

# Be Safe

*When You Travel with  
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## Informational Shorts on Travelling Safe

### What's so Common about Common Sense?

*There are five words that most people hear when they are saying their goodbyes before leaving on vacation.*

Their friends tell them to just use your common sense. But until the "common" part of common sense is defined, no one really knows what it means. Common to me might be to wear my gold chain and gold ring and carry my expensive camera around with me wherever I travel. Common to you may be to take off all your "bling" and store it in the hotel safe, and show some sensitivity to the locals being too ostentatious when you travel.

As far as travel safety is concerned we can define common sense as "being aware of your surroundings and your possessions at all times"; watching for the warning signs of a travel scam (you will learn these from reading this column) and leaving a situation quickly when you feel that your safety may be at risk. A popular saying is that "forewarned is forearmed". If you can recognize the characteristics of a scam, then you can better safeguard your person, your possessions and your travels.

### Taxi Scams: Welcome to your destination!

*Taxi drivers are for the most part, honest hard working individuals.*

But in every profession there are a few "bad apples" that can cause you grief during your travels. Here is the set-up for a popular taxi scam.

You arrive in a country for your very first visit and hail a taxi to your hotel. The smiling driver immediately asks if you've been to the country before. You say No.

You have, in a way, just informed the driver that you don't know where things are located, you probably have no idea of distances and you may not be familiar with the language, the currency or the current scams. You have set yourself up as a potential target for a scam. The driver can use one of several old tricks when he says:

1. ...there are road repairs up ahead so I better take the long way to your hotel (whereby you end up paying more).
2. ...your hotel is not very good. I know a better one. I'll take you there (you end up going to the driver's relatives' hotel where he gets a kick-back on the room rate and you get an inferior hotel room and location).
3. ...I'll take you to a jewellery shop on the way to your hotel where you'll get the best prices anywhere in the country (you end up paying much more and it will be very hard to leave the store if you choose not to purchase anything).
4. ...there is a surcharge on top of the meter fare between the hours of (whereby you are tricked into paying more for the ride and then you will be reminded to TIP the driver on top of this surcharge).

It doesn't matter how friendly the driver acts. It's all part of the scam. The idea is to take advantage of you, as you have admitted that you've never been here before.

### How to avoid this?

You can answer the question by saying that you are familiar with the country and are expected at the hotel shortly so the driver should take you there without any stops on the way. If the driver insists, then tell him/her to stop the car and you'll get out.

Some travellers will take a photo of the taxi before they get in, so they have the driver's number, just in case. If he's a great driver, they can ask for him again, but if he's a scam artist then there is a record to report to the police or inform the manager at your hotel.

Continued...

We are delighted to partner with Steve Gillick (President of Talking Travel / [www.talkingtravel.ca](http://www.talkingtravel.ca)) who has been in the travel industry for over 30-years and is a well-respected speaker and travel educator. These "tips" are designed to give you information but not a guarantee that, despite all precautions, you are completely safe from scam artists while travelling. We hope you enjoy these and that you travel safe.



Worldwide Central Travel Ltd., 295 Weber Street North, Unit 3, Waterloo ON N2J 3H8  
Local: (519) 886-7700 Toll-Free (North America): 1-888-667-8881 Email: [travel@worldwide.on.ca](mailto:travel@worldwide.on.ca)