



HOW TO TRAVEL SAFELY ON BUSINESS OR FOR LEISURE

Every year millions of travellers are taking to the skies heading for foreign destinations on business or leisure. Threats to their personal safety and security await them at all corners of the earth, however, there are steps you can take to mitigate potential risks. Garth Fuchs, Executive Director of DeltaOne International, shared some valuable thoughts on how to travel safely while on business or for leisure.

The stress of travel tends to magnify the risks faced by many. Travellers are subject to jet lag and fatigue, adding to the difficulty of common sense decision-making processes, especially under duress. Added to this is the combination of traveller profile and unfamiliar environments, different cultures, different legal systems and different driving conditions as well as having to contend with different security threats than those to which one is accustomed back at home. All these factors tend to contribute to a degree of vulnerability and uncertainty.

many travellers spend more time searching for a restaurant to host that important business meeting or looking for fun leisure activities, than researching for the security precautions that should be taken. The recent terror incidents in Australia, France and Belgium demonstrate the dynamic flux of how quickly the risk and safety rating for any destination may change. The risk spectrum may include varying degrees of crime, political instability (such as the Arab Spring in 2010), or natural disasters (like the devastating tsunami that struck Asia in 2004, leaving more than 200,000 people dead and millions of people homeless.) Pre-travel security awareness preparation, allows individuals to become familiar with the security-related risks of a specific destination, and to have a plan for natural disasters such as earthquakes and extreme weather. The more control you have over events and the situations involving you, your loved ones and colleagues, the less risk there will be. What we are trying to do is increase our awareness, understand risk and, where possible, take control of our lives.

PRE-TRAVEL AWARENESS

Travel well and smart

Most business travellers think they travel well and smart, but in reality they don't. Many of us don't prepare enough for the safety and security threats of the places we travel to. Travellers usually don't think about safety either, because nothing has happened to them previously, or whatever steps they need to take to guard their safety is a source of inconvenience. In fact,

Do your pre-trip research

Doing pre-trip research shouldn't be a chore. Learning about the place, its climate, people, culture and customs, will not only improve your safety and security, but will stand you in good stead for a more enjoyable holiday, without the chance of causing



offence. Your pre-trip research should also include: the status of travel warnings for your destination and the surrounding region, the level of local political stability, the activity of terrorist organizations, the risks posed by local criminal activity and, the nature of local emergency medical care

Travel agent brochures about a destination tend to be very alluring and colourful, without pointing out the dangers and downsides of places. Your research should cover the hot spots for gang activity, drive-by shootings, car-jacking, burglary, muggings and assault with deadly weapons. Find out as much as you can about the crime rate and the areas in which crime is normally perpetrated. In doing so, you can build up your sense of awareness of what and where the actual dangers are, and how to avoid them.

Planning

A little advanced planning will ensure you arrive safely at your destination, relaxed and ready to enjoy your stay. Your travel plans and precautions should be sensible and simple, with enough depth to retain control. Doing this will minimise the risk of an incident spoiling your holiday. Getting mugged or robbed before you arrive at your hotel will put a stop to any planned holiday before it's even begun. You want to remember your holiday for the right reasons and not for the wrong ones.

Never leave home without a map or access to Google maps, to help you plan your holiday and your route. Try obtain a map of the city/country before you arrive in-country. Ideally do a map

study and plan your routes before you arrive. Re-check it while you are in-flight and pre-select safe havens like embassies, hospitals, police stations and public buildings along your route. Identify obvious landmarks and prominent buildings that you can use as markers so that when you are travelling by bus, taxi or car you know roughly where you are. That way you are retaining control. Remember that it is a good idea to copy all credit cards, passports, air tickets and other documents, to facilitate reporting loss and replacing them, if needed.

IN THE AIR

The Airport

Your main aim and approach in dealing with airport departures must be to get through security and immigration as quickly as possible. The most dangerous area in any airport is land-side, and the safest is air-side. Many travellers postpone getting air-side because of the perception that the facilities are not as good as they are land-side. Once through the hurdle of getting air-side, you can relax because everyone air-side are either employees or travellers and have gone through security.

At your destination airport the same principle applies. You are able collect your baggage relatively safely, however, as soon as you are processed through to land-side you become vulnerable and need to heighten your security awareness.

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Flight

The reasoning behind the security risks land-side, are that criminals are drawn to airports in the knowledge that travellers tend to have large amounts of money and other valuables while travelling, and therefore make easy targets. You don't want to be coming out of the airport badly stressed, carrying two suitcases and a shoulder bag, screaming at the kids and looking at the signposts like a lost tourist because you are sending out signals of vulnerability. Your aim should be to spend as little time at the airport as possible and get to your hotel as quickly, and as safely as possible, so that you can deposit your money and valuables in your room safe. Criminals know this vulnerability and will try at every opportunity to target you from land-side until your check in at your hotel.

Airline Safety Record

Get your travel agent to check the safety record of your intended airline carrier, and only fly with an airline that has a good safety record. The recent incidents in the Far East in which aircraft have simply dropped out of the sky, underscores this point.

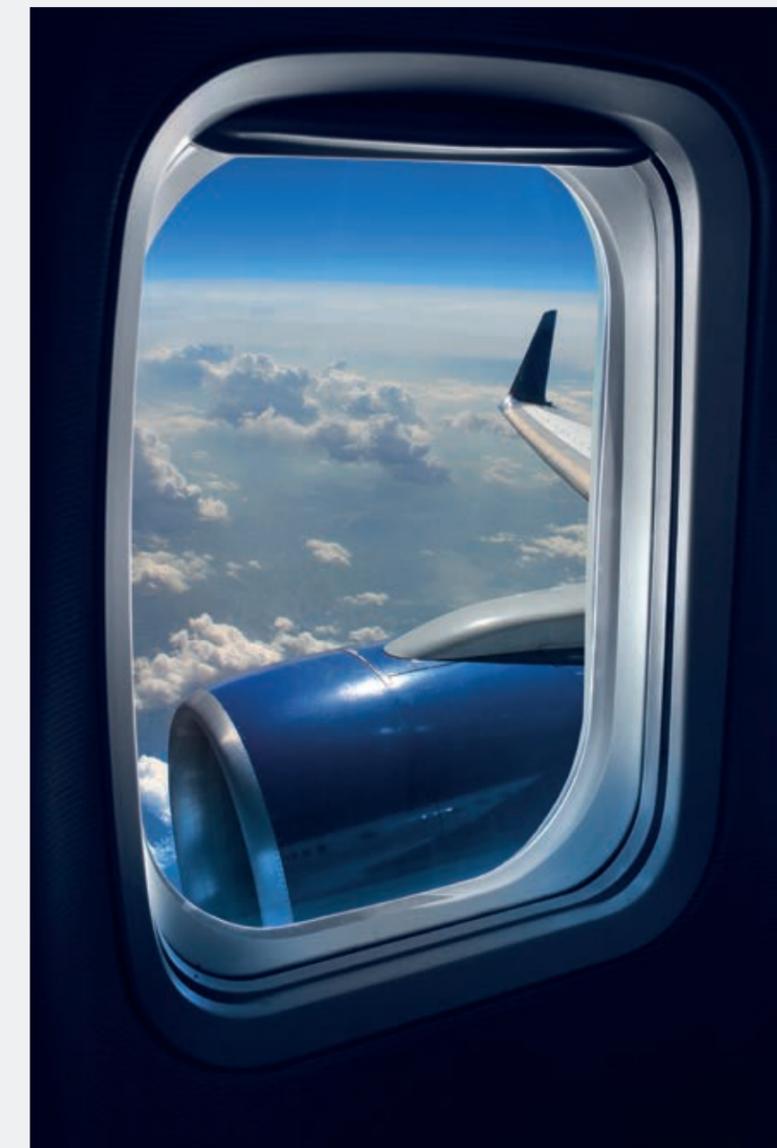
Whenever possible try and fly on a wide-bodied aircraft like a Boeing 747 or an Airbus A380. Hijackers tend to avoid targeting wide-bodied aircraft because of the tactical problem of covering so many passengers and having three columns of seating instead of two.

From a convenience perspective, try and schedule a direct flight. From a security perspective there are two reasons for this. Most airline accidents occur during the takeoff and landing, thus, from a statistical point of view, the less interaction between your aircraft and the runway, the safer you are from being involved in an accident.

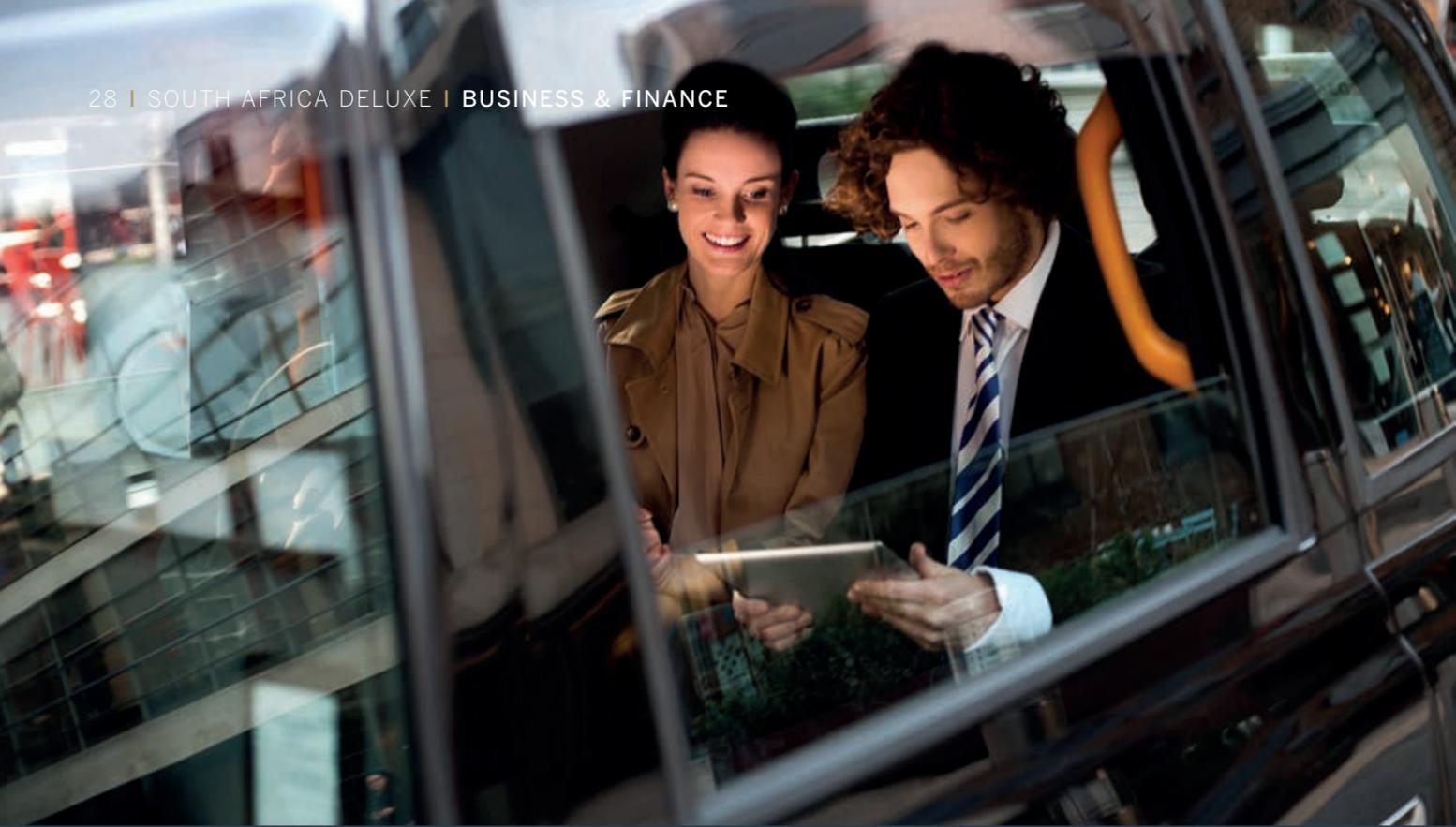
The second motivation is to minimise the risk of being involved in a hijacking, and the usual points of infiltration by hijackers are the less secure airports at which connecting flights must stop. If you must take a connecting flight, make sure you are not transferring in an airport that has a history of poor safety practices or is in a high-risk area.

In Flight

Your passport, wallet and other valuables should be on your person or in your cabin baggage. Hold luggage is often targeted through pilfering, theft or tends to go missing. Most travellers prefer an aisle seat. Consider choosing a window or centre seat as this may keep you from being selected by hijackers or any action that may be going on in the aisle in the event of a hostage



Import



AT YOUR DESTINATION

Taxis

Airports are high-risk locations, so having pre-arranged transportation to move on to your final destination is preferable. This may take the form of a meet and greet security driver/chauffeur or the hotel courtesy vehicle/shuttle.

If you are taking a taxi, only use reputable cabs from the official rank. Don't be suckered into going with those pushy cab drivers trying to solicit your business in unauthorised transport. If you use registered taxis there is a system of accountability. This tends to hold true for most countries.

Most airports tend to have floaters and touts who wander the airport saying "Looking for a taxi? I'll take you to your hotel for \$5." Being in a new country and feeling a little vulnerable, there is a tendency to go along with someone who hustles you. Don't do it. The principle remains the same, stay in control. If you go with him he is controlling you, because he has picked you.

In countries where English is not the common spoken language, it may be advisable have the description and address details of your hotel, printed on a card in the local language to hand to your taxi driver to confirm your intended destination. This may also be handy on those days you go exploring and become a little

disorientated and need to ask the locals for directions. When you are in the taxi keep your map handy and ensure that the route being used by the taxi driver is in the right general direction or is he taking you on a roundabout trip with a hefty price tag at the end.

If an argument about your route leads to a confrontation in the taxi, use your map to find the nearest safe haven – hotel, police station or public building – and instruct the driver to drop you there. Pay him and get another taxi. You can't afford aggravation in a strange place, because you are then surrendering control.

The Hotel

Once you have checked into your hotel, the first order of business is to get your valuables into the hotel safe. Your second order of business is to orientate yourself in terms of where the emergency exists are. Get your bellman to point out the emergency exists while he is escorting you to your room during the check-in process. From your room, know the position of nearest exist and next available alternative. Hotel fires are a real danger and it would be prudent for everyone in your group to walk the escape route personally. This opportunity will allow you to become familiar with your new surroundings and to verify that the fire exit still holds true. Often I have found that the fire exit doors are locked, the lights are broken or there are storage boxes packed in front of the escape doors preventing any emergency escape. You will want to know this before there is a fire, not when you are trying to use the exit for real. During the attack on the

five-star Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai by four terrorists in November 2008, 31 of the 450 guests in the hotel at the time of the Pakistani backed terror attack, were either murdered at point blank range or leapt to their deaths to escape the fire that spread through the hotel.

Understand that there are a number of people with free right of access to your hotel room. Cleaners and hotel staff may come into your room with legitimate reasons to do so. Most hotel staff are honest and hardworking, however a few do succumb to temptation. Do not leave valuables lying about or try hiding valuables in your room. There are really very few places that you can hide valuables and none that can't be found very quickly by someone searching. Attaching the "Do Not Disturb" sign to your room door will only work for a while. So if the sign is hanging out all day, it is only a matter of time before someone knocks and establishes that the room is vacant. Keep your luggage locked when you are not in your room. It will not stop a professional thief or foreign intelligence agent, but it will keep the curious hotel maid honest.

Your hotel room is your home away from home for the duration of your stay and you should apply the same security measures there as you would back home. Most hotels have a double turn mortise lock and chain. As an added security measure you can use a small door wedge as well as the locks. Retain control by applying the same visitor screening procedure that you would utilise back home.

Prostitutes take advantage of travellers around the world through the use of various ploys, including the use of "knock out" drugs. The result could be the theft of your luggage, cash, credit cards and your passport; or worst case scenario you could be kidnapped and held for ransom. Avoid engaging persons who you do not know and refrain from inviting them to your room.

Safe Areas

Local insight will augment and add additional value to the desk research that you would have conducted prior to your travel. The hotel concierges are normally excellent sources of a wide range of different information. The local police station can also provide valuable input.

Local sources will be able to advise you on which areas to avoid, the most common scams and other crimes to be aware of. Tell the concierge the types of things that you like to do, what you want to see and they will advise you where to go, where to avoid, the best time to go and how to get there. People tend to avoid the booking centre in the hotel because they assume it will be expensive. Hotels tend to refer or use only reputable people to service their guests. This is a small price to pay for the peace of mind of having a hotel-vetted service provider and is far less risky for you than booking a tour at the side of the street.



The Hotel

On the Street

When you are out and about, always maintain your sense of direction and your position relative to the landmarks and prominent buildings that you identified in your map study prior to arriving. Have your mental list of safe havens and places you can go. Apply and follow the same security awareness measures that you would apply back home, switching between colour codes of awareness for perceived changes in your environment. This can be done in a relaxed manner without detracting from the enjoyment of your holiday. Dress sensibly without sending out signals of wealth and keeping particular note of the local context and customs. Within the first 24 hours of being in-country, I recommend that you familiarise yourself with your neighbourhood. Leave your valuables in the safe and take a minimal amount of money with you. Consider carrying a give-away wallet so you don't have to be a hero. You will only want to be a hero if you are carrying everything you own with you – your

passport, your cash and credit cards. Keep control of these items and you won't have that problem. Only keep one credit card on your person; leave the rest in your hotel safe.

Change your money at a bank or at your hotel; your rate might be slightly worse but at least you are able to maintain control. You will be offered a better rate of exchange on the street, but you don't know what you are letting yourself in for when you enter that alley to do the money exchange. Criminals will select an ambush point that provides them with dominance and control. Street traders around the world offer you merchandise of every imaginable description. Should you show the slightest interest in any one product, in an instant, you will be swarmed by other traders, each trying to outbid the next. Try and buy from regulated stalls and markets. If someone approaches you in the street or an open-air market and offers to lead you to where you can get the best goods "dirt-cheap", don't believe them. If you follow them, you've handed control over to someone else who could lead you into a trap.

Pickpockets are a persistent problem around the world. They tend to work in twos and threes and operate in crowded areas like markets, airports, bus and railway stations and events. Remove the principle of opportunity and restrict the ability of pickpockets to steal your valuables. Don't carry valuables in obvious pockets, but if you must, button down pockets or use a safety pin. A handkerchief stuffed into the top of a pocket will stop their hands getting into your pockets. If you carry a bag, don't leave it open and don't have a purse or wallet in the top of your bag, even if it is closed. Consider securing your bags zips with re-usable cable ties, carabineers or padlocks.

Returning Home

At the conclusion of your holiday you will be asked to declare, at the airport of departure, the integrity of your luggage. Before departing your hotel, empty your suitcase completely and repack it. Once this has been done and you know the complete contents, lock it and mark it with a discreet distinguishing mark so that nobody can switch cases with you and that you are able to retain control of that case until you check it in at the airport. Lastly, don't have labels on your suitcase containing your name and address details plastered all over your suitcase. Our interconnected world leaves you vulnerable in the knowledge that you are away from home.

When you arrive back at your home airport, don't forget to switch-on when you get land-side. The universal truth is that all airports worldwide are prone to varying degrees of risk and just because you are back in your home country is not a reason to lower your guard and end an enjoyable holiday on a bad note. ■ Garth Fuchs

For more information on executive personal security services visit www.delta01.com / www.bodyguard.co.za or contact telephone: +27 11 0555 777, mobile: +27 82 882 5223

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HISTORY AND HEROES.



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