

# Transportation

## Traveler Summary

### Introduction

**Review transportation options in advance:** infrastructure may differ significantly from what travelers are accustomed to and some common modes of travel may be unsafe or unavailable.

### General Guidance

**Review the latest Safety and Security bulletins for both destination and transit countries:** world events (e.g., political unrest, strikes, or terrorism) or natural disasters (e.g., floods or earthquakes) can abruptly disrupt or suspend transportation.

## Modes of Transportation

### Air Travel

#### Air Safety and Carrier Standards

- Research unfamiliar companies or airlines: not all commercial airlines meet international aviation safety standards.
- Avoid itineraries with connections that require transfer to uncertified local/regional airlines.
- Confirm domestic/private flights are run by legitimate, insured companies with certified pilots.

### Road Travel

#### Driving Risks

- Become familiar with the destination's traffic safety and road conditions. Some destinations may be extremely hazardous, with potential risks including:
  - Higher rates of collisions and fatalities
  - Limited maintenance, lighting, or signage
  - Adverse weather (flooding, snow, ice)
  - Motorists who drive erratically or aggressively
  - A general disregard for traffic laws (including speed limits)
- Use local taxis, ride-hailing apps, and public transit rather than attempt to drive without local knowledge in unfamiliar countries.
- Consider driving only with sufficient local knowledge and
  - Avoid road travel at night or during periods of bad weather.
  - Allow extra travel time.

#### Driving and Local Laws

- Become familiar with local driving laws and the consequences: laws may differ significantly from those in travelers' home countries.
  - Determine if driving is allowed for nonresidents: driving may not be permitted with a foreign driving license.
  - Know the Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) laws: operating a vehicle above .00 BAC may be illegal and severely punished, including with immediate imprisonment.
  - Research whether operating a mobile phone while driving is illegal.
  - Be aware that some countries maintain military or law enforcement checkpoints where drivers are required to stop. Comply with local authorities and present all necessary documents.

### Ride-Hailing Apps

Consider the following if opting to use app-based services such as Uber, Lyft, or Grab, which are widely available and usually provide a safer alternative to taxis:

- Verify the vehicle and driver match the details shown on the app before entering the vehicle.
- Insist on sitting in the backseat.

- Avoid paying cash if a card option is available.
- Do not permit drivers to make unscheduled stops or pick up additional passengers during the ride.
- Ensure child locks are not engaged and keep windows rolled up to prevent anyone from reaching inside.

## Taxis

- Use only official, clearly marked taxis and arrange taxis through hotels or trusted providers when possible: unfamiliar companies may be unlicensed and unreliable.
- Avoid taxis without working meters: drivers may overcharge.
- Do not enter a taxi that is already occupied or allow drivers to pick up additional passengers.
- Insist on sitting in the backseat.
- Arrange advance pick-ups at airports: unlicensed drivers and scams are common.
- Women travelers should consider app-based ride-hailing services instead of taxis: taxi routes are not recorded or tracked if a driver diverts from the intended route.
- Ensure child locks are not engaged and keep windows rolled up to prevent anyone from reaching inside.

## Public Utility Vehicles (Jeepneys/Tuk-Tuks/Rickshaws)

Consider safer alternatives, such as local taxis, ride-hailing apps, and public transit when available. Public utility vehicles may:

- Lack regulation
- Carry significant safety risks
- Operate in heavy traffic where accidents can be fatal
- Involve drivers who may attempt to exploit tourists

## Public Transportation (Bus/Metro/Subway)

### System Rules

- Research public transportation systems: some countries operate reliable, low-cost systems, whereas others have limited or informal networks.
- Become familiar with the system's rules:
  - Some fares must be prepaid, whereas others are collected at the end of the trip.
  - Some tickets must be carried at all times; inspectors may impose heavy fines for noncompliance.

### Safety Risks

- Maintain situational awareness at all times and keep personal belongings secure: although generally safe and reliable, crimes and accidents can occur.
- Familiarize oneself with the route prior to travel: criminals may specifically target travelers who appear unfamiliar with the area or disoriented while riding.
- Exercise caution in overcrowded locations: overcrowding can create hazardous conditions.
- Women travelers should look for women-only train cars or designated waiting areas where available.

## Water Transport (Ferry/Boat)

### Vessel Safety

- Avoid vessels that appear overloaded or unseaworthy.
- Confirm life jackets and other required safety equipment are available before boarding.
- Use only reputable tour companies when booking excursions.

## Self-Powered Options

### Safe-Riding Practices

Travel by bicycle, electric scooter, or other self-powered/portable electric vehicles (PEV) may be convenient in some destinations.

Follow local rules and customs:

- Stay in designated lanes and use appropriate safety equipment.
- Park only in authorized areas and secure properly to prevent theft.

## Pedestrian Safety

- Exercise increased caution when crossing roads while walking or running: motorists may not yield to pedestrians.
- Observe locals if traffic signals are confusing.

## Transportation-Related Security Risks

### Armed Conflict and Transportation Routes

- Carefully review Consular Travel Warnings or Safety Bulletins before entering any destination affected by conflict.
- Consider avoiding all travel to countries or regions experiencing armed conflict: vital infrastructure hubs or transportation routes may be deliberately targeted due to their strategic value.
- Use armored vehicles or convoys outside of designated safe zones or cities in unstable or unsafe areas.
- Avoid travel off main roads in areas where landmines and unexploded ordnance may be present.

### Terrorist Attacks at Transportation Hubs

- Remain alert at all times and report suspicious behavior to local authorities immediately: terrorist violence is often random and designed to cause mass casualties.
- Be aware that risk exists even when travelers are not directly targeted.
- Recognize that transportation hubs, including airports, train stations, subway/metro stations, and bus terminals are frequent targets and common methods of attack include homemade explosives, vehicular ramming, firearms, or bladed weapons.
- Do not attempt to confront the attacker(s) if an attack occurs. Instead:
  - Escape the area if possible.
  - Seek shelter away from the threat.
  - Contact local authorities once it is safe to do so.
  - Check in with the embassy or consulate to confirm one's safety and receive further guidance after the incident.

### Risks at Border Crossings

- Confirm that no conflict is ongoing and review any Consular Travel Warnings or Safety Bulletins for the route when crossing borders by road.
- Avoid contested international borders: contested borders can be extremely dangerous to cross due to armed conflict or inadequate security.
- Limit travel to official highways, avoiding rural or unmarked roads: even in areas where hostilities have ceased, borders may remain hazardous due to unexploded ordnance or landmines.
- Be prepared to stop at checkpoints and present all legally required documents.
- Verify the validity of entry and exit stamps for both countries: unrecognized stamps may result in denial of entry.
- Always confirm that the crossing is open before attempting to proceed: border crossings may close without notice.

## Transportation-Related Crime Risks

### Risk for Foreign Travelers in Transit

- Be aware of the crime threat level in each destination: criminals may specifically target foreigners or those who appear to be tourists.
- Exercise caution at night and in areas with poor public services: risks often increase at night or in areas with poor public services.
- Women travelers should travel with a companion and avoid traveling alone at night: travel may be especially dangerous for women travelers in certain regions.
- Women travelers should confirm whether self-defense items are legal in their destination country: regulations vary widely and penalties can be severe.

The following common crimes may affect travelers in many destinations.

## Carjacking and Vehicle Theft

- Do not resist if targeted for carjacking and vehicle theft: both are common in certain regions.
- Comply with demands but try to remember details about the attackers and the location.
- Immediately report the incident to local authorities and file a police report.
- Provide documentation to insurers if eligible.

## Smash-and-Grab and Snatch-and-Grab Theft

- Keep doors locked (when occupied or parked), bags and valuables concealed, and windows closed (or opened only slightly): smash-and-grab theft often occurs when vehicles are stopped in traffic or left unattended.
- Maintain situational awareness, attempt to move away if targeted, and drive to a well-lit area or police station if possible: snatch-and-grab theft is common in cities and may involve criminals on motorcycles weaving between vehicles.

## Fraudulent Stops

- Insist on a paper ticket or request to proceed to the nearest police station to pay rather than paying cash on the spot if a traffic stop seems suspicious: in some countries, criminals impersonate law enforcement and demand immediate payment during fraudulent traffic stops.
- Do not stop for persons who appear to stage a traffic collision or indicate an issue with a vehicle: armed criminals use various ruses to get motorists to stop and exit their vehicle. Report the incident to the police.
- Stop to fix any flat tires at a well-lit, populated location (e.g., a fuel station) and avoid accepting assistance from unknown persons.

## Pickpocketing and Public-Transit Theft

- Keep belongings secure in zipped or buttoned pockets or in a bag worn on the front of the body: pickpocketing is a frequent risk on public transportation and in crowded areas.
- Be alert to jostling and bumping: criminals often work in pairs, with one distracting while another steals bags or valuables.

## Vehicle Rental Scams

- Be alert to potential scams when renting vehicles in foreign countries.
- Verify the authenticity of any site before booking (certificates, contact details, official channels should match): fraudulent websites mimic legitimate rental companies.
- Make payment by credit card whenever possible, rather than debit card, eCheck, or wire transfer: credit cards typically offer stronger fraud protection.
- Inspect and document the rental vehicle's condition before leaving with it: travelers may otherwise be charged for preexisting damage. Some companies may intentionally rent defective vehicles and later blame foreign customers when breakdowns occur.
- Address disputes directly with the company but be prepared to involve the police if necessary.
- Avoid renting leisure vehicles (e.g., jet skis, snowmobiles, ATVs) from companies of questionable integrity: in regions where corruption is widespread, authorities may side with rental companies or refuse to file reports.

## Maritime Piracy

- Be familiar with kidnapping safety and security recommendations before travel: pirates often kidnap travelers for ransom.
- Use only officially recognized docking and berthing facilities and exercise caution when boarding watercraft in regions where maritime piracy is a risk.

## Protests, Strikes, and Civil Disturbances

### Transportation Strikes

- Monitor local news and advisories: transportation strikes are common in many parts of the world and result in lengthy delays or cancellations of public transit, including aviation.
- Make plans that work around the strike: strikes are often announced in advance if labor demands go unmet, making them easier to plan around.

- Allow extra time for travel during strike periods.

## Protests and Demonstrations

- Monitor local news and advisories: protests unrelated to transportation strikes may also disrupt travel, especially when demonstrators block major roads or highways.
- Do not attempt to pass through or remain near protest sites.
- Leave the area immediately if a demonstration occurs unexpectedly: demonstrations have the potential to turn violent or deadly.
- Do not join or participate in demonstrations in another country: doing so can result in detention, deportation, or other legal consequences.

## Curfews and Restrictions

- Comply with curfews imposed by governments during periods of heightened tension or national emergency: violations can result in strict penalties, including imprisonment or deportation.
- Confirm local regulations daily during periods of unrest and plan all movements accordingly.

## Conclusion

Transportation choices play a central role in travel safety. Reduce risks and move safely and confidently in unfamiliar environments on land, in the air, and at sea by using the following rules:

- Research options in advance.
- Use reputable providers.
- Follow local laws.
- Remain alert.
- Plan for disruptions.
- Adapt to local conditions.