



# TRAVEL SMART, TRAVEL SAFE

Helpful Tips for Gary Berglund's Trip to China and Tibet

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## Travel Smart, Travel Safe

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WorldStrides and your school want you to have a safe and rewarding journey overseas. Travel Smart, Travel Safe is designed to share some tips based on our experience sending more than 100,000 students to international destinations in 100+ countries.

More than 90% of student safety crises overseas occur after hours or during free time. Yet this document cannot anticipate every scenario you might encounter during your trip.

Be prudent, make good choices, and know that your actions represent your country and your institution. Be a good ambassador for both.



## Overview

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- Personal Safety
- Hotel Safety
- Health Safety
- Passport Safety
- Computer Safety
- Safety information for your destination



## Personal Safety, page 1 of 3

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- Most incidents can be avoided by using good sense and staying out of dangerous situations
- Be aware of your surroundings and suspicious activities, especially when using public transportation (in countries where public transportation is OK)
- Use taxis from hotels or designated taxi stands
- If locals try to start an argument with the group about politics, race, religion, always disengage and walk away
- Stick to highly populated tourist areas; avoid neighborhoods that are off the beaten path



## Personal Safety, page 2 of 3

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- The most common crime in most destinations is petty theft, either pickpocketing or theft of unattended bags.
- When travelling by bus for airport or coach transfer, watch your luggage until it is loaded underneath the bus, whenever practical.
- Carry limited cash with you at any given time. Stay alert at ATMs.
- Be cautious about texting or surfing using your smartphone while in public, especially on subways or while walking. Not only does this reduce your situational awareness, but it makes you a target for phone “snatch-and-run” thefts.
- Leave valuable jewelry at home
- Keep a wide berth away from public protests and rallies, even if they seem calm
- Calm protests can turn angry or violent with little warning
- Even if you are an observer, if you are near a protest police may consider you part of the protest



## Personal Safety, page 3 of 3

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- If approached/threatened and told to hand over your valuables, do not resist. Everything can be replaced – except for you.
- The U.S. State Department Foreign Service Institute advises resisting only when a perpetrator threatens to take *you*.
- If you are a victim of crime, please alert your trip leader and guide; they will alert WorldStrides.
- Note that mace/pepper spray, even small amounts for personal protection, are illegal in many countries.
- In most cases, a report will need to be filed with police or tourist police.



## Hotel Safety

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- Upon checking in, immediately review evacuation procedures that normally will be posted in your room; if not posted please ask hotel staff and be sure to know where the emergency exit is in case of fire.
- When out of your room for the day, do not leave cash, passports, computers, or valuables in plain sight. If the hotel has an in-room safe, you may choose to keep valuables inside. Make sure your safe is bolted down before using it. Thieves have been known to walk off with unsecured safes and their contents.
- If your hotel room has both a deadbolt and a latch, use both when you are sleeping.



## Health Safety, page 1 of 3

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- Always bring prescription medications in their original pharmacy containers, and generally bring them in your carry-on luggage
- Wash hands frequently with soap and use hand sanitizer; this is the top precaution against becoming ill overseas
- Avoid touching your face to reduce the chance of illness
- In some countries, it is not safe to drink tap water, rinse toothbrushes with tap water, or use ice made from tap water. Please refer to the “Staying Healthy and Safe” section for your country on the CDC’s Travelers’ Health website at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list/>
- Ask your local guide for guidance, and be conservative when in doubt
- Only eat meats and eggs that have been fully cooked
- In developing countries, avoid live bird/animal markets





## Health Safety, page 2 of 3

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- Insect-borne illnesses are increasing in number and geography, even in urban areas. Outbreaks of Dengue, Zika, Chikungunya, and West Nile call for individual travelers to take precautions against mosquito bites.
- WorldStrides encourages all travelers to bring and use insect repellent. Our risk partners at iJet recommend products with at least 35% DEET. The percentage of DEET does not indicate effectiveness, just the frequency of reapplication. 15% DEET should be reapplied every 1-2 hours. 25% DEET every 2-4 hours. 35% DEET every 4-6 hours.
- If using sunscreen, apply it first, then apply insect repellent.
- Consider treating clothes and hats with permethrin spray prior to travel to further deter insects. Permethrin can remain effective through 10-12 washings.
- In areas with insect threats, we recommend wearing lightweight long pants, long sleeve shirts, and socks – ideally with pant legs tucked in.

## Health Safety, page 3 of 3

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- Take care to avoid swimming in stagnant freshwater rivers, lakes and ponds which can contain parasites that can lead to serious waterborne diseases.
- Before departure, check the Travelers' Health section of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for updated recommendations for your destination. Also consult with your physician or travel medicine clinic for additional recommendations.
- Because immunization guidelines can change rapidly, WorldStrides will not make specific recommendations for your travel destination.



## Passport Safety

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- Unless advised otherwise by your local guide, we recommend you carry a color copy of your passport's photo/information page and (if required) visa for the country you are in.
- WorldStrides encourages that original passports be left behind in your room or room safe.
- The odds of losing a passport or having it stolen while carrying it are greater than the odds of being asked to show it by local authorities.
- You may need to bring your passport for some visits. Your guide will inform you about this in advance.
- Always do a passport check on the bus after hotel checkout to make sure no one left theirs behind.
- Consider writing your e-mail address on the information page in case passport is lost.
- International students: Don't forget or lose your I-20 forms if you travel on an F-1 visa. Your I-20 forms are required for re-entry into the U.S.
- International students who are U.S. Permanent Residents: Don't forget or lose your Green Card.



## Computer Safety

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- Fully back up your laptop/tablet/devices before you leave for your trip
- Also save documents you might need during the trip onto a USB/thumb drive; keep this drive separate from your device
- Never pack your laptop/tablet/phone in your checked luggage. Always take these in your carry-on luggage.
- Be cautious about accessing secure websites (e.g., your bank account or credit card statements) from unsecured internet connections

## China Safety, page 1 of 2

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- International SOS Traveler Risk Rating for China – Low, for areas that university groups visit. (On par with countries in Western Europe).
- English is limited throughout China. Take a card from the hotel showing the name and address of the hotel in Chinese. This is important to show taxi drivers where to take you.
- Be especially aware of unofficial taxis. A common scam is to lure travelers into a vehicle, take them to an unfamiliar place and then demand a large amount of cash to return them to their hotel. Do not use taxi apps, as these are sometimes linked to unlicensed taxis.
- Various media reports indicate that spas at a number of Chinese hotels, including some major chains, may be fronts for prostitution rings. Most hotel spas are legitimate.
- Air pollution continues to be an issue in many Eastern cities, especially Beijing during fall/winter months. Travelers with respiratory issues, including asthma, should consult with their doctors prior to travel and should consider wearing a mask.



## China Safety, page 2 of 2

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- Do not have an expectation of privacy in China. Internet and phone traffic may be monitored. Hotel rooms and computers can be searched without permission & without your knowledge. Many business travelers bring “clean” laptops to China, or offload sensitive documents before travel.
- Be aware of limits on free speech, internet access, and social media
- In August 2014, the Chinese government issued a new polio entry requirement. Upon arrival, nationals from the following countries must provide an official Polio vaccine certificate issued within the last 12 months: Afghanistan, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, and Syria. All travelers from these countries who don't have a certificate will be given polio vaccine at the port of entry.
- Reminder that if you lose your passport in China, not only do you need to get a replacement passport, but you also need to get a replacement Chinese visa before you can leave.

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