

Practically free ways to travel more safely than ever

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Practically free ways to travel more safely than ever...and the tired advice most people still don't follow, but we know we should :)

Over the last 2 years of having friends and guests (and ourselves) in Belize and elsewhere, we have watched as new apps and ways of keeping your stuff safe, communicating more effectively all over the world, and new inventions come up that can turn a potential vacation-ruining experience, into one that you pat yourself on the back, because your past self did your future self some favors by covering your behind!

The first part of this post is some of the newer ways you can prepare yourself before your vacation-some that didn't even exist several years ago. Second part is some of the old, tired, boring stuff we all KNOW, but we still see first hand how many people do not/will not/forget to follow...and then vacations are ruined and you just want to slap that past self of yours! So, some ideas and gentle reminders...

New stuff that is practically free, so just do it, just in case!

- Don't post on social media that you will be gone on certain dates, it is too easy to find all of someone's personal info with very little effort. Don't "check in" at the sweet places you are at, just post the pics when you get home.
- Decide what ID's you really need to bring. For most people this is passport, medical insurance card, driver's licence, 2 credit cards, 1 debit card. Take a picture with your cell of what you are bringing, front and back, and store this in some sort of cloud storage, like dropbox.
- Put passcodes on your devices if they don't have them already. Also download security apps that track or even shut off your phone, such as Find my Android. This costs you NOTHING and if you lose your phone or something gets taken, what a relief to know your stuff isn't getting looked at!
- Bring a personal alarm with you; these are so easy, legal, and when you are walking home at night

or doing anything where you think there is a risk, it doesn't cost anything to have this thing handy. Even keep it on your nightstand at night. Here's a good one that should just be part of your packing when you travel:

<http://www.amazon.com/Vigilant-Personal-PPS22BL-Batteries-Activation/dp/B005E04MK0>

This is not going to make or break your luggage weight.

- If you want to communicate with people back home, the most popular apps we have found that are low cost to free, are to download the Skype app, put a few bucks on it, and it works all over the world, just like a regular phone
- not just video chat. For texting and sending pics, use WhatsApp or Kakao Talk. Have the people back home you want to talk to, download the app to their phone as well (except Skype, my favorite, you just call from your cell phone and the number shows up as a random US number to the other person, but they don't need the app to answer
- it just looks like a regular phone call to them).
- If you are worried about your house being secure when you are gone, think about a home security system that runs on wireless, using your cell phone
- these are so much easier and cheaper than the old home security systems. Here is an example:
<http://simplisafe.com/wireless-security-systems>

Generic, tired old safety tips about travel.....that are STILL true and STILL people don't consistently follow, until someone gets burned...don't let it be you!

- Carry any meds with you on the plane...along with your electronics, basic toiletries, and a change of clothes.
- Even though you might feel like a lil old lady with a pillbox, do pack some basic first aid things that are relevant to where you are going. Things like, emergency antibiotics for UTIs or traveler's diarrhea (your future self will thank you!!!!), band aids, antibacterial gel like Neosporin, aspirin, and extra girly items even if you aren't supposed to be on your special time.
- Do just a little bit of extra work to find out how locals dress where you are going. It's the worst to show up with a bunch of flip flops and yoga clothes and feel like a bum, or be an overdressed uptight person when everyone else is totally comfortable. This also makes you stand out much less, which you want!
- If you meet someone very interested in what you do for a living, where you are staying, etc, (even another tourist), be very aware of impressing those around you with money talk
- where tourists go, so do thieves, and they are really, really good at overhearing these kinds of things to mark those that have some money. Oh, and don't talk about the exact place you are staying :)
- When you go out at night, bring the BASICS as much as you can. Leave a bit in different places on your body if you can, if you are in a dicey place. BE DISCREET when you are pulling out

your cash about where it is and how much it is.

- Leave wedding rings and sentimental jewelry at home!
- Stay in brightly lit areas with tourist traffic and don't go off by yourself. This happens all.the.time when people are lulled into a sense of security.
- Just wear the SPF and bug spray.....don't be a hero.
- If the people in town or the hotel staff tell you to not leave things on the porch, keep door locked, stay away from certain places, etc.....DO IT! They are telling you for a reason.
- Don't let anyone walk back with you if you are heading to your hotel. If you feel like you are being followed, head to busier areas, and make it clear you see the person.
- Don't make yourself a target by getting drunk, being loud, being obnoxious, being really strange, or being rude to locals.
- Use the safes and don't leave stuff out when you leave!! And LOCK your door at night. Amazing how many people forget this one. We have all done it.

A final note on safety, one of my BIGGEST PET PEEVES is when a US news site will post some crime committed in some exotic place in the world, and people make comments like, "well now that place is off my list." Meanwhile, in their own home city, crimes are going on by the dozens. DO NOT decide about where to vacation based on one random news story, because you may be missing out on some of life's greatest experiences. If you are truly concerned about crime in a place you haven't gone, look online at their local newspapers or stalk the city on facebook groups – in small towns like Placencia, you will find the most honest knowledge from people that live here, about what is really happening.

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