

Avoiding Petty Crimes and Theft Abroad

Pickpocketing and other petty crimes are the most pervasive crimes committed against international travelers. Before you travel, do your research, and learn how you can protect yourself. Speak to a trusted host or individual with experience at your destination and do your own internet research on the location's common crimes and crime rates. You can also visit the Country Information Page of your destination's [U.S. Department of State travel advisory](#) for more information.

When traveling, use these guidelines to avoid pickpocketing and theft!

- Remain aware of your surroundings, especially in crowded or unfamiliar places such as public transportation, airports, large town squares, tourist sites, etc.
- Avoid the vicinity of protests, demonstrations, and other large, crowded events.
- Travel in groups and stick to well-lit, well-traveled, and populated areas and streets, especially at night.
- Educate yourself on local laws and cultural norms so you can blend in more seamlessly.
- Stay updated with local news, political issues, and economic concerns as these may affect petty crime and theft rates.
- Avoid clothing or accessories that make you stand out in a crowd; this includes but is not limited to American sports gear, English-language slogans, jewelry, and expensive watches.
- Don't let yourself become distracted! Avoid large groups, street sellers, performers, people offering unsolicited assistance, or attempting to gain your attention in public spaces. Distractions are often used by pickpockets or other petty criminals to target to facilitate crimes.
- Always keep your luggage, bags, and devices within hand reach and avoid placing items in the open where they can be taken.
- Use cable luggage locks and other anti-theft devices.
- Carry only what you need for the day and leave other valuables secured at your lodging. Carry copies of identification and, if possible leave originals locked away.
- Keep important possessions close to your body in a secure place such as a closeable interior pocket or a concealed cross-body bag. If possible, avoid keeping all your important items in one place on your body.
- Choose lodging with brightly lit entries, secure locking access, and 24/7 staffing. Always lock the doors to your lodging as soon as you enter or exit. Use the room's secured safe or another locking compartment to store important items.
- Never resist criminals. Petty crime can quickly escalate into violence. Memorize or write down the number for local law enforcement and other important contacts and report crimes to local authorities, your hosts, and UW-Madison contacts. *Reporting incidents can help protect others!*

