

## Exploring Different Cultures . . . Safely

For many DoDEA students, the opportunity to experience different cultures is one of the greatest benefits of living overseas or in different parts of the United States. As former DoDEA student Ed Griffin put it, “Few people realize how much you can immerse yourself in a culture when you are living overseas. I loved walking around the old cities, trying new foods like “currywurst,” and being able to talk to people I would never get to meet back home.”

Yet, when exploring a new location – whether it is a shopping mall in the United States or a tourist attraction overseas – it is crucial to stay cognizant of the need for personal security. According to the Pentagon Force Protection Agency’s Personal Security Guide, “Terrorism is a form of crime, and at the personal level, defenses against both are virtually identical.”

Keeping these basic personal security tips in mind when venturing abroad can help DoDEA students, staff and their families limit their vulnerability to terrorist attacks or criminal activity:

- ◆ Research the area you are visiting. Talk to your security officer or State Department officials for country specific information and travel advisories.
- ◆ Dress inconspicuously and avoid insignias that advertise you are a U.S. citizen.
- ◆ Learn some of the local language.
- ◆ Walk with a companion or in groups. Stay in well-lit areas.
- ◆ When traveling, dress casually; dress down where appropriate. Be aware of local customs.
- ◆ Keep your valuables in a secure area on your person. Make sure the openings of purses or fanny packs are located on your side or front to deter pick-pockets. Fasten backpacks securely. Keep wallets in the front pocket of trousers.
- ◆ Consider safe havens where you could seek protection. Police stations, government buildings, and banks usually have armed guards who could intervene to protect you.
- ◆ Occasionally thinking through how you would escape a hypothetical situation can improve your response during an actual incident.
- ◆ Notice your surroundings when walking down the street. “Street smart” means paying attention to others around you. Some U.S. personnel have successfully escaped terrorist attacks by noticing assailants following them in traffic and immediately taking action to avoid the area.



The State Department offers information on security conditions in foreign locations. Printed advisories are available on-line at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel\\_1744.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html). Additional information on personal security measures is available from:

- ◆ The DoDEA Office of Safety and Security at [www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/index.cfm](http://www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/index.cfm), or
- ◆ The DoD Antiterrorism Level I training on-line at [www.at-awareness.org](http://www.at-awareness.org) or <https://atlevel1.dtic.mil/at/>. ■