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TRAVEL SECURITY FORM

THIS IS A PRODUCT OF THE
RESEARCH AND INFORMATION SUPPORT CENTER (RISC)



ABOUT THIS FORM

More U.S. private sector employees, students, and staff are traveling abroad than ever before. At the same time, the overseas security landscape has grown increasingly dynamic, with threats posed by terrorists, insurgents, and criminals, as well as non-human forces like natural disasters and diseases. The objective of this guide is to equip international travelers with tactics and procedures that may reduce the risks inherent to overseas travel. It is our hope that the enclosed recommendations will both encourage individuals to seek opportunities abroad and provide greater comfort and confidence to those traveling internationally.

We acknowledge that every destination is unique and that no one resource can address all situations or scenarios. In response to that challenge, OSAC has created a form that can be customized depending on the destination and needs of the traveler. The document can then be saved by the traveler, shared with his/her organization, and printed as an accompaniment (in case an electronic copy is not accessible during travel).

= Action item

= Advisory / best practice

TRAVELER INFORMATION

Name:

Organization:

Position:

Nationality:

Passport information:

Country	Number	Date of Issuance	Date of Expiration
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Visa information:

Country	Number	Validity	Date of Entry	Date of Expiration
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Emergency contact information:

Name	Relationship	Phone (1)	Phone (2)	Email
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Table of Contents

- About this Form..... 2
- Traveler Information 2
- Before You Go..... 3
- What to Pack..... 4
- Health & Wellbeing 5
- Situational Awareness..... 6
- Transportation Security..... 7
- Hotels & Lodging..... 8
- Information Security 9
- If You Are a Victim..... 10
- If You Are Detained..... 10
- Notes 11



ABOUT OSAC

The Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) promotes security cooperation between American private sector interests worldwide and the U.S. Department of State. The private sector is defined broadly, to include businesses, NGOs, academic institutions, and faith-based organizations.



BEFORE YOU GO

Preparation for a safe and healthy trip abroad should begin long before you are taxiing on the runway. There are a number of free and publicly available resources that provide specific guidance on the places you plan to visit, including conditions that may affect your security. Additionally, it may benefit you to read up on the values and norms of your destination and learn a few words and phrases in the local language in advance of your trip.

RESEARCH YOUR DESTINATIONS

Visit and bookmark country-specific websites for information on your destination country. These include:

- [Bureau of Consular Affairs Country Information, Travel Warnings, and Travel Alerts](#)
- [OSAC Crime and Safety Reports and analysis](#)
- Travel briefings provided by your employer/institution
- Local and regional news and social media reporting

Country/Post	Resource	Website
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Consult travel.state.gov for information on visas and immigration; note: immigration policies may be subject to change and you should always confer with the embassy of your destination for the latest guidance.

MAKE THE APPROPRIATE NOTIFICATIONS

Register with the State Department's [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#).

Leave your travel itinerary and contact information with family or friends; do not otherwise disclose.

Consider a Privacy Act waiver. This provides written consent that a U.S. Consular Office can release pertinent information about you to designated individuals in the event of emergency. Also, make a copy of your will.

Understand the currency exchange rates in your destination country (e.g. XE.com, OANDA.com):

Destination	Currency (XXX)	USD to Foreign Currency	Foreign Currency to USD
		1 USD =	1 = USD
		1 USD =	1 = USD
		1 USD =	1 = USD

Notify your credit card company and bank of your intent to travel; confirm credit limit and availability.

Consider securing a new credit card with a low credit limit separate from existing credit cards; in the event of theft, this may ensure that your primary accounts are not compromised.

PREPARE CONTINGENCIES

Review your organization's communication policy and time line for checking in following a major security development. You may consider multiple forms of communication (SMS, social media, phone trees, etc.), in the event of outages.

Ensure that your phone has international coverage and know what roaming fees may apply; depending on the length of your stay and the availability of international coverage, you may consider buying a local SIM card.



WHAT TO PACK

Modern conveniences, like ATMs, GPS, and the Internet are invaluable resources in our everyday lives. Unfortunately, amenities such as these can be scarce or non-existent in a number of international contexts. Whether it is printing out contact lists, keeping a little cash on hand, or packing physical maps, you should consider contingency plans that are not entirely reliant on technology.

TAKE PHYSICAL COPIES OF IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Print copies of import documents and information and keep them on your person/carry-on. These include:

Passport & visas	Local contact details
Flight itinerary	U.S.-based employer/institution contact
Nearest embassy/consulate addresses	Destination address

Get a map and study it. Identify potential hazards and safe havens; learn several routes to places you will be staying, living, and/or visiting.

PACK LIGHT, BUT PREPARE FOR POSSIBLE CONTINGENCIES

Consider packing your own small travel medicine kit, which may include:

Anti-diarrheal medication	Gauze, bandages, and medical tape
Anti-malaria (if applicable)	Insect repellent (with DEET 35)
Antihistamine and decongestant	Mosquito net
Antacid and laxative	Razor/tweezers/manicure kit
Anti-bacterial hand wipes/sanitizer	Sunscreen and aloe
Anti-fungal/hydrocortisone cream	Thermometer

Take an extra pair of eye glasses; depending on the destination, contact lenses can be problematic.

Bring a backup charger for your electronic devices/mobile phones; note: some airlines and foreign customs authorities may not permit lithium ion batteries in carry-ons.

Depending on your destination, include a rubber door stop that can be wedged under your door to prevent entry. This may be particularly helpful in accommodations that lack physical locks.

Pack one day's worth of clothing in your carry-on, in case your checked baggage is delayed or lost.

Consider taking a modest amount of USD or local currency in various denominations. Although you do not want to make yourself a target by appearing wealthy, you should also avoid being entirely reliant on your debit or credit cards, as they may not be universally accepted. Also remember that in some countries, worn, torn, or otherwise defaced currency is not accepted, even if it would be back home; bring new(er) bills.

UNDERSTAND LOCAL LAWS AND CULTURAL NORMS

If you are taking prescription medications, carry your medications in their original labeled containers, and pack them in your carry-on baggage since checked baggage is occasionally lost or delayed.

Pack clothing that is consistent with, and respectful of, local dress. Some countries expect far more modest dress than the U.S.; some monuments and places of worship may require certain parts of the body to be covered.

Avoid items that signal your nationality or political views.



HEALTH & WELLBEING

Before you travel overseas, understand the potential health and safety risks you could encounter. Recognize that expectations of medical facilities and level of care may differ drastically from our own and prepare contingencies should you become seriously ill or injured.

PRE-TRAVEL CHECKUP AND VACCINATIONS

- Consider a physical health exam and dental checkup if you have not had one recently.
- Confirm that your health insurance covers foreign medical providers and medical evacuations.
- Consult the [CDC](#) to determine what vaccinations are suggested for your destination.
- Visit a travel clinic, inform them of your destination(s), and get any needed inoculations or medicines.

Vaccinations				
Vaccine	Required	Suggested	Received	

Identify any concerns about the air quality of your destination, particularly if you have pre-existing health conditions; note: while N95s and other filtering face-piece respirators, provide additional protection, paper or “surgical” masks do not actually strengthen defenses.

Recognize that water is not potable in every country; this includes ice and water for brushing teeth and showering. Find out whether or not you should be drinking bottled water in your destination.

SEEKING MEDICAL ATTENTION ABROAD

Identify what medical providers exist and determine the level of care or services they may be able to offer. This information is often listed on U.S. embassy and consulate websites and OSAC Crime and Safety Reports under the heading “Medical Emergencies.”

Destination #1		Destination #2		Destination #3	
Hospital/clinic #1		Hospital/clinic #1		Hospital/clinic #1	
Address		Address		Address	
Tel		Tel		Tel	
Hospital/clinic #2		Hospital/clinic #2		Hospital/clinic #2	
Address		Address		Address	
Tel		Tel		Tel	

TRAVELING WITH PRESCRIPTIONS

Research your destination to ensure that the prescription medicines you are taking are legal. If so, bring a letter from your physician in case you are questioned about your carry-on medication; some countries have strict restrictions about bringing prescription into the country without proper documentation.

Pack enough medicine to last your entire trip, including some extra in case you are unexpectedly delayed.

Ask your pharmacist or physician for the generic equivalent name of your prescriptions in case you need to purchase additional medications abroad.



SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

While abroad, focus on seeing and remembering everything around you and constantly be on the lookout for situations that are unusual or uncomfortable. This may seem challenging at first, but heightening your awareness will get easier as with time, eventually becoming second nature. *However*, avoid becoming too comfortable or complacent – even the most veteran travelers can be victims when they let their guards down.

LEARN ABOUT WHERE YOU ARE HEADED AND WHAT IS ON THE HORIZON

Consult OSAC Crime and Safety Reports and note the Crime, Terrorism, and Political Violence ratings, where available; note that these ratings can change and that even safe destinations may experience incidents.

Country/Post	Crime	Terrorism	Political Violence
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Create bookmarks for local media websites and social media tags for pending events like elections, demonstrations, and anniversaries that could cause civil disturbances. Monitor these regularly.

Have your organization reach out to OSAC if you have questions or concerns.

KEEP YOUR HEAD UP, EYES AND EARS OPEN, AND FOLLOW YOUR INTUITION

Trust your instinct; if a place does not feel right, move to an alternative location as quickly and safely as possible. If that is not an option, find a secure area and shelter in place.

Behave in an unprovocative manner that discourages unwanted attention and be attentive to how others perceive you; this includes minimizing displays of wealth (e.g. jewelry).

If you see a protest forming, leave the scene. Even demonstrations meant to be peaceful can turn violent with little or no warning. If you are curious (and you should be) read about it online from a safe location.

If you carry a bag or purse, hold it close to your body and away from the street. Individuals have been severely injured when thieves on motorcycles have dragged them by their bag or purse strap.

Carry appropriate identification with you at all times; in most countries, it is recommended that you carry a copy of your passport/visa rather than the original.

Consider removing name tags, insignia, or apparel that would identify your affiliation.

Vary your patterns and routines. Do not become predictable. Similarly, watch for surveillance; if you see same person paying attention to you twice, it may not be a coincidence.

STRIKE A HEALTHY BALANCE BETWEEN *COURTEOUS* AND *CAUTIOUS*

Behave maturely and in a way that is respectful of local cultural norms.

Politely decline offers of food or drink from strangers. If you do accept beverages, ensure that they are in sealed containers and that there is no evidence of tampering.

If you are invited to bars, restaurants, cafés, or tea shops, ask to see the price list before you partake. It may be much more difficult to dispute prices after goods or services have already been rendered.

Be wary of strangers who have an unusual interest in spending time with you or learning more about you. Foreign nationals may naturally be curious, but be wary of undue attention or affection.

Remain calm in the event of confrontation; focus on de-escalation and escape.

Avoid public expressions about local politics, religion, and other sensitive topics.





TRANSPORTATION SECURITY

Travel may pose a number of challenges to travelers. Depending on the destination, you may have to contend with dangerous road conditions; untrained or unlicensed drivers; drivers operating under the influence of alcohol and narcotics; vehicles that are poorly maintained and therefore hazardous; police checkpoints; and criminal roadblocks. Additionally, many places may have different traffic laws, enforcement, infrastructure, and emergency assistance than you are accustomed to. Most [OSAC Crime and Safety Reports](#) provide specific information on transportation safety, but included below are a few best practices.

AIR TRAVEL

Stay with your bags at all times and politely refuse to watch or handle the bags of others, however temporary.

Be mindful of how much personal or business information you share with fellow passengers or taxi drivers.

Limit alcohol intake in flight and drink plenty of water; this may help counteract jet lag.

Consider pre-arranging transport from the airport to your hotel/accommodations. In certain environments, it is advised not to exit the airport until you have arranged secure transportation, as areas around airports may experience a higher volume of crime.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Understand the indicators for official, licensed taxis for your destination.

Prior to entering a taxi, note the license plate number and driver; consider sending it to a friend or colleague.

Avoid getting into a taxi already occupied by others. If necessary, pay extra for a single fare.

Negotiate a price before getting into a taxi. Have money ready to pay in appropriate denominations; not all taxis accept credit cards and some drivers may not be able to make change for large bills. Additionally, some taxi drivers operate a scam in which large denominations are fraudulently exchanged.

Take a seat on a bus or train that allows you to observe fellow passengers but does not prevent you from changing seats if necessary.

AS A DRIVER ABROAD

Check with the embassy of the country where you plan to travel to find out more about driver's license and car insurance requirements. Many countries accept a U.S. driver's license for a short-term visit; however, they may require an accompanying International Driving Permit (IDP) and proof of insurance.

Use a common, indiscreet vehicle model. If you rent, remove as many markings that identify vehicle as a rental as possible. Never leave anything exposed inside the vehicle, regardless of the value you assign to it.

Be alert to scam artists and carjackers, and always leave a path for escape at intersections and crosswalks.

Park in a well-lighted area and in a manner that expedites your departure.

Carry a working cell phone, first aid kit, maps, flashlight, and official documents in your vehicle; note, however, that using a cell phone while operating a vehicle is generally illegal.

Keep the vehicle windows rolled up and the doors locked; keep seat belts fastened.

Consult OSAC Crime and Safety Reports for the proper local procedures should you be involved in or witness a traffic accident. In some locations, stopping for an accident can put your life at risk.

For more information, see the OSAC Report [Driving Overseas: Best Practices](#)



HOTELS & LODGING

Selecting the right hotel is critical, but no temporary accommodation should be viewed as a complete safe haven. Hotels and guesthouses have historically been targeted by extremists; criminals may have the perception that travelers staying at hotels are wealthy and view them as prime targets. In some contexts, hotels rooms may be under constant surveillance by foreign intelligence agencies and you should have limited expectations of privacy.

DETERMINING WHERE TO STAY

Use reputable hotels, hostels, or guesthouses; your safety is worth any added cost. OSAC may be able to direct you to accommodations used by other members of the private sector.

Identify what security protocols (e.g. guards, bollards, metal detectors) are in place.

Note if there is an attached venue (e.g. restaurant) accessible to non-hotel patrons. See what safeguards separate that venue from where you are staying.

Consider choosing a room on the third to fifth floors. These rooms may be more difficult to break into than those on the ground level, but still able to be accessed by fire/emergency response equipment.

Keep your room number to yourself. If your room key or key sleeve is numbered, keep it out of sight. If a hotel clerk announces your room number loud enough for others to hear, ask for a new room.

INSPECTING YOUR ROOM

Take a walk around the hotel facilities to familiarize yourself with your environment.

- Are hotel personnel located on each floor?
- Do they display any identification?
- Are they in uniform?
- Who else has access to your floor?

Ensure that the room phone works and that you know how to dial out, both locally and internationally. Check all locks, including deadbolt, chain lock, window locks, and sliding doors.

Inspect the room carefully; look under the bed, in the showers, and in the closets.

Familiarize yourself with hotel emergency exits and fire extinguishers; count the doors between your room and nearest emergency exit (in case of fire or blackout). Rehearse your escape plan.

MEETING GUESTS AND ACQUAINTANCES

Do not bring strangers back to your room; there have been numerous reports of individuals waking up to find precious valuables missing. Consider meeting in a neutral space like the lobby.

If you are not expecting guests or room delivery, check with the front desk before opening the door.

Remind hotel staff to not give out your room number.

PRACTICING SECURITY WHILE YOU ARE OUT

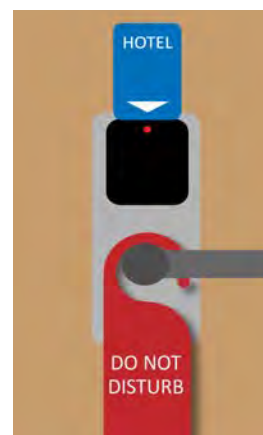
If you leave the hotel, carry the hotel business card with you; it may come in handy with a taxi driver who does not speak your language.

Keep your laptop out of sight, in a safe, or in a locked suitcase. You may wish to use a laptop cable lock to secure your laptop to a window frame or bathroom plumbing.

Consider leaving a "do not disturb" sign outside your door and keeping the TV/radio on.

Do not leave sensitive documents or valuables visible and unattended in the room.

For more guidance on indicators of safe accommodations, see the OSAC Report: Hotel Security Working Group's [Hotel Security and Safety Assessment Form](#)



TRAVELING WITH MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

The principal rule with of mobile technology should be: **when in doubt, leave it out.** Even the information you may consider routine or mundane (like contacts, schedules, and correspondence) may prove invaluable to threat actors interested in you or your organization. If you must take mobile technology, maintain physical control at all times. Despite your best efforts, recognize that devices taken overseas may be compromised and take the proper steps to sanitize them prior to reconnecting to your personal or professional networks.

BEFORE YOU GO

Find out if your organization has loaner devices for temporary travel; this will reduce the likelihood of your personal technology and sensitive information being compromised.

Back up all important data on your device.

Wipe or sanitize your device and restore factory settings; note: if you use a previous backup to restore the settings on your devices, you may end up reloading the proprietary information you just deleted.

Update software, anti-virus, and applications; this will help patch any bugs or vulnerabilities.

Enable screen lock/timeout; unlocked or unattended devices can be compromised in a matter of minutes.

Consider opening a new email account for use during your trip. This may not only limit the compromise of existing accounts, but may be useful in locations where certain webmail services (e.g. Gmail) are blocked.

Strengthen online passwords; you may also consider diversifying your passwords so that if one account is compromised, the breach will not extend to your other accounts.

Disable Bluetooth and GPS.

If you must take sensitive information, make sure you encrypt it.

Check your social media posts and delete any information about your itinerary and the details of your upcoming trip; your friends might like them, but opportunistic criminals may appreciate them even more.

Leave non-essential devices at home.

WHILE ABROAD

Carry your device in a secure but inconspicuous sleeve or case.

Clear your temporary files, including your browser history, caches, and cookies after each use.

Do not leave your electronic devices unattended.

Do not use local computers to connect to your organization's secure network.

Avoid public Wi-Fi networks. If you must use Wi-Fi, terminate connections immediately after use.

Disable file sharing and do not connect to unknown devices.

Do not download apps unless absolutely necessary; executable files can lead to the installation of malware.

Never use "remember me" for passwords.

- Do not click links in text or email messages. Most web browsers will allow you to roll over hyperlinked text to see the actual destination of the URL.

UPON RETURN

Avoid immediately connecting device to personal or business networks.

Scan devices for malware independently or with the help of your IT department.

Change all passwords.

For more, see the OSAC Report, [Traveling with Mobile Security Devices: Trends & Best Practices](#)





IF YOU BECOME A VICTIM

Despite your best efforts to reduce exposure to risks and avoid threats, you may still become the victim of a crime or critical event. The police/emergency response may vary drastically depending on your destination so be resourceful and consider multiple options for recourse.

Remember the local emergency number (your destination’s 911 equivalent) before events occur. Also note the number for non-emergency police number/tourism police; emergency switchboards may be overtaxed and alternative numbers could prove helpful for reporting crimes and requesting support in non-life threatening situations.

Location	911 equivalent	Other (Police/Fire/Ambulance)	Non-emergency
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Contact the local police to report the incident and get immediate help. Request a copy of the police report.

Review [OSAC Crime and Safety Reports](#) for your destination. More information can be found under the headings “Police Response,” “If You Become a Victim,” and “Medical Emergencies.”

Consult Consular Affairs Country Specific Information for the country you are in. More information can be found under the “Victims of Crime” heading in the “Safety & Security” section.

If you are a U.S. citizen, consult the website for the [nearest embassy or consulate](#) and visit the American Citizens Services section. Consular officers are available for emergency assistance 24 hours/day, 7 days/week. If you are not a U.S. citizen, contact your respective embassy or consulate.

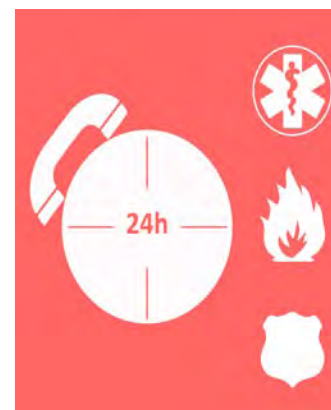
In the event of a situation that requires urgent attention, the OSAC Duty Officer can also be reached 24 hours/day, 7 days/week at 202-309-5056.

IF YOU ARE DETAINED

Remember that while traveling, you are subject to the local laws even if you are a U.S. citizen. Foreign laws and legal system can be vastly different from our own and it is very important that you know what is legal and what is not. If you break local laws while abroad, a U.S. passport will not help you avoid arrest or prosecution, and the U.S. Embassy cannot get you out of jail. Embassies and consulates may, however, be able to:

- Replace a stolen passport
- Contact family, friends, or employers
- Obtain appropriate medical care
- Address emergency needs that arise as a result of the crime
- Explain the local criminal justice process
- Obtain information about your case
- Connect you to local and U.S.-based resources to assist victims of crime
- Obtain information about any local and U.S. victim compensation programs available
- Provide a list of local lawyers who speak English

For more information, consult the website for the [nearest embassy or consulate](#) and visit the American Citizens Services section.





NOTES