



7 Travel Scams Every Traveler Should Know

Overseas travel can be exciting, and some times dangerous. Before you know it you could be a victim of a scam or crime. When traveling, remember you may be under observation by opportunists or criminals who have targeted travelers just like you in the past. They can employ sophisticated and clever tactics and will be looking for the right time to implement them.

Scam 1 - Discounts

These scams generally occur near baggage claim areas and involve some body approaching you and offering discounts on hotels or transport. They may look official, so proceed with caution or decline the offer altogether.



Scam 2 - Taxi fraud

In developing countries, taxis are often not licensed and you will end up with a highly inflated fare or even a victim of a robbery or kidnapping. The official and licensed drivers may also attempt to take you to another destination in an effort to gain commission from a different hotel. They could also attempt to inflate your fare by:

- Exaggerating tolls or airport taxi rank fees
- Not re-setting the meter
- And not taking you via the most direct route



Tactics you can employ:

Determine the fare before the trip and make sure the driver knows where they are going.

Get out your map or GPS. Even if you are lost, it will appear to the driver that you know where you are going.

Don't exit the car at your destination until the driver does just in case they try speeding off with your luggage!

Gather all valuables before exiting the car.

Scam 3 - The Overly Friendly

Scam artists know that you are probably tired, disoriented and in need of some friendly advice. Before you know it, your new friend who has helped you with your bags, called a taxi, or helped with directions, will be asking you for some money. They may be wearing official looking uniforms, but they are not officials at all. They will appear authoritative in an effort to gain your trust. Instead, use the airport information booth.



Scam 4 - The Thief

In a crowded environment, the pickpocket can easily brush up against you and relieve you of your money and passport. It is known as the 'bump' and the dexterity they possess to rid you of your valuables is astounding.

Secure your valuables and be aware of your surroundings.

Thieves also scout bathrooms to find bags that have been placed on the floor inside cubicles. They will pull your luggage under the door and be off well before you have time to raise the alarm. They also prey on bags that are left at the entrance to bathrooms while you are otherwise occupied. Keep your bags as close to you as possible.

If you suspect anything has gone missing, check before you leave the airport so you can file a report with the airport police.



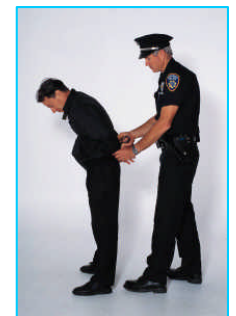
Scam 5 - Currency Exchange

An "official" may insist you follow them to conduct a currency exchange at a "very good rate". At best you will receive an exchange that is the same as is offered by your hotel or a bank and at worst you are being tricked into conducting an illegal currency exchange and may find yourself incarcerated on Day 1 of your trip.



Scam 6 - Scams by Officials

Unfortunately, in some countries, bribery and corruption is rife among airport officials. You may have something planted on you or your luggage, or informed that you are wanted for a trumped up crime. In this situation your best course of action may be to pay the bribe or fine, as failure to do so may result in detention or worse yet, incarceration in a foreign country.



Scam 7 - Pre-arranged pick-up

If you have pre-arranged your vehicle pick up, it is recommended you call your driver before you leave the terminal building. The taxi rank area of many international airports is a very busy area, leaving yourself open to harassment by scam artists and illegal taxi operators.

If your driver is meeting you inside the terminal, insist they show you identification that ascertains they are who they claim to be. In some countries, it is a common scam to reproduce identification signs with your name and hotel written on it, and simply stand in front of the real driver.

Some hotels have their driver's show you your booking details inside a sealed envelope to ensure you have met with the correct driver.

During your journey, keep the doors locked, your windows up, wear your seat belt and remain alert as to where you are going. If you think you are going the wrong way, say something. Say it confidently and with purpose. If you are unhappy with the response, threaten to call the police.



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