



Following is the Department of State's message to U.S. students, providing important safety information they need to know when traveling abroad.

As the time approaches for spring or summer break, many college students are getting ready for a much anticipated trip abroad. The following information is geared to help students plan a safe and enjoyable adventure.

First, a note about passports: effective in January 2007, all persons - including U.S. citizens - traveling by air from Canada [<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/ci/ca/>](http://www.state.gov/p/wha/ci/ca/), Mexico [<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/ci/mx/>](http://www.state.gov/p/wha/ci/mx/), the Caribbean [<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/ci/bf/>](http://www.state.gov/p/wha/ci/bf/), and Bermuda [<http://www.state.gov/p/eur/ci/uk/>](http://www.state.gov/p/eur/ci/uk/), will be required to have a passport to enter the United States. This is true even if the foreign country visited does not require a passport for entry. Students who may have previously traveled outside the United States without a passport may not know about this new requirement. Since it can take several weeks to obtain a passport, students are urged to apply now. Information about how to obtain a U.S. passport, and about traveling abroad, is available on the Department of State's website at <http://travel.state.gov> [<http://travel.state.gov/>](http://travel.state.gov). Although this new requirement applies only to air travel at this time, we encourage all Americans traveling abroad to have a passport.

It is also important for travelers to note that the Cricket World Cup will take place at various venues in the Caribbean from March 11, 2007 through April 28, 2007. Accommodations in many instances may be scarce or unavailable. We recommend that travelers exercise heightened security awareness as any large-scale public gathering could be the focus of terrorist acts or other forms of violence.

Travel safety is a major concern. Although most students will have a safe and enjoyable adventure, for some the trip will become a nightmare with a serious impact on the rest of their lives.

Each year, more than 2,500 American citizens are arrested abroad -- about half on narcotics charges, including possession of very small amounts of illegal substances. A drug that is legal in one country may not be legal in a neighboring nation. Alcohol also can cause trouble for U.S. citizens traveling abroad. Students have been arrested for being intoxicated in public areas, for underage drinking, and for drunk driving. Some people are victimized because they are unaware of the laws, customs, or standards of the country they are visiting.

Disorderly or reckless behavior can have serious repercussions. In many countries, conduct that would not result in an arrest in the United States may constitute a violation of local law. Some Americans go abroad assuming that local authorities will overlook such conduct because they are American citizens. The truth is that Americans who violate the laws of the countries they visit may very well be arrested, and they could face severe penalties, including long prison sentences. In fact, some countries have mandatory death sentences for drug offenses.

Being arrested is not the only misfortune that can occur on a foreign vacation. Americans have been badly injured or have been killed in automobile accidents, falls, and other mishaps. Although these incidents are sometimes chance occurrences, many are related to alcohol or drug use. Other Americans have been sexually assaulted or robbed because they found themselves in unfamiliar locales, or were incapable of protecting themselves because of drug or alcohol use, or because they were the victim of a "date rape" drug.

Other safety issues are of major concern as well. Standards of safety and supervision overseas may be different from those in the United States. Many Americans have died after automobile accidents on bad roads and after falls from poorly-fenced balconies. Americans should also exercise caution when swimming or engaging in water sports. Currents on both the Caribbean and Pacific Coasts of Central and South America can be swift and dangerous, and in many areas there are few lifeguards or signs warning of dangerous beaches. In addition, travelers should be aware that tidal currents before and after storms are strong and unpredictable. Several American citizens drown each year due to riptides or sudden drop-offs while in shallow

water. In some countries, the water sports and scooter rental industries are not carefully regulated. Visitors should rent equipment only from reputable operators and should insist on sufficient training before using the equipment. Every year people are killed or injured by the improper use of scooters, jet-skis, and personal watercraft or by the careless operation of such equipment by others. The exercise of simple common sense can help to minimize risks.

Americans are strongly urged to register their foreign travel on the State Department's website at <https://travelregistration.state.gov> < <https://travelregistration.state.gov/>> before the trip begins. Travel registration makes it possible to contact a traveler if necessary, whether because of a family emergency in the United States or because of a crisis in the foreign country. Registration is a free service provided by the State Department and is easily accomplished online. (Note that, in accordance with the Privacy Act, the Department of State may not release information about a citizen to inquirers without express written authorization.)

For further information contact: Bureau of Consular Affairs

Office of Public Affairs

Press inquiries: (202) 647-1488

Internet address: <http://travel.state.gov>

Public inquiries: toll-free (888) 407-4747

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