**Eyes on the Road: Driving and Transportation Abroad**

Transportation is an important part of a successful trip abroad. While some travelers choose to drive themselves, others rely on public transportation or hired drivers. In any case, it is crucial for the traveler to have a comprehensive understanding of the risks and safety precautions which accompany their arrangements.

One of the major reasons for medical evacuations for travelers, expatriates and their families, students, volunteers and others is due to auto accidents. They represent your main risk in any country.

“First and foremost, travelers should not drive themselves unless they are intimately familiar with road conditions, driving styles and rules of the highway,” said Matthew Bradley, Regional Security Director for International SOS and Control Risks. “Road safety is very specific to the country you are visiting; therefore, it is important to understand driving laws in other countries.”

This is especially true in remote areas that have poor infrastructure. Savvy travelers take credible public transportation. And most use taxis or hire drivers. Other important aspects of driving in a foreign country are renting a car and auto-insurance. Generally, your at-home car insurance will not cover you abroad.

**Stay safe**

Keep these tips in mind to stay safe:

* In most developing countries, traffic can be chaotic. A hired driver should be someone trustworthy.
* They should also speak your language as well as the local dialect, if possible. As a general rule, sit in the back seat on the opposite side from the driver.
* Always wear a seatbelt, wind up your windows and lock doors. Remind your driver to fasten his or her seatbelt as well.
* Ensure that they keep a decent gap between your vehicle and the vehicle in front, both when driving and when stopped. As a general rule, you should be able to see the rear tires of the car in front. This provides better awareness of other cars and room to maneuver away from danger.
* Even though you are not behind the wheel, you are your best advocate for staying safe. If you do not feel safe, speak up.

**If you are in an accident**

Despite your best efforts, you may be involved in an accident outside your home country. Understand that procedures vary depending on where you are in the world, so a little research before a trip goes a long way. In all circumstances, you need to consider the local legal requirements. In certain countries it is not advisable to stay at the accident site, whereas in other locations, you should remain at the scene.

If you need to leave the scene, you may need to report the accident as soon as possible to the local authorities. Contact your assistance company, embassy or consulate for advice. After an accident you may be in shock. Don’t hesitate to call for medical assistance. Carry identification with information in the local language about who to call that can be used if you are unconscious.

**Public Transportation**

In some countries, public transportation may be a safer and more convenient way to travel throughout the area. Be sure to learn which option is more reasonable for your destination. If you choose to consistently or occasionally use public transportation, including buses, trains, and taxis, pay attention to your surroundings.

* Avoid isolated bus/train stops. At night, wait in well-lit areas near other people;
* Stand away from the curb or edge of the platform until the bus, taxi or train arrives;
* Don’t open your purse or wallet while boarding. Have your money/pass in hand, ready to go.
* Alert authorities if you feel threatened. Where crime is a frequent problem extra police are often assigned to these trains.
* Systematic robbery of passengers on trains along popular tourist routes is common, especially at night and on overnight trains. When possible, stay awake, especially when you are by yourself. Take turns sleeping in shifts when you travel with companions.
* If possible, lock your compartment because criminals are known to spray sleeping gas in train compartments.

“Only take taxis clearly identified with official markings,” said Puig. “Beware of unmarked cabs. They can put your safety at risk.”

Traveling in any foreign country can be stressful, but keeping a few tips in mind can make the journey more enjoyable and keep you safe.

Disclaimer: This information has been developed for educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Should you have questions or concerns about any topic described here, please consult your healthcare professional.

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