



The Event Planner's Guide to Travel Security

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Balancing event productivity/profitability with ongoing criminal intelligence and venue related risk is perhaps more challenging than ever before for the event planner. Given the increased risk of terrorism both on American soil and abroad amidst a plethora of other domestic and foreign concerns, this cadre of professionals is clearly in a precarious position as they attempt to solidify the 2016 calendar.

During what is arguably some of the most tumultuous times in recent history, ensuring safe travel and a positive experience is of paramount concern. It is with this in mind that the adage "Proper Planning Avoids Panic and Paranoia" rings true.

Regardless of the mode of travel, traveling domestically or internationally presents inherent risks if due caution is not exercised. Travel security within the U.S. generally presents lower risk levels than traveling to international markets. However, with community violence at its worst level since the civil rights riots, this is most definitely a concern that must be taken into account. International travel has and will continue to be hampered by the growth of groups such as ISIS, and the ongoing increase of "Express Kidnap" scenarios from resort areas. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us all to re-examine the manner in which we plan our travel, the precautions we take while traveling, our mind-set regarding safety upon arrival at our destination, and the distinction between domestic and international travel risks.

Given the apparent risks and the need for peace of mind, the following illustrates current "Best Practices" for enhancing personal safety during travel.

Pre-Travel Planning

- Limit travel itinerary to a "need to know" basis and delegate someone as a 24/7 contact and arrange daily communication protocol.
- Every traveler should have a system of accountability for tracking family members while traveling. This information must be limited to involved parties only and never discussed outside that inner circle.
- Provide prearranged car service submitting segments of travel only.
- Ensure no signs are presented to identify the individual traveling by name at the airport.
- Identify alternative routes of travel, including different modes of transportation, to provide prompt response in the event of a crisis.
- Select a separate credit card to be used for all travel reservations and accommodations.
- Make copies of wallet contents and passport/visa prior to travel.
- Ensure all required medication is packed in carry-on bags.
- Remove all forms of identification from travel bags by substituting them with other identifying features.

There is no reason to advertise who you are or where you live. One alternative is to place a tag with your business address without company name on your bags. In the event you are claiming a lost bag, your picture ID with proof of business address will suffice.

- Bring and utilize luggage ties to secure luggage and ensure the safety of your belongings while they are left unattended in a hotel room.
- It is recommended to not register or make reservations in one's own name if the individual is well known and prone to attracting unwanted attention.
- When possible, book hotel rooms between the second and seventh floors to limit first floor access while still being positioned safely for emergency evacuation if necessary.

Travel Precautions

- Always maintain a low profile.
- Avoid routine patterns and vary travel routes.
- Be conscious of being followed.
- Never leave a laptop or any type of mobile electronic device unattended and only travel with needed data by utilizing removable media/data storage.
- Affix an identification label to the outside of laptop to avoid confusion of ownership while processing through secure checkpoints.
- Morning arrivals and departures are recommended.
- Take caution when conversing with strangers despite their personal appearance.
- Avoid traveling with items that are not absolutely necessary.
- Limit items to be carried.
- Dine in recognized eateries not off the beaten path.
- Avoid street vendor food.
- While flying, remain at the entrance of the metal detector until your bags have gone through the X-ray machine and never let them out of your sight for any time period.
- If flying commercially, once on the plane, keep your carry-on beneath your seat in lieu of in the overhead compartment.
- While traveling by train, enter and remain in only those cars that are occupied.
- Do not joke about weapons and/or explosives personal safety upon arrival.
- From airport arrival, travel to the hotel and throughout your stay, there is a great deal that can be done to enhance overall personal safety. At each and every destination, providing the previously mentioned front end precautions were taken, the following should be practiced as the rule, not the exception.
- Keep door locked while in the room.
- Avoid public areas of the hotel as criminal/terrorist activity is drawn to these areas.
- Do not under any circumstances discuss the nature of the trip with anyone and be cautious of the information discussed over the telephone.
- Avoid nighttime activity away from the hotel if feasible.
- If away from hotel, always watch drinks while they are being poured and never leave them unattended.
- Be sure any time a credit card is used it is promptly returned and do not give it to bartender to establish a tab.
- Avoid using your own name when making social reservations.
- Ensure that daily contact is made with the delegated point of contact (POC) and that contingencies are developed assessing international travel risk conduct and due diligence

on the location(s) of travel to determine an accurate threat based upon the following checklist:

- Social issues
- General crime and corruption issues (to include limits to personal rights if held by local authorities)
- Active terrorist groups
- Organized crime activity
- Propensity for kidnap and extortion
- Labor instability
- Local ethnic/extremist religious issues
- Infrastructure and environmental situation
- Political climate
- Economic strength and income discrepancy
- Health and public safety risks
- Areas not to visit, roads not to travel, taxis not to take, and rentals not to use
- Weather/climate concerns
- Hotels/restaurants/hospitals/clinics not to frequent
- Secure travel contingencies in the event of a disruption in schedule

The advisor should recommend a reliable personal protection specialist and security driver (24/7) once the travel due diligence is completed and it is determined the intended destination presents substantial risks. Once it is determined the threat level has been addressed, the following preparations and precautions should be taken:

- Obtain foreign currency in advance, consisting of small denominations, and avoid carrying large sums of cash.
- Program cellular phones with local one-touch emergency telephone numbers.
- Identify medical facilities in and around the area(s) of destination in advance.
- Bring a copy of passport, driver's license, and related visa documents to be kept in a separate location in the event of being lost or stolen.
- Leave your passports in the hotel safe (providing it is a well-known, internationally recognized property).
- Carry a card with personal medical information, including blood type, medications (including those causing allergic reactions) and physician contact numbers.
- Only use ATMs during the day and preferably inside a bank.
- Beware of pickpockets and the common techniques they use (distractions, such as jostling, spilling something on you, asking for directions or the time, solicitation of items, and small groups, oftentimes of children, that you must pass through).
- Ensure daily communications are scheduled in advance with point of contact (POC).
- Develop consistent code words/phrases to alert PGC to an adverse situation.

In sum, perhaps the greatest explanation point on the planning process is to never forget 'Cheap IS Expensive'. Proper due diligence is no longer a nicety but a necessity.