

AUGUST IS TRAVEL SAFETY AWARENESS MONTH

Whether it's a weekend away or the vacation of a lifetime, a little time away from home can be full of fun and adventure. For some families and business travelers, however, the prospect of traveling in the wake of 9/11 might seem a little frightening. The good news is that with a little extra planning and attention to detail, vacations and business trips can still be safe, enjoyable and productive.

As always in these times, it makes sense to be alert and observant. We should always be aware of our surroundings and report any suspicious activities to the authorities. In selecting routes and destinations, we should avoid locations where there is active hostility. And it is always wise to be knowledgeable about our destination, to have planned our trip carefully, and to be courteous guests when we travel.

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW TO PLAN A SAFE TRIP

- Start early. Allow enough planning time to research your destination and to find the best routes.
- Take advantage of resources like the Automobile Club, visitors' bureaus, and websites to plan your trip and make reservations.
- Learn what conditions are like in the place you plan to go. If you're leaving the country, check the US State Department for travel advisories.
- Get appropriate inoculations or certificates of inoculation that you might need.
- Make sure your identification, passports, driver's license, emergency contact lists and insurance are all up to date.
- Have enough cash and credit for your planned trip and to handle any emergencies that might arise during your travel.

TO PACK FOR A SAFE TRIP

- Strictly obey rules on what you can and can't carry on an airplane. (For details, see the Transportation Security Administration web site, www.tsa.gov)
- Never carry weapons, explosives, flammable items or disabling chemicals
- Sharp objects, tools and some sporting goods may be carried in checked baggage, but not in carry-on bags
- Do not leave unprocessed film in checked bags
- Don't lock your luggage. Instead, carry a few plastic cable ties to secure zippers. If Federal Security Screeners need to open and search your bag, they will leave a note inside the bag and use a cable tie to close the zipper again.
- Put personal belongings in clear plastic bags so that screeners can see them without handling them.
- Pack footwear on top of other items in your suitcase.
- Don't pack food and drink items in checked baggage.
- Place your name, home address, itinerary, and destination inside each bag.
- Bring only as much luggage as airline rules permit.
- If you are carrying gifts, wait to wrap them until you arrive at your destination.

TO PROTECT YOUR HOME IN YOUR ABSENCE

- Arrange to stop your mail, newspapers, and other routine deliveries.
- Have a neighbor keep plants watered, pick up packages, and check the house from time-to-time.
- Leave copies of your itinerary, passport data page and visas with a trusted friend, so you can be contacted in case of an emergency.

TO TRAVEL SAFELY BY CAR

- Before you go, safety-check your vehicle's hoses, belts, radiator, coolant, oil, battery, tires and spare, filters, windshield wipers, lights, and turn signals.
- Always wear your seatbelt, and ensure that children under 12 years of age are in the back seats and in appropriate seats and restraints.
- Keep maps and papers ready and within arm's reach.
- Select your radio station before you start the engine, so that you won't be distracted later.
- Follow local laws governing the use of cell phones while driving.
- Never leave children or pets in a closed car.
- Don't bring agricultural products across state lines, and never carry fruits and vegetables out of a quarantined area.
- If you plan to travel into Mexico, make sure you have car insurance that will protect you in case of an accident. Bring all documentation; your driver's license, passport, and proof of ownership of your car.
- If you plan to go beyond the free trade zone near the border, you need a temporary importation permit for your car.

CHECK THESE WEBSITES

www.tsa.gov (Transportation Security Administration)

www.cdc.gov/travel (Centers for Disease Control, travel alerts)

www.aaa-calif.com/travel/tips (Automobile Club of Southern California, travel tips)

www.dhs.gov (Department of Homeland Security)