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THE AAA GUIDE TO TROUBLE-FREE TRAVEL



TAKING CARE
OF YOURSELF
AND YOUR STUFF
WHEN YOU'RE
TAKING A TRIP

IF THE DOOR IS AJAR, THE CAMERA MAY BE A MEMORY

Your room key is buried under a mountain of luggage, cameras and toys. Suddenly, you realize you left the pretzels in the car. So you prop open the door, dash down the stairs, reach under the seats and race back to your room — to find that someone has stolen your belongings.

Wherever you go, if you're a tourist, you're vulnerable. After all, crooks expect travelers to carry lots of money and expensive stuff like digital cameras.

Tourists may also get lost and confused and have to depend on the guidance of strangers. And because they're trying to relax,

vacationers tend to let down their guard and take more chances than they would at home.

Though crimes do happen, they're not as common as you might think. In fact, very few travelers run into trouble. And there are several things you can do to ensure a happy, safe vacation — all related to three basics:

- Stay alert and tune into your surroundings.
- Stand tall, walk confidently and don't make it obvious you're a tourist.
- Trust your instincts. If something doesn't feel right, leave quickly.

TIPS FOR SAFETY ON THE ROAD

Before you squeeze the cooler between the suitcases and wedge Grandma between the kids, do two things that may keep you safer down the road.

First, take your vehicle to a AAA Approved Auto Repair shop and ask for a complete inspection. Next, know where you're going and how you'll get there. Use AAA's TripTik Travel Planner at AAA.com to plan your route. You might also consider purchasing a GPS navigation system. Some manufactured by Magellan feature AAA travel information. By taking a few minutes before setting out, you're less likely to get lost or wind up sitting by the roadside for hours.



Other tips for traveling:

- Keep your gas tank at least 1/4 filled, doors locked, windows up, safety belts buckled and your children in properly installed safety seats.
- Stay on main roads and highways.
- Don't pick up hitchhikers.
- Pack a flashlight, first-aid kit, water and snacks.
- When you stop for breaks, go into the restroom with your kids.
- Carry a cell phone with you at all times.
- Don't stop to help someone with car trouble. Instead, use your cell phone to alert police.
- Always watch for suspicious characters and look for ways to avoid them.

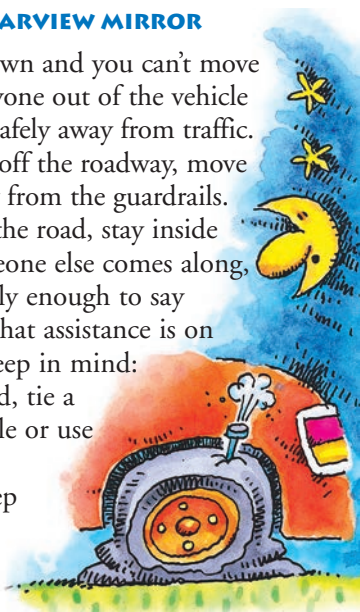
Some people are concerned about carjackings, but the chances that you'll be a victim are slim. Here are a few things you can do to make that risk even slimmer:

- Whenever you need to stop at night, choose a well-lighted, populated facility. Try to park where your vehicle can be seen.
- If your vehicle is bumped by another, don't immediately jump out to check for damage. Watch the other driver. If you're uncomfortable, stay in your vehicle until police arrive.
- When stopping at a traffic light, try to leave space in front of your vehicle so you can pull away if necessary.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SEE YOUR TRANSMISSION IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR

If your vehicle breaks down and you can't move it off the roadway, get everyone out of the vehicle and stand on the shoulder safely away from traffic. If you can get your vehicle off the roadway, move it to the shoulder and away from the guardrails. If your vehicle is safely off the road, stay inside it until help arrives. If someone else comes along, roll down your window only enough to say you've called for help and that assistance is on the way. Other things to keep in mind:

- Raise the vehicle hood, tie a white cloth to a door handle or use reflective triangles.
- If you must walk, keep your group together.



- Be cautious if someone seems overanxious to help, and avoid riding with strangers.
- If someone motions that your tire is flat or your vehicle is smoking, don't stop until he or she is gone. Try to get to a service station or a populated place.

WHERE TO STOP WHEN YOU'RE PARKING

Every time you come to a stop, your vehicle turns into a billboard. Out-of-state tags, luggage, maps — all advertise the arrival of travel-weary tourists with potentially desirable belongings.

After stopping, put the maps away and cover expensive items. Better yet, hide them in the trunk — especially suitcases. You also should:

- Park in a lighted, visible place at night.
- Back your vehicle into a parking space so that it's easier to pull away quickly.
- Always lock your vehicle doors, even if you'll only be gone for a few minutes.
- Be alert whenever you're in a parking lot, parking garage or side street. Look around before getting into or out of your vehicle, and check the back seat before getting in.
- If someone seems to be following you as you walk to your vehicle, walk past it to find help.

TIPS FOR A SAFE HOTEL STAY

After hours of driving, spinning on rides or baking in the sun, you may not be at the peak of alertness when it's time to find a place to stay. That's one reason to book motel or hotel reservations in advance — with advice from your AAA travel agent.

- When you arrive, watch for people hanging around the lobby, maybe listening as you check in. Don't let a stranger carry your luggage. And every time you go to your room, be sure you're not being followed.

- If someone overhears your room number, you can ask to have it changed.



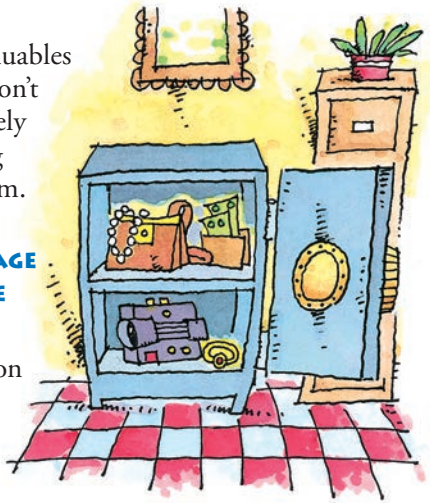
- Stash your valuables in the hotel safe. Don't leave even moderately valuable items lying around in your room.

HOW TO DISCOURAGE UNWANTED HOUSE CALLS

If a delivery person knocks on your door, don't let him in — especially if you haven't ordered anything. Always use the peephole to make sure you know who's out there.

Among other room safety recommendations:

- Keep your entry and balcony doors locked, using deadbolts and chains whenever possible.
- Don't open your door to anyone. Even if a hotel repairman shows up, call the front desk.
- Don't leave keys lying around when you're at the beach or pool.
- Consider buying a portable door alarm, available at specialty shops.



WHEN YOU WANDER AWAY, MAKE VISITORS WONDER WHO'S HOME



- Try not to establish a regular routine and if you go out for a while, leave the TV on and the curtains closed.
 - Don't put the sign on the door for the maid to clean up. If your room has been made up before you go out, hang the "do not disturb" sign on the door.
 - If you're a devoted runner, check with the front desk or a security guard for a safe course.
- Whenever you go out, tell others in your party where you'll be and when you'll be back.

TIPS TO USE WHILE SIGHTSEEING

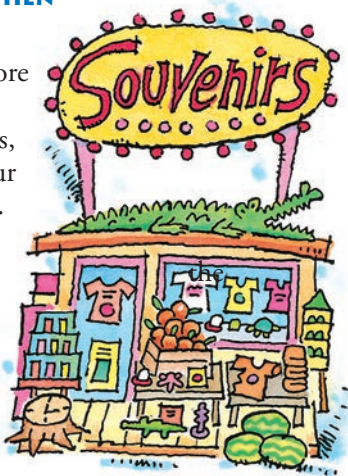
If you're at an attraction, amusement park or sightseeing spot, tell your kids where they should go if they get lost. Keep the whole family together as much as possible.

- Hold hands with family members when walking through crowds. Consider using a safety "leash" for toddlers to make sure they don't stray too far.
- When little kids need a bathroom break, go with them.
- Count family members after every ride.
- Repeat the warning not to talk to strangers, other than police or authorities.
- Give walkie-talkies or cell phones to your kids, and make sure they know how to use them.

TAKING PRECAUTIONS WHEN YOU'RE TAKING A HIKE

When it's time to explore on foot or pick up a few souvenirs from local shops, get good directions to your destination before you go. Taking the safest route may not always be quickest.

- Don't carry too many bulky packages at a time.
- If you get lost, don't act like it.
- If you're alone and someone stops to ask for directions, act as if someone is coming to join you. Keep your distance and look for a place to go in a hurry.
- If you think you're being followed, do an about-face, cross the street or duck into a store.
- If you're going out at night, stay with a group in lighted, busy areas.
- If you're on a sidewalk bordered by bushes, trees or dark doorways, walk close to the street.
- Any time you are in danger, make as much noise as you can to attract attention.



HOW TO AVOID STANDING OUT

One of your best defenses is to avoid standing out in a crowd. If you wear expensive — or expensive-looking — jewelry you may be drawing the wrong person's attention.

- Carry travelers cheques, one credit card and only a small amount of cash.
- Avoid carrying a purse. If you must, use a clutch-type or one with a strap, and hold the purse in front of you.
- When you get travelers cheques or cash, count your money and put everything away before you go outside. When using an ATM, go during the day and not by yourself.
- Above all, if someone wants your purse, wallet, keys or vehicle, don't resist.

PRETEND YOU'RE HOME — BUT IN A BETTER LOCATION

You're on vacation, so leave the alarm clock, workplace worries and daily commute behind. This is the time to sleep late, relax and spend time with your family.

But there are a few things that should always go with you: a sense of awareness, a look of confidence and trust in your instincts. When you're in unfamiliar surroundings, be alert, not afraid. Be cautious, not anxious. If you drink alcohol, don't drink too much. And don't go anywhere with strangers.

If you were home, you'd probably lock your doors, be wary of strangers and try not to take unnecessary chances. If you remember to take the same precautions when you take a trip, your greatest dilemma could be running out of sunscreen.

