelers should research their airport's check-in and security processes (transit processes too, if applicable), which can differ across destinations. This will help to ensure that they have everything that they need for their journey and that they arrive for their flight well in advance, factoring in potential delays and waiting times.

While at the airport, it is important to remain vigilant for announcements, including those for any changes to the flight gate or departure time. Travelers should always remain aware of their surroundings and should never leave their belongings unattended. Group travelers should not leave large amounts of luggage behind with one traveler, even for short amounts of time. This is important in all destinations and particularly in destinations where crime, including drug trafficking and luggage theft, is common. Once at their destination, travelers should follow all the required entry and border control procedures. Travelers should not draw attention to themselves and should avoid lingering in or outside of the airport terminal for a significant amount of time.

Other Modes of Transportation

DO	DO NOT
✓ Determine transport needs pre-travel.	✓ Travel in higher-risk neighborhoods.
✓ Research available transport options and any associated HSS risks.	✓ Ride in a car with the windows down or unlocked.
✓ Ask local contacts for reliable driver, taxi, and ride-hailing recommendations.	✓ Use unlicensed, unregistered, or unmetered taxi services.
✓ Know directions to nearest consulate/embassy.	✓ Begin a journey without checking directions first.
✓ Remain vigilant while traveling.	✓ Wear headphones while traveling.
✓ Travel in a group, if possible.	✓ Travel at night, if possible.

It can be challenging to travel overseas, particularly for those who are not familiar with their destination and do not speak the local language(s). Travelers should adopt the following best practices and supplement them with additional research specific to their needs, risk profile, and destination.

Travelers wanting to discuss specific safety and security risks in their destination, including additional guidance, can schedule a travel risk consultation with Global Safety & Security by emailing globalsafety@princeton.edu.