



[Home](#) > Personal safety guide 5: travel in safety

Policy

Personal safety guide 5: travel in safety

Corporate health and safety procedure

Contents

1. [Driving for work](#)
2. [Driving on motorways](#)
3. [Parking](#)
4. [Using public transport](#)
5. [Taxis and private hire vehicles](#)
6. [Staying in hotels](#)
7. [Working in other countries](#)

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1. Driving for work

Driving today is a hazardous business and whilst we all tend to feel safe in our mobile personal space bubbles, you should consider yourself a target in a vehicle, think about the risks that could occur and plan accordingly.

- Keep your car in good condition and try not to run out of fuel. Carry a spare can if possible.
- Carry spare water both for drinking and for the car.
- Join one of the breakdown organisations.
- Keep the doors locked when driving and keep bags, phones and other valuables out of sight – preferably in the boot.
- If you have to have the window open, only wind it down a little. Don't wind it down far enough to allow someone to reach in whilst you are stopped at traffic lights.
- Plan your route to your destination and keep to the main roads if you can.
- Always carry directions and a map so that you don't have to stop and ask anyone.
- In the winter months – carry a winter car kit – wellies, spade or shovel, blankets, thermos, light snacks.
- Carry a mobile phone, keep it charged up, switched on and within easy reach but **NEVER** use it whilst moving. If you need to use the phone you **must** stop and pull over. **If you are involved in an accident whilst at work, and it is proven that you were using your mobile phone, this is a disciplinary offence.**
- Carry enough change or phonecard to use a public phone in an emergency.
- If you see an incident or accident or someone tries to flag you down, don't immediately conclude you should stop to help. Think first – it is genuine? Can you really do anything to help? It might be safer and more practical to report what you have seen at the next convenient place to stop.
- If you think you are being followed or harassed, try and turn around at the next roundabout and drive away in the opposite direction, or keep driving until you come to a busy place or drive to the nearest police station. Alert other road users by flashing your lights and sounding your horn. Make as much noise as possible.

2. Driving on motorways

- If your car develops a problem pull off the road and on to the hard shoulder and switch on your hazard lights.
- Use your mobile if you have one to call either the police or your breakdown organisation or if signal is a problem the nearest motorway phone which will connect you direct to the police. They are never spaced more than a mile apart on opposite sides of the motorway. Never cross the carriageway to use a phone.
- If you are on the hard-shoulder or telephoning, keep a sharp look-out and don't accept lifts from strangers – wait for the police or breakdown service to arrive.
- Don't wait in the car – there is a high risk you will be hit by another vehicle. Wait on the embankment nearby with the front passenger door open.
- If someone approaches or you feel threatened, get back in the car quickly and lock yourself in. Speak to them through a small gap in the window. Thank them for their concern and ask them to phone the police or rescue service even if you have already done this yourself.
- If you have to wait in the car – sit in the passenger seat – this implies you are not alone and that the driver has gone for help.
- When the breakdown vehicle arrives, wind your window down slightly and ask for ID and check that the driver knows your name.

3. Parking

- Always lock your car - even if you only leave it for a minute.
- Look around you before you get out of the car – if you are parking in the daylight but returning to your car at night, think about how things will look in the dark.
- If you work in an office where you work late but the majority of your colleagues leave at 5pm – consider moving your car nearer to the building entrance once they have all left – even into normally "reserved" spaces for senior managers!
- Whenever possible, choose a manned car park and park as close as you can to the attendant.
- Avoid poorly lit car-parks. For street parking – park under a street light.
- Reverse into the space.
- Make sure your interior light is always working.
- Park on the side of the road in the direction you want to leave – so if you need to make a fast getaway

- you don't have to turn around.
- When visiting people in their homes – don't park right outside the gate/front door – park a bit up the road – this could give you vital seconds advantage if you have to get away in a hurry.
- Always have your key ready in your hand when you go back to your car – don't be scrabbling around in the bottom of your bag when you get there.
- Make sure there is no-one inside the car before you get in.

4. Using public transport

- Plan your route and connections – stay away from isolated bus stops – especially after dark.
- Wait in busy or well-lit areas.
- Sit near other people or the driver if you are on an empty bus.
- On a train, sit in a compartment where there are several other people.
- Choose a compartment which will be near the exit of your destination station.
- Check to see where the emergency chain is.
- Move seats if someone makes you feel uncomfortable.

5. Taxis and private hire vehicles

- Keep the number of a reliable company with you at all times.
- Always ensure you travel in a licensed taxi or PHV by checking the vehicles signage or plate and the driver's badge. You should never agree to travel in an unlicensed vehicle with an unlicensed driver.
- If possible always pre-book rather than taking a cab from a rank – beware of bogus mini-cabs.
- Always check that the taxi or PHV that arrives is the one you ordered. Ask for a description of the car – colour, make etc – and check this when it arrives. You could also ask for the name of the driver beforehand.
- If you are in any doubt when it arrives, make an excuse and don't get in the vehicle.
- If you pre-book – leave the name of the company and their telephone number with a friend or colleague.
- When you get to your destination, ask the driver to wait until you get inside. Have the correct fare ready to handover. Have your keys ready and get inside quickly.
- If travelling alone, always sit behind the driver in the back seat.
- If you feel uneasy, ask to be let out in a well-lit area where there are plenty of people.

6. Staying in hotels

- Try to use a hotel you know or a chain where optimum standards are set
- Book ahead at all times and find out the exact location of the hotel
- Park nearby if possible in a well lit area where you and your car can be easily seen
- At reception, try to avoid other people overhearing your name and room number
- Avoid rooms that are accessible from the outside, or with a fire escape outside
- If you are given a room at the end of a dimly lit corridor – ask to change
- If there is a safety chain on the door use it
- If you receive telephone calls in your room – don't give your room number away
- If you use the hotel restaurant, try to ensure the waiter does not repeat your room number out loud, normally you should have a room card – show this for billing purposes
- If you feel safer avoiding the dining room order your meal in your room
- Don't invite clients to a meeting in your room and avoid meeting in their room unless you know this is perfectly safe – use one of the public rooms or meeting rooms instead
- If you hear a disturbance in the corridor, stay in your room and phone reception
- Do not wander around the hotel grounds after dark

7. Working in other countries

If you are travelling outside the UK on County Council business, you will need to take additional precautions to enhance your personal safety, prevent or deal with the risks of loneworking, and ensure both you and your line manager or department have a clear plan in place as to what actions both will take in the event of an emergency.

Most travellers carefully plan their flights, rental cars, accommodation and itineraries, but few plan for emergency situations such as

1. What you would do if you are a victim of a crime?
2. Who you can/will call for help?
3. What would happen if you had a medical emergency overseas?

Crime

Unfortunately, many foreigners fall victims to crime while travelling abroad. Many just don't understand the threats they face while in another country. However, you should never forget that you are in a new environment and must be even more careful than you are in your home country. Prepare and educate yourself about the country you intend to visit. Check the Foreign Office web pages for up-to-date information and recommendations on any security risks for the countries that you are travelling to. Sign up for e-mail alerts and you'll get the latest alerts for that country.

Carrying a laptop and/or computer bags can make you a target in a foreign country. Not only can your laptop be stolen but the information on that can be of value to criminals.

Give careful thought to your dress – you will want to be smart for work but overseas you are what you wear. Many locals abroad have the misconception that all foreign visitors, especially westerners, are wealthy and have lots of money to steal. Wearing the wrong type of clothing while overseas can further this stereotype and make you a victim of a crime.

Avoid wearing:

1. Expensive name brand clothing
2. Clothing that signifies your home country
3. Bright colours that make you stick out from a crowd
4. Large hats that make you look like a tourist and block your peripheral vision
5. Safari clothing in urban areas. This type of clothing makes you look like a tourist; therefore, making you a target
6. A large sun hat. Again this makes you look like a tourist and also makes you stick out from a crowd.

Business women travelling alone are at a higher risk of crimes such as sexual assault, harassment, and handbag/purse theft. Tips for women include:

1. Never accept drinks from people you don't know while in a bar or restaurant. The drinks could be laced with drugs.
2. While walking with your purse, instead of carrying it with your arm through the strap, you should tuck it under your arm, not using the strap. This way if a criminal runs by and snatches your purse, you won't be pulled to the ground during the incident.
3. Wear shoes that are comfortable and that you can run in.
4. Address any cat calls or sexual harassment on the street by ignoring it, walking with confidence, and continuing on your way.
5. If driving a vehicle abroad, don't leave your bag on the passenger seat beside you. A common tactic abroad is to smash the passenger side window and grab any bags off the seat while you are stopped at a red light. Store your bag on the floor behind your seat.
6. If you are going to use a taxi, always sit in the back seat. Many taxi drivers will ask women to sit in the front seat in an attempt to make unwanted passes at them.
7. Women should always dress conservatively while abroad. In some countries doing otherwise is

culturally unacceptable or at the very least causes unwanted attention.

8. Avoid going places alone.
9. Carry a small whistle on your person, other than in your purse. In the event that you are attacked you can blow the whistle to attract attention.
10. Perhaps some of the best travel advice for women is to try to do things that may disgust your attacker, in the event that a criminal attempts to sexually assault you. Try making yourself vomit or urinate. Tell the attacker that you have AIDS or any other sexually transmitted disease.
11. If you are sexually assaulted report the assault to the authorities immediately.

Hotel security

Both men and women business travellers abroad should be aware of hotel security.

Criminals know that business travellers are rarely in their rooms, are in a hurry to attend meetings and leave valuables unsecured in the room while away.

Make sure that your hotel room has a safe. Use it to store your passport, currency, traveller's cheques, ATM cards, credit cards and jewellery, so that it is not stolen during a robbery while you are out in town. Never leave these items out on view when you leave the room, even if you are not expecting maid service. Many hotel crimes involve hotel employees.

Request a room located between the 3rd and 5th floors because the room is high enough to make it difficult for burglars to climb and enter from outside but close enough to the ground that you can escape during a fire or natural disaster.

Also, try to avoid a room so close to other hotel roofs that criminals could climb over and into your room.

Familiarise yourself with escape routes throughout the hotel. If there is a fire or natural disaster, you will already know the alternatives for exiting the hotel and getting to safety.

Also, there should be substantial lock on your hotel room door and the door should have a peephole so you can view anyone who knocks at the door. Keep the door locked at all times, even when you are inside the room.

Do not allow strangers into your hotel room.

Another hotel safety tip is to place the "do not disturb" sign on the outside of your room door, even when you are out of the room. This helps keep out maids and may make potential burglars think you are inside.

Never place the "please clean room" sign on the outside of the door because it tells criminals that you are not there.

If you are at all unhappy with your room for safety reasons – ask to be moved to another room.

Identity Theft

Travelling on business may increase your exposure to identity theft. Identity thieves are known to target business travellers, banking on the fact that they are focused more on their itinerary than on their identity exposure.

Identity theft can ruin your life so invest some time in some basic safe data practices and should the worst happen, be prepared to immediately contact your financial services company who can help you take steps to limit any fraudulent activity.

Financial safety tips for travellers:

1. If you need to access your email from a cyber cafe or other establishment, limit your access, avoid entering any passwords to your personal financial accounts, and be sure to log off when you are finished with your session.
2. Try to avoid "tweeting" or blogging about your travel plans or talking about them on social networking sites like Twitter, Facebook and MySpace. Thieves may use this information to target empty houses back home.
3. Protect yourself from key loggers, hackers, spammers, and botnets by installing anti-virus and anti-spyware software on your laptop computer.
4. If browsing the internet with a wireless connection, do not assume public "hot spots" are secure. Ensure you are using encryption to scramble communications over a network.
5. If you're staying at a hotel or motel and receive a call from the reception desk asking that you confirm a credit card number, tell them you'll provide the information at the front desk instead. The call could easily be a random one from outside the hotel.
6. Bring as few credit cards as possible and ideally carry just one with you and keep a backup card in the hotel safe. Bring a copy of the emergency contact numbers for your credit cards and bank accounts in case they're lost or stolen.
7. It is recommended that travellers do not use their debit cards abroad to further protect their checking accounts.
8. If you do have to withdraw money from an ATM abroad, be extra cautious, and be protective of your PIN.
9. Beware of pickpockets – remove all documentation and cards from your wallet or purse that you don't need during your travels.
10. Use cash or travellers checks wherever possible to minimise the risk of credit card fraud or overcharging (this can also help avoid costly exchange fees).
11. Make a photocopy of the cards and documents in your wallet or purse, including credit and ATM cards, store cards, drivers' licenses, etc. Leave the copy with someone you trust so if your wallet or purse is stolen, you'll know what to cancel. Or enrol in a card registry program that has your card information on file.
12. Consider using a credit and public monitoring service that alerts you to potentially suspicious activity.

Emergency contact information

It is vital that you always leave full and detailed information with your line manager or department about your trip including

1. travel arrangements – how and when you are travelling – relevant flight numbers, flight and/or train times, departure and destination airports or stations
2. details of how you can be contacted whilst you are away
3. name of hotel(s) where staying

Make a detailed list of contacts you can use when you are away:

Find out the address and telephone number of the nearest British Embassy or Consulate in the country you are visiting from the [Foreign Office website](#) . You will need this if your passport is lost or stolen.

On your list - include details of any extra dialling codes which need to be used or instructions from your network provider about your mobile phone. Don't forget to take an international adaptor for your mobile phone charger.

The Voiceconnect Loneworker Tracking system can still be used when abroad – please contact the system administrator wendy.parkin@northyorks.gov.uk beforehand when planning your trip so that special measures can be put in place to cover you.

Health or medical emergency

Travelling abroad can expose you to a variety of health risks that are uncommon in the UK - from the trivial to

the deadly serious.

If you take treatment for a specific health problem, then you need to take a supply of your medicine with you, even if you only use it intermittently e.g. asthma puffers or skin creams for eczema.

If your problem or the treatment for it is unusual, or can cause sudden incapacity, you should carry information about this with you at all times. If you have only recently recovered from a major illness, you should get checked before travelling.

Vaccinations

Visit your GP to find out about recommendations for the countries you are visiting. Your specific need for vaccinations will depend on:

1. Where you stay
2. How long you will be away for
3. What activities you will be doing

If you are in good health, travelling only for a few days to a major city for a conference or meeting, staying and eating in good class accommodation, then your risks of most infections will be very small. If your stay is longer, or you may be living, eating or working in places with poor hygiene or sanitation, or you are not sure, then you are strongly advised to have the vaccinations recommended.

The [Fitfortravel website](#) contains up to date advice and travel health information for people travelling abroad from the UK.

Also check out the [tips on the Foreign Office website](#).

Checklist of top travel tips

1. Where possible avoid travelling alone.
2. Choose a safe and secure hotel rather than a cheap one.
3. Keep a photocopy of all your important documentation.
4. Carry a copy of your passport on your person whilst out and about, storing the actual passport in the hotel safe.
5. Remember to carry details of your contact numbers back in the UK – store these on your mobile phone and also in a back-up location.
6. Leave details of your itinerary and contact information with your line manager or department so they can get in touch with you abroad.
7. Refrain from carrying large bags.
8. Be aware of your surroundings and avoid social distractions (e.g. talking on mobile phones and listening to mp3 players).
9. Surrender your valuables if confronted by thieves. They can be replaced – you can't!
10. Be extra careful when using public transportation abroad. If possible avoid using crowded buses.
11. Find out the location number and opening times of the nearest British Embassy or Consulate in the country you are visiting and carry it with you.
12. Get sound security advice by contacting your embassy or consulate and speaking with someone in the security office.
13. Contact the police immediately and report it if you are victimised.

Source URL: <http://nyccintranet/node/928>

Links

- [1] <http://nyccintranet/node/928>
- [2] <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/>
- [3] <mailto:wendy.parkin@northyorks.gov.uk>
- [4] <http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/home.aspx>
- [5] <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/staying-safe/health/>
- [6] <http://nyccintranet/tags/health>
- [7] <http://nyccintranet/tags/safety>
- [8] <http://nyccintranet/tags/travel>
- [9] <http://nyccintranet/tags/travelling>
- [10] <http://nyccintranet/tags/personal>