

Personal Safety

introduction

Your stay abroad should be an enjoyable and worthwhile experience. You will however, at least initially, be living and working in an unfamiliar environment and you may find yourself having to deal with certain situations on your own for the first time. This leaflet is intended to offer general practical advice which you can relate to your own situation to minimise risks to your personal safety. While much of the advice will be applicable mainly to female students, men should also find relevant information. Do remember that the vast majority of young people who work overseas enjoy a positive and rewarding experience; the suggestions which follow are intended to advise, not to alarm.

arrival

- Be aware that you may well look and behave like a stranger and could therefore appear vulnerable.
- Keep an eye on your luggage while travelling and try not to take more than you can comfortably carry.
- Keep your money, passport and other valuable papers in a safe place, e.g. in a hidden money belt or a secure bag worn across your body, not over your shoulder.
- Try not to advertise the fact that you are unfamiliar with the area you are in, e.g. use maps as discreetly as possible.
- Have easy access to items you will need while travelling, e.g. passport, loose change, street map.
- Try to arrange travel so that you do not arrive at your destination late at night, especially if you do not have pre-arranged accommodation.
- Be sensitive to any ways in which your clothes and behaviour may be uncharacteristic of the local population; style of dress or behaviour which is perfectly acceptable at home may give out different signals overseas.

accommodation

Check whether the accommodation you are going to see is in a safe area before you go.

- If possible, take someone with you when viewing accommodation. If viewing alone, leave the address you are visiting and your expected time of return with a friend or colleague.
- Find out exactly who might have access to the accommodation apart from yourself.
- Be business-like in your dealings with prospective landlords.
- If you feel uncomfortable with anyone who is showing you accommodation, mention that friends know where you are and are expecting to meet you at a certain time.

additional work

If you seek additional work, such as giving private language classes, try to obtain this through known contacts. However, if you do decide to advertise, have a native speaker advise you on appropriate wording and never give your address in the advertisement.

- When meeting a potential client, take someone with you or arrange to meet in a public place.
- Dress in a business-like fashion and keep discussion to professional matters; don't carry on the meeting into a social occasion, e.g. by going for a drink or a meal afterwards.



- Use the same care in judging people as you would at home.
- Be careful about whom you invite home; be aware that in some countries offering hospitality shortly after meeting someone may imply more than ordinary friendliness.
- When arranging to meet people, suggest cafés/bars/ public places initially.
- If unsure about someone's motives in inviting you to their home, ask if you can take a friend with you.
- Always know how you will get home, i.e. the last trains/ buses or the telephone number of a reputable taxi firm; a promised lift home may not actually materialise.
- Never take shortcuts through waste ground, dark alleys or dimly lit areas. Keep to well lit main roads even if this means a longer walk.
- Walk facing the traffic so that a car cannot pull up behind you without your being aware of it.
- Walk briskly and with confidence; be aware of what's going on around you and where other people are in relation to you.
- Don't react to verbal abuse/invitations, and avoid eye contact with strangers.
- Avoid isolated bus/tram stops. Move if necessary, and sit near the driver. Avoid empty carriages or small enclosed compartments on trains. Sit near the emergency alarm.
- Don't hitch or accept lifts from people you don't know.
- If you are followed getting off a bus or train, go straight to a source of help, e.g. transport office, police station, café/bar. Don't go home as this will indicate to the person following you where you can be found.
- Be aware that you don't know the safe/unsafe areas in an unfamiliar location and that the nature of an area can change dramatically over a short distance.
- If you are at all uncertain about a potential colleague's motives, end the meeting politely and leave.
- Make sure you're not followed home and do not accept a lift home after a first meeting.
- Never arrange a first meeting at a client's home or hotel room

making friends

travel

- Should a sexual attack take place get help as soon as possible and go somewhere safe.
- Write down any important details you can remember.
- It is your decision whether or not to report the attack to the police but if you decide to report it, do so as soon as possible. Clothes worn during the attack may be kept by the police as evidence and a medical examination may be required.
- If you decide not to report the incident to the police, do seek confidential counselling or speak to someone you can trust about what has happened.

NUMBERS TO RING FOR EMERGENCIES AND ADVICE/ COUNSELLING ON SEXUAL ATTACKS

eu countries: official emergency number across the eu, t:112

Rape Crisis Network Europe T: 00 353 91 563 676,
www.rcne.com rcni@eircom.net
Rape Crisis England and Wales,
www.rapecrisis.org.uk info@rapecrisis.org.uk
T: +44 (0)808 802 9999 (12–2.30pm; 7–
9.30pm)

Rape Crisis Scotland T: +44 (0)8088 010 302,
www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk

Rape Crisis Network Ireland, **www.rcni.ie**

Samaritans T: +44 (0)8457 90 90 90,
www.samaritans.org
jo@samaritans.org

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust, National Centre for
Personal Safety, 218 Strand, London WC2R 1AT
www.suzylamplugh.org/worldwise
T: +44 (0)20 7091 0014, info@suzylamplugh.org
Advice from the leading authority on personal safety,
including a section on world travel. The Trust
publishes the booklet, *Travelling Safely in the UK
and Abroad*, £1.90

British Foreign & Commonwealth Office Travel Advice Unit
www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad
T: +44 (0)845 850 2829, Twitter: @fcotravel,
www.facebook.com/fcotravel
Individual country advice, constantly updated.
Subscribe to [FCO email alerts](#) to stay up to date
with the latest information

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime

Website offering information about preventing and
reporting crime along with support for victims.

Students should also check whether their university/
college provides information on personal safety and
advice on working and living overseas.

argentina: Police T: 911 or 101 (helpline in English in city of
Buenos Aires only), Tourist Police T: 0800 999 5000 (freephone in
city of Buenos Aires only)

austria: Police T: 133, Weisser Ring (victim support)
T: 0810 955 065 (local call), **www.weisser-ring.at**

Belgium: Police T: 101, Télé-Accueil counselling service
T: 107 (24 hrs), **www.tele-accueil.be**

canada: Emergency Services T: 911,
**www.reisa.ca/en/partners-ressources/violence-and-
sexual-assault**

chile : Police T : 133

china : Police T : 110, Emergency Medical Services T : 120

colombia : Police T : 112, Emergency Services T :
123, Sexual Abuse Helpline T : 106 or 125

ecuador : Police T : 101, Emergency Medical Services T :
911, Red Cross T : 131

France : Police T : 17, 08 Victimes T : 08 842 846 37,
www.inavem.org

germany: Police T: 110, Weisser Ring (victim support)
T: 116 006, **www.weisser-ring.de**

italy: Police T: 113, Carabinieri T: 112, Azzurro Rosa
(support for abused women and children) T: 800 001 122
(urgent cases) or 030 353 0301, **www.azzurrorosa.it**

mexico: Emergency numbers vary between states; National
number for Emergency Services T: 066, Red Cross T: 065

spain: National Police T: 091, Municipal Police T: 092,
Centro de asistencia a víctimas de agresiones sexuales
T: 91 574 0110 / 3264, **www.violacion.org**

switzerland: Police T: 117, Emergency Medical Services T: 144
Weisser Ring (victim support)
T: 044 422 6562, **www.weisser-ring.ch**

uk: Emergency services T: 999