

# Top tips to keep you safe when travelling abroad

Charlie McGrath, Co-founder of Objective Travel Safety, provides safety training advice for those who are planning a trip overseas

## THINKING SAFE

Objective Travel Safety's key aim is to help individuals 'think safe' so that they can avoid trouble at the earliest opportunity. Journalists may face extreme danger, such as being shot or the threat of kidnap, and for our young travellers, the main hazard is from crime or getting ill abroad. Our training courses allow the individual to travel with increased confidence which may help to reduce their risks. The contents of our courses vary depending on the specific needs of the client and courses are adapted depending on destinations and the experience of those travelling.

## BEING SMART – WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

So what are the major risks abroad? Whilst they may be varied and change depending on differing jurisdictions, the big three risks remain the same: crime, disease/sickness and road traffic accidents. For example, in Rio de Janeiro or Nairobi, the challenge will be not to be robbed, in India it's not being run-over or getting ill. Our situation awareness training is designed to help people recognise and avoid threats. We encourage our travellers to mentally play the mugger, "who would I rob?" as it encourages them to look for solutions so that they don't become a victim. So often the advice is there to be taken. Some years ago, two of our trained Gap Year students avoided a robbery scam in the Retiro Bus Station in Buenos Aires

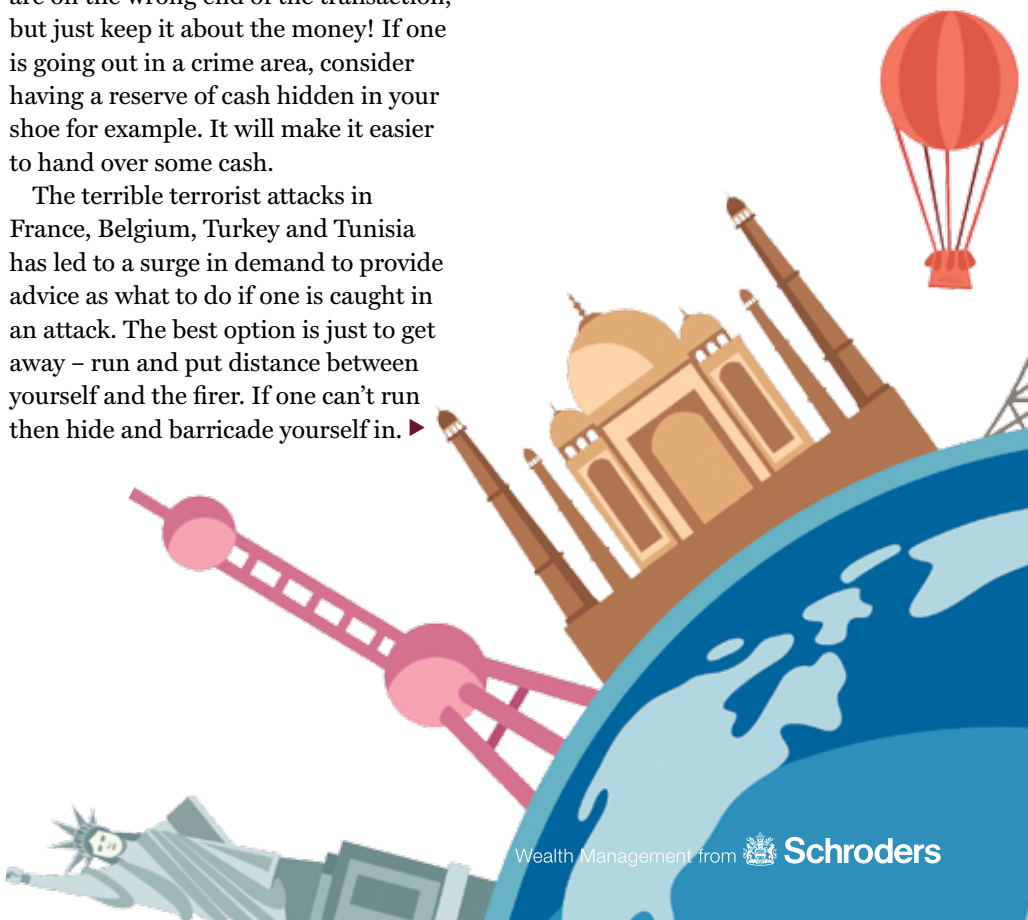
by simply reading the Foreign Office advice for Argentina which had been highlighted on the course. They knew the scam and spotted the culprits from 50 metres as they entered the station.

Nevertheless, it's not always possible to avoid trouble, and a number of people have been mugged despite receiving training as some aggressors are just very good at their job. However, all the victims lived to 'tell the tale' as they knew how to respond – they just complied to the demands. Being robbed is just an economic transaction – you are on the wrong end of the transaction, but just keep it about the money! If one is going out in a crime area, consider having a reserve of cash hidden in your shoe for example. It will make it easier to hand over some cash.

The terrible terrorist attacks in France, Belgium, Turkey and Tunisia has led to a surge in demand to provide advice as what to do if one is caught in an attack. The best option is just to get away – run and put distance between yourself and the firer. If one can't run then hide and barricade yourself in. ▶

## YOUR PACKING LIST MADE EASIER

- HAND SANITISER
- HEAD TORCH
- POWER BANK – TO RECHARGE YOUR MOBILE OR TABLET DEVICE
- UNIVERSAL PLUG ADAPTOR RATED TO 2 AMPS
- INSECT REPELLENT WITH AT LEAST 50% DEET FOR DENGUE, CHIKUNGUNY, ZIKA AND MALARIA AREAS
- MEDICAL PACK
- FILTER WATER BOTTLE SO YOU CAN DRINK ANY WATER
- UNIVERSAL SINK PLUG FOR GAP YEAR STUDENTS – FOR USE IN HOSTELS





## YOUR GUIDE TO KEEPING SAFE


### BUSINESS TRAVELLERS

We now spend 30 minutes or so in our business traveller courses providing basic information such as weapon ranges, what protection will stop a bullet and how to act in the event of an attack. In Bavaria, in conjunction with the Eurovision Academy, we have run up to six, five-day-long hostile environment courses per year for Dutch, German, Swedish, Belgian and other European TV and radio broadcast companies. Most TV stations make it a mandatory requirement that staff have received this kind of training before they are deployed abroad.

### dialogue

For further details on courses please visit [objectivetravelsafety.com](http://objectivetravelsafety.com) or [objectivegapyear.com](http://objectivegapyear.com)

### GAP YEAR ADVICE

The increasing need for safety awareness for young travellers led to us launching the Gap Year safety course in 2004. The course is designed to encourage those travelling to make the most of their time away. We discuss a range of subjects including security and cultural issues, how to interact with the locals, taking local transport, avoiding crime, budgeting and staying healthy. In one day, students are given advice, warnings and responses to various situations so they can avoid trouble and have the confidence to get off the beaten track and explore. Towards the end of the day we cover some of the environmental issues; earthquakes, rip currents and the threat from lightning strike, to help those that may be unfortunate enough to experience these events. A number of years ago a gap year student was swept off a beach in Australia, a frightening experience but he was able to save his own life as he knew what to do. 

This article is for information purposes only and readers should seek advice for their individual circumstances.

### Do

- Research your destination: culture, legal and environmental issues
- Avoid crime by lowering your profile, look confident and be aware of local dangers
- Duplicate essential documents and leave a second copy at home
- Minimise what you take, extra kilograms of weight equals more stress
- Eat in busy restaurants where the locals are
- Re-apply mosquito repellent (it will evaporate in heat) to Avoid being bitten by mosquitoes, they carry malaria, dengue fever and other diseases
- Seek advice from hotels, hostels and information desks on taxis and crime areas for example
- Go to a local doctor if feeling unwell
- Sit at the front of a bus near the driver

### Do not

- Upset or offend the locals
- Get sunburnt; if your shadow is shorter than you the sun is too strong
- Fall for money scams
- Carry anything across international borders for anyone
- Take a room on the ground or lower floor
- Let yourself get run down, stay healthy
- Get dehydrated, drink lots of water
- Shower with your mouth open
- Fight off muggers; comply with demand
- Swim where others are not



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