

# KNOW THE RULES...

## TRAVELING OUTSIDE OF AND TO THE UNITED STATES:

*Preparation and Planning May Help Avoid  
Travel Pitfalls and Potential Danger*

Dangers may exist when traveling in any country. According to the most recent national study about missing children in the United States

- **59% of children in nonfamily abductions are between the ages of 15 and 17**
- **65% of children abducted by nonfamily members are female<sup>1</sup>**

Teens may be vulnerable to these crimes because they may not be familiar with cultural norms and accepted standards in another country. Teens may also be “naïve” and not realize acceptable practices in their home country may have different results in another country. One of the first steps in staying safer is preparing for the trip. Noted below are some tips to assist in that preparation.

### FOR TEENS TRAVELING OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES

- Check with the U.S. Department of State for up-to-date travel warnings and visa and other entry requirements.<sup>2</sup>
- Check with and follow the recommendations of any authorized travel group or exchange program involved with your trip.
- Register with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in that country prior to or upon your arrival, and check for any additional travel warnings or information about any other travel requirements issued by government authorities.
- Ask your hotel, or host location if an exchange student, to arrange transportation for you to locations such as restaurants, museums, stores, and other recreational locations. Ask the hotel or host to arrange transportation to pick you up at such facilities and bring you back.
- Know where you're going; find out if it's safe to drive, walk, take taxicabs, or take buses there; and have your hotel address with you in writing preferably in the language(s) of the country you are visiting.

### FOR TEENS TRAVELING TO THE UNITED STATES

- Report directly to your school or exchange program upon arrival so your school or program official may validate your participation in the Student Exchange and Visitor Information System (SEVIS).<sup>3</sup>
- Maintain contact with your designated school or sponsor official throughout your stay to help ensure your SEVIS data is updated and accurate.<sup>4</sup>

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- Arrange transportation to locations such as restaurants, museums, stores, and other recreational locations. Arrange transportation to pick you up at such facilities and bring you back.
- Know where you're going; find out if it's safe to drive, walk, take taxicabs, or take buses there; and have your address with you written in English.

## **FOR ALL TEENS TRAVELING TO OR FROM THE UNITED STATES**

*Don't go places alone.  
Traveling with someone or in groups is always safer.*

- Tell an adult where you're going, and tell someone your whereabouts at all times.
- If anything happens to make you feel scared, uncomfortable, or confused, say **NO**; get out of the situation as quickly and safely as possible; and tell someone about it.
- Be alert and aware. Exude confidence. Pay attention. Don't look and act like a "tourist."
- Dress and act conservatively, and avoid attracting unnecessary attention to yourself.
- Avoid being in the wrong place at the wrong time, guard against being drugged or in any other way being taken advantage of, and avoid activities such as drinking or drug use that could impair your judgment.
- Have a copy of your passport and itinerary with you, and leave copies in safe places such as with your family back home and host family.
- Don't trust someone just because he or she looks or acts friendly, and never get into someone's vehicle if you don't know him or her.
- Make sure you may be reached in case of an emergency. Don't be afraid to ask for assistance if anything is troubling you about your visit and regularly stay in touch with your family at home.

*By using common sense and familiarizing yourself with local customs and practices, your trip to another country may be the adventure you had dreamed about without the pitfalls.*

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<sup>1</sup>David Finkelhor, Heather Hammer, and Andrea J. Sedlak. "Nonfamily Abducted Children: National Estimates and Characteristics" in *National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children*. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, October 2002, page 7.

<sup>2</sup>U.S. Department of State web site, <http://travel.state.gov>.

<sup>3</sup>DHS Offers Travel Tips For Arriving Foreign Students and Exchange Visitors. Washington, DC: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, issued January 4, 2005, and accessed August 23, 2005, at <http://www.ice.gov/graphics/news/newsreleases/articles/010405sevisravelreminder.htm>.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

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