

Be Safe

*When You Travel with
Worldwide Central Travel*



Informational Shorts on Travelling Safe

The "Bump"

Having survived your first few minutes at the destination, you decide to explore the neighbourhood around the hotel. You find a shop selling souvenirs. The signs in the shop explain that if you break it, you've bought it. Fair enough. But just then someone bumps into you, causing you to lose your balance and you crash into a shelf containing glass figurines. They fall to the floor. The shop keeper is standing in front of you with a threatening look that you better pay up or there will be trouble.

What happened?

You have been the victim of a set-up! The store practices a regular routine with tourists, many of whom stay at the same hotel as you, whereby two fake tourists enter the shop and start a lively conversation, touching and comparing souvenirs. When a real tourist (you) is in place "in front of some breakable objects" one of the fake tourists pretends to lose her balance, causing the 2nd fake tourist to bump into you with enough force to cause you to lose your balance and break something. The fake tourists apologize quickly and leave the shop. The shop owner is part of the scam operation. S/he then confronts you, as you are the only one left in the shop and you were clearly the one who actually broke the merchandise.

The shop keeper wants immediate payment in cash. S/he is yelling in the local language, a crowd is gathering outside the shop. You are upset, scared and don't actually have that kind of cash with you.

What you can do?

There are a few strategies that have worked with this scenario

1. Ask the shop owner to call the police or the tourist police, many of whom will speak English. Explain your version of events to them and hope for a sympathetic ear.
2. Appeal to the crowd in the hopes that someone will speak English and be able to represent your side of the story with the shop owner
3. Ask to call the manager or concierge at your hotel (which is why you should always carry a hotel business card with you), and again, explain your story to them
4. In some instances the tourist will show the shop keeper how much money they actually have with them, and the owner will settle for cash on the spot. This is called "buying your way out of a predicament", and while it is not an ideal solution, sometimes it may be the most immediate way to extricate yourself from the store.

Remember as many details as possible and report the incident to the hotel, and if you choose, the tourist police.

Could you have prevented this scam?

Probably not. But in the future, you may be able to recognize the warning signs and be able to move away from aggressive tourists, or rambunctious children, or from the breakable section of the shop.

We are delighted to partner with Steve Gillick (President of Talking Travel / www.talkingtravel.ca) who has been in the travel industry for over 30-years and is a well-respected speaker and travel educator. These are designed to give you information about travel scams and how scam artists work. The goal is to be aware and informed. Still, there is no guarantee that, despite all precautions, you can completely avoid scam artists. We hope you enjoy these and that you travel safe.

