

Vacation Safety

Vacations should be the time that families enjoy one another, get out and experience new things, leave their troubles behind, and make wonderful memories together. Unfortunately, vacations can often be filled with stress and worry, especially when families fall victim to criminals who like to prey on the unsuspecting vacationer. But do not despair; there are things that you can do to lessen your chance of becoming a victim and keeping your vacation memories good ones.

To have a safe and fun vacation whether at home or on the road, consider the following tips:

Before Leaving

- Inform your neighbors how long you expect to be away. Inform them if you will have a housesitter.
- Have a friend or neighbor pick up mail and/or deliveries. Make arrangements to have the lawn mowed and leaves picked up.
- Simulate a “lived-in” appearance by using timers to run lights and a radio on and off during expected hours.

On the Road

- Never carry large amounts of cash; use traveler’s checks. If you must carry a large sum of money, do not display it openly.
- Keep a record of your traveler’s check numbers and your credit card numbers in a safe place.
- Have the telephone numbers to call in case your checks or credit cards are lost or stolen.
- Take only credit cards that you actually plan to use. Make a photocopy of all your cards before you leave home so you have a record of the card numbers.
- Be aware of your surroundings and never advertise your plans to strangers. This includes travel routes and the amount of cash you are carrying.

Car Rental and Security

- When renting a car, pick one whose operations you are familiar with. If not, take time to see where the lights, brakes, turn signals, windshield wipers, and spare tire are and how they work.
- Don’t rent a car at night. Stay in the hotel and rent it in the morning.
- Always lock your car when entering or leaving it.
- Park in well-lighted, busy areas and check the vehicle’s interior and surrounding area before entering.
- Always lock valuables out of sight. Always carry wallets, checkbooks, and purses with you.
- Do not advertise that you are a tourist. Place maps and travel brochures in the glove compartment.
- If you do become lost, drive to a public place to check the map. Don’t stop along a street or the highway.

Sightseeing

- Remember the name and address of the hotel/motel where you are staying. Take a business card or a book of matches with the name of the hotel/motel.
- Ask for directions at a hotel/motel to get to those attractions you want to visit.
- Ask if there are any areas of town to avoid.
- Select your guides carefully.
- Stick to well-lighted main streets and public areas.
- Only carry with you the cash you will need, and only in small denominations.

Hotel and Motel Security

- Determine the most direct route to and from your room, to the fire escapes, elevators, and nearest phone.
- When occupying or leaving your room, use all auxiliary locking devices on doors and windows.
- Identify anyone requesting entry to your room. Open the door only if you are certain that the person has a legitimate reason to enter your room. If in doubt, call the hotel/motel office.
- Unpack and place belongings in the closet and dresser. Arrange your things so you'll know if anything is missing.
- When you leave your room, close up your suitcase.
- Suitcases should always be locked so they cannot be used to carry your property out of your room.
- Never leave money, checks, credit cards or car keys in the room. Take them with you.
- Place extra cash, expensive jewelry or other valuables (furs, gems, gold, or silver) in the hotel/motel safe.
- Report any lost or stolen items to the hotel/motel management and to the police.
- Report to the management any suspicious movements in the corridors or rooms.

On the Town

- Never display large amounts of cash when making purchases. It is better to use traveler's checks or credit cards.
- Men should carry wallets in an inside coat or trouser pocket.
- A woman should hold her purse close to her side when walking. Be sure the purse is closed tightly and that the opening is facing the body.
- Don't stop to give money to panhandlers.
- Be aware of your surroundings and those around you. If you feel threatened or uncomfortable, seek help.

Traveling safely with your family also means sticking together and keeping an eye on your children at all times. Make sure they know where you're staying (name and address), and teach them what to do if they get lost or separated. You might want to agree on a meeting place, just in case. And by all means, make sure your kids know not to accept rides or favors from strangers.

Make your family vacation a memorable one for all the right reasons!