SPRING BREAK
INFORMATION FROM THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT ON
STUDENT TRAVEL ABROAD

For more information on documents needed for travel abroad, State Department Travel Alerts and Warnings, and Country-Specific Information Sheets, please see:

http://studentsabroad.state.gov/

Ready for Spring Break?
Don't let your escape from dorm life and research papers turn into a Spring Break horror story. Put your mind (and your parents) at ease by using these strategies to avoid dangerous situations.

Do you have a passport?
You may now need a passport for Spring Break, even if you didn’t need one before! The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative created new guidelines for travel, even to Mexico and Canada. Make sure you have all the information you need before you travel, and APPLY EARLY FOR YOUR PASSPORT!

Plan Ahead: Before you Travel—Register Your Trip
Millions of Americans travel abroad every year and encounter no difficulties. However, U.S. embassies and consulates assist nearly 200,000 Americans each year who are victims of crime, accident or illness, or whose family and friends need to contact them in an emergency. When an emergency happens, or if a natural disaster, terrorism, or civil unrest strikes during your foreign travel, the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate can be your source of assistance and information. By registering your trip, you help the embassy or consulate locate you when you might need them the most. Registration is voluntary and costs nothing, but it should be a big part of your travel planning and security.

If you’re planning to travel abroad, you are encouraged to register your travel with the Department of State. No, this isn’t Big Brother tracking you. Travel registration makes it possible to contact you if necessary, whether there’s a family emergency in the United States or a crisis in the country you are visiting. Registration is quick, easy and free, so go to the following web site and register today!

https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/index.aspx

Are you traveling to Mexico?
Make sure you read the most recent Travel Alert. If you decide to go to Mexico, know the risks and the recommendations from the State Department:


Avoid underage and excessive alcohol consumption.
"Overdoing it,” leads to the majority of arrests, accidents, violent crimes, rapes, and deaths suffered by American students on spring break. As in the U.S., disturbing the peace, lewd behavior, littering, driving under the influence, drinking on the street or on public transportation may all be considered criminal activities by local authorities—is it worth it?

Don't import, purchase, use, or have drugs in your possession.
It just makes good sense. Drug charges can carry severe penalties, including imprisonment without bail for up to a year before a case is even tried. A conviction carries several more years of imprisonment in a foreign jail. In some countries it doesn't matter if you're underage either; you can still be charged as an adult.
Obey the local laws.
An arrest or accident during spring break can result in a difficult legal situation. Your U.S. citizenship does not make you exempt from full prosecution under another country's criminal justice system. Many countries impose harsh penalties for violations that would be considered minor in the United States. If you find yourself in a legal jam, contact the closest U.S. consulate, U.S. consular agency, or the U.S. embassy for assistance. Keep in mind, U.S. consular employees cannot arrange for local officials to release detained American citizens.

Take warning flags on beaches seriously.
This seems like a no-brainer, but many drownings occur when swimmers are overwhelmed by the water conditions. If black or red flags are up, do not enter the water. Strong undertow and rough surf along beaches are more common than you may think, especially on the Pacific coast. If you swim, always exercise caution.

Only use licensed and regulated taxis.
Some illegitimate taxi drivers are sometimes, in fact, criminals in search of victims. Some passengers of unlicensed taxis have been robbed, kidnapped, and/or raped. When in doubt, ask the hotel, club or restaurant staff to summon a legitimate taxi for you.

Do not carry weapons.
A pocketknife can result in a serious weapons charge while on foreign soil - even if the knife is found while being arrested for a separate offense. Visitors driving across the border to Mexico should ensure that their vehicles contain no firearms or ammunition.

Avoid participating in demonstrations and other political activities.
Here in the U.S. we enjoy many liberties. However, political activities in other countries can result in detention and/or deportation by officials. Even demonstrations that are intended to be peaceful can sometimes turn violent, and you don't want to be caught in the middle. You can "stick it to the man," but on your own soil.

Be conscientious.
Be aware of surroundings, and take general precautions. Remember that standards of safety and supervision (i.e. for swimming pools or hotel balconies) may not reach those expected in the United States. The difference has contributed to the deaths of U.S. citizens overseas. It’s scary, but true. Also, don't take your valuables with you on your trip—leave them at home in your sock drawer.

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