

# Personal Security While Traveling

Notify a trusted person of your departure and return dates, but don't otherwise publicize your travel or vacation plans. Leave contact numbers with trusted friends or family. Check plane, train, and bus times before you travel. Sit near other people or near aisles or doors. Learn the location of emergency alarms and exits. Stay awake and alert when using public transportation. Consider purchasing special clothing or accessories to hide your passport, money, or credit cards. Keep the majority of your funds in travelers checks and hidden; carry some in your wallet or handbag. Use a money clip. If you are robbed, you may lose the money in the clip but will retain important credit cards and documents. Keep valuables out of sight and luggage close at hand. If carrying a handbag, keep it in front of you, closed, with the fastening toward your body. Keep a wallet in your front pants pocket. Let go if your bag is snatched. Do some research on the area you are visiting.

Talk to the host convention coordinator regarding travel advisories or warnings. When traveling, dress casually; dress down where appropriate. Be aware of local customs. Don't wear excess jewelry. Reduce wallet and purse contents, particularly cards denoting affiliations, memberships, accounts, etc. At airports, proceed through security checks and go to the boarding area as quickly as possible. These areas are usually the most secure in the airport. In any crowded situation, be aware of any crowding or jostling, even if it appears innocent. This is often a ploy by pickpockets to distract you. Be very careful any time you use a telephone calling card. Fraudulent uses of these cards are on the rise. Look for people observing your card or your fingers as you dial your code. Avoid being heard giving the number to local telephone operators.

## Personal Security in Hotels

Do not discuss your business or travel plans in public areas where they may be overheard. Discuss your travel plans and movements during your stay with as few people as possible. Selecting a hotel room on the third to fifth floor generally will keep you out of reach of criminal activity from the street but still within reach of most fire truck ladders. Do not entertain strangers in your hotel room. Be alert to overly friendly locals who may have criminal intentions. They may offer to take you to a "special" restaurant. Their ruse may be to offer drugged refreshments. Never leave valuables in your hotel room exposed or unattended, even in a locked suitcase. Place valuables--money, jewelry, airplane tickets, credit cards, passport--in a hotel safe deposit box or room safe. Familiarize yourself with escape routes in case of fire or other catastrophe. Use the door chain or bolt lock whenever you are in your room. Use the door viewer (peephole) before opening the door to visitors. Do not discuss your room number while standing in the lobby or leave your room key on restaurant or bar tables. Keep your room neat so you will notice disturbed or missing items quickly.

By using these basic safety tips and your own common sense, you can help protect yourself.

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**INFORMATION PROVIDED BELOW IS OBTAINED THROUGH RESEARCH AND  
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AWARNNESS ADVICE**

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In recent years, hotels have become increasingly adept at finding ways to nickel and dime their customers. According to a study published last year by PriceWaterHouseCooper's Hospitality Division, hotels are gorging themselves on surcharges and hidden fees. Hotels worldwide were on track to rake in nearly \$2 billion in surcharges and hidden fees in 2007, more than tripling the \$550 million they took in just four years ago. That's a lot of minibar charges and towel replacement fees.

**Groundskeeping:**

Make sure to take time to smell the roses in that lushly landscaped garden because you are likely to billed \$3 or more a night for the effort involved in keeping the greenery perky.

**Towels:**

Need a towel at the pool? Expect to pay a buck or two. Don't scamper off to your room with it either, as you may be billed five dollars or more if you forget to return it to the attendant after your swim.

**Business center, fitness room:**

If there's a room with special equipment in it you'll probably get charged for simply staying in the same hotel with said equipment, even if you never venture into the business center or gym. Fees typically run \$5 - \$10 a day. At resorts, this is typically called the "resort fee."

**Safe:**

Hotels are tacking \$1-\$3 dollar a night "Safe Warranty" fees onto bills to cover the cost of providing the safe and the insurance policy that covers the things stored in it. (Good luck collecting anything if that in-room safe is burgled though, as most hotels post signs disclaiming responsibility for valuables.)

**Housekeeping, bellman gratuity fees:**

These folks certainly deserve to be paid well for their hard work, and most travelers show their appreciation with tips. But before you dig out the dollars, be aware that fees of \$10-\$30 a stay are being added to some hotel bills to cover housekeeping and bellman gratuities.

**Water and newspapers:**

How nice that a bottle of pure spring water was thoughtfully left in your room. Don't drink it. Chances are it's not a gift and you will be billed anywhere from \$4-\$6 a bottle. The newspaper that shows up at your door in the morning? Expect to be billed for the "convenience."

**Energy surcharge:**

Intended to recover the rising costs of providing electrical power, this charge can add \$3-\$6 dollars a day to your bill.

**Early check in or out/extended cancellation:**

Checked in earlier than the hotel's stated check-in time? You may be billed up to \$50 for that early access. Had to leave sooner than planned? Expect to be charged anywhere from \$50 to the cost of one night's stay. And make sure to check the cancellation policy: Hotels that used to allow you to cancel the same day before 6 p.m. are now billing customers for one night's stay if they don't cancel 48 hours ahead of time.

**Shuttle service:**

Taking the hotel shuttle from the airport used to be free, but it's likely to cost you now, and almost as much as taking a cab to your lodgings.

**Baggage-holding:**

Travelers with late-day flights often ask hotels to store their bags so they can enjoy another vacation day before heading to the airport. Some hotels are now charging up to \$3 for each bag they babysit for the day.

**Bartenders:**

Check the bill before you tell the bartender to keep the change. Posters on several travel boards have reported seeing charges for 20% of each drink added to their tabs for the bartender gratuity.

**Room block fees:**

You'd like to reserve a bunch of rooms, all on one floor, for a family reunion or other event? No problem, because some hotels will be happy to bill you \$10-\$20 for that service.

**Mini-Bar:**

No, it's not the insane prices charged for those goodies, it's the charges that are now added to your bill if you move something in the bar to make room for your own bottle of water, or even pick something up to look at it for a few seconds (sensors in the bar record your action and add the product's fee to your room bill.) Some travelers who've routinely asked for the mini-bar to be cleared out before their arrival have been surprised by \$50 "unstocking" fees.

**Random incorrect charges:** Numerous posters on travel forums have reported getting charged for smoking in non-smoking rooms when the evil weed had never touched their

lips. Ding: cleaning fee of \$100 to \$250, and sometimes more. Other random fees include being charged for unordered movies, unmade phone calls, etc.

## What to do

**1. Be aware of your rights.** According to federal law, additional fees should never be a surprise. Hotels must post information about such fees "clearly and conspicuously." What "clearly and conspicuously" means in practice is in the eye of the beholder, but if extra fees aren't clearly stated in the reservation conditions when you book online or over the phone, you should inform the hotel they are violating the law and politely but firmly ask for the charges to be removed. Obviously you now need to read the fine print conditions when you book online, and should ask if any extra fees are billed when you book over the phone.

**2. If you're not using the service you're being charged for, ask to have it removed from your bill.** Some hotels remove fees for safes, business/fitness centers, newspapers, and gratuities from your bill. If the latter, explain that you've already tipped the staff (assuming you have). The practice of "negative option billing" -- the legal name for fees billed without your express permission -- is based on the assumption that you've used the service and have therefore implied you agree to the charge. If you don't and haven't, the hotel should remove it from your bill.

**3. Look at your bill before you check out, and question any unexpected charges.** If your card is automatically charged before you receive the bill, look it over as soon as possible and contact the hotel if you see any charges you think are unfair. It's often best to query charges in writing, either via mail or email, so you have a record of what happened should you need to get your credit card issuer involved, or opt to take legal action.

**4. Vote with your wallet.** Stay at hotels that charge a fair rate for a room and facilities, rather than a bogus low rate which they then jacked up with an assortment of dubious additional fees.

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**Note: When renting a vehicle be sure to inspect the inside and outside for damages, be sure to note any damages on the vehicle on the contract no matter how minor. Further use your cell/smart phone camera and take a picture of the damage, this will help in any dispute of damages.**

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## Helpful Travel Information

### Hotels

Adams Mark Hotels	800-231-5858
Best Western	800-528-1234
Courtyard by Marriott	800-321-2211
Doubletree Hotels	800-528-0444
Econo Lodges	800-446-6900
Embassy Suites	800-362-2779
Fairfield Inn	800-228-2800
Four Seasons	800-332-3442
Hampton Inn	800-426-7866
Helmsley Hotels	800-283-3824
Hilton Hotels	800-445-8667
Holiday Inns	800-465-4329
Howard Johnson	800-465-4329
Hyatt Hotels Corporation	800-233-1234
Loews Hotels	800-223-0888
Marriott Hotels	800-228-9290
Marriott Residence Inns	800-331-3131
Meridien Hotels	800-543-4300
Omni	800-843-6664
Outrigger	800-733-7777
Quality Inns	800-221-2222
Radisson Hotel Corporation	800-333-3333
Ramada Inns	800-272-6232
Ritz Carlton Hotels	800-241-3333
Sheraton	800-325-3535
Stouffer Hotels	800-468-3571
Travelodge Interational	800-255-3050
Westin Hotels	800-228-3000

### Airlines

Air Canada	888-247-2262
Air France	800-AF-PARIS
Alaska Airlines	800-426-0333
Alitalia	800-223-5730
American Airlines	800-433-7300
American Trans Air	800-225-2995

America West Airlines	800-235-9292
British Airways	800-AIRWAYS
Carnival Airlines	800-437-2110
Continental Airlines	800-525-0280
Delta Airlines	800-221-1212
KLM Royal Dutch Airlines	800-374-7747
Lufthansa German Airlines	800-645-3880
Northwest Airlines	800-225-2525
Qantas Airways	800-227-4500
Southwest Airlines	800-435-9792
Swissair	800-221-4750
Tower Air	800-34-TOWER
Trans World Airlines	800-221-2000
United Airlines	800-241-6522
USAIR	800-428-4322
Virgin Atlantic Airways	800-862-8621

### **Car Rentals**

Advantage Rent-A-Car	800-777-5500
Alamo Rent A Car	800-327-9633
Avis Rent A Car	800-331-1212
Budget Car and Truck Rental	800-527-0700
Dollar Rent A Car	800-800-3665
Enterprise Rent-A-Car	800-Rent-a-car
Hertz Rent A Car	800-654-3131
Kemwel Holiday Autos	800-576-1590
National Car Rental	800-227-7368
Thrifty Car Rental	800-367-2277

Note: When renting a vehicle be sure to inspect the inside and outside for damages, be sure to note any damages on the vehicle on the contract no matter how minor. Further use your cell/smart phone camera and take a picture of the damage, this will help in any dispute of damages.

### **Credit Card Numbers (to report lost or stolen)**

American Express (Except AZ)	800-528-4800
Diners Club (Except CO & Canada)	800-525-9040
Discover Card	800-347-2683
MasterCard – USA	800-826-2181
MasterCard Outside USA (Collect)	212-974-5696
Visa (Except CA)	800-336-8472

### **Air Freight Companies**

Airborne Express	800-426-2323
DHL Courier Express	800-225-5345
Emery Worldwide	800-443-6379
Federal Express	800-238-5355
UPS	800-742-5877