TRAVEL SMART, TRAVEL SAFE

Best Practices and Guide for Furman University to Finland

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Travel Smart, Travel Safe

WorldStrides and your school want you to have a safe and rewarding journey overseas. Travel Smart, Travel Safe is designed to share some best practices 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

- Personal Safety
- Hotel Safety
- Health Safety
- Passport Safety
- Computer Safety
- Safety information for your destination
Most incidents can be avoided by using good sense and staying out of dangerous situations.

Be aware of your surroundings and suspicious activities, especially in bars/clubs and when using public transportation (in countries where public transportation is OK).

Use taxis from hotels or designated taxi stands.

Travel in groups, especially after dark.

Never accept a drink from a stranger and do not leave drinks unattended. Do not over-consume alcohol.

Stay together leaving clubs; don’t leave any students behind and don’t stay out alone when others are ready to leave.

If locals try to start an argument with the group about politics, race, religion, always disengage and walk away.

Stick to highly populated areas; avoid neighborhoods that are off the beaten path.
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. Use ATMs inside hotels, banks, airports or other locations with additional security.

Avoid using ATMs on the street. This will help safeguard against both fraud and theft.

Be cautious about texting or surfing using your smartphone while in public, especially on subways or while walking. Texting and surfing the web reduces your situational awareness and it makes you a target for phone “snatch-and-run” thefts.

Leave valuable jewelry at home.

Keep away from public protests and rallies, even if they seem calm. Calm protests can turn angry or violent with little warning.

Do not attempt to observe and/or photograph demonstrations. Even if you are a bystander, if you are near a protest police may consider you part of the protest.
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. But for some crimes in some countries, WorldStrides may recommend that a police report not be filed.
Hotel Safety

− 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.
− Always bring prescription medications in their original pharmacy containers, and generally bring them in your carry-on luggage with a copy of the prescription.

− 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.
Insect-borne illnesses are increasing in number and geography, even in urban areas. Outbreaks of Dengue, Zika, Chikungunya, Yellow Fever, and West Nile call for individual travelers to take precautions against mosquito bites.

WorldStrides encourages all travelers to bring and use insect repellant. 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 for 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.
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 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

− 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.
− We encourage original passports be left behind in hotel 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 company visits.
− Always do a passport check on the bus after hotel checkout to make sure you didn’t leave yours behind.
− Do not place passport in airplane seat pocket; immediately store in your carry-on luggage after boarding to reduce risk of loss.
− 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

− 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.
The U.S. Department of State has assigned a Level 1 (Exercise Normal Precautions) travel advisory to Finland. Travelers should review the DOS country specific information on Finland on the travel.state.gov website.

iJet rates the overall threat to security in Finland as generally low.

The wave of terror attacks throughout Europe that started in January 2015 has raised global awareness of the potential for extremist attacks against civilians in Europe. Risk agencies rate the likelihood of being directly impacted by such an attack as extremely low.

Still, please remain aware of your surroundings at all times. Avoid all protests, rallies and large gatherings. If you see suspicious packages or situations that make you feel uncomfortable, please clear the area and report the situation.

Be aware that petty crime such as theft and pick-pocketing does occur, especially in large cities such as Helsinki and around tourist attractions. Guard your belongings.
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