

Bring 'em Home Safe A Checklist for Student Safety Abroad

**NCHERM Presentation
April 19, 2001
Troy Harris
*Director of Risk Management
Westmont College, Santa Barbara CA***

Intro: What it Takes

Ah, the stories you could tell. The midnight call informing parents that their son is in a foreign jail cell. The auto accident in a country where your students were expressly told not to drive. The email saying Sara's in the hospital with dengue fever she caught in the jungle. The misunderstanding at the border that led to the confiscated pickup. Your student's little cross-cultural gaffes that led to unexpectedly messy imbroglios. Maybe we should have titled this article "Bring 'em back alive!"

You're only reading this if you have something to do with the wide, wide world of student travel abroad. We hope that somewhere in this article you'll discover something fresh, something novel, something you've not yet encountered that will help your students be ready for one of life's richest experiences.

Three elements are crucial to that readiness.

- ✓ **Collaboration**
- ✓ **Preparation**
- ✓ **Orientation**

We'll address these in order, sharing what we've seen work well at Westmont College. Then we'll take you on a brief guided tour of the safety segment of Westmont's foreign travel orientation, a PowerPoint presentation designed to get our travelers

- ✓ **"There & Back ... In One Piece"**

Collaboration

Only by effective collaboration and coordination will students have any hope of digesting the massive amount of information they need to contemplate as they pack their bags. There is so much to tell them, and so little time. Working together helps to minimize duplication and to ensure that the prime priorities are emphasized. Here are some of the collaborators in safety planning, along with brief observations about their roles. The first three listed, and the last one, have important input to the mandatory-for-travelers semi-annual orientations (one each semester for next semester's travel) that are a key ingredient of a well-conceived safety strategy. The others are essential resources for you to work with as you develop and refine your own training methods.

✓ **Off-Campus Programs Office**

In addition to overall program management and oversight, this office has primary responsibility for planning and conducting the travel orientation.

✓ **Campus Health Center**

Our resident physician speaks from experience about the medical risks students may face. Take this quick quiz yourself to see if you'd be helped by listening to his presentation (answers in footnote¹):

1. What is the most common illness experienced by travelers?
A. Diarrhea; B. Flu; C. Altitude sickness; D. Hepatitis; E. Giardia
2. What is the leading cause of death in travelers?
A. Heart attack; B. Accidents; C. Cancer; D. Stroke; E. Parasites
3. What is the leading cause of traveler's diarrhea?
A. Jetlag; B. Dehydration; C. Chemical imbalance; D. Malnutrition; E. Food
4. If you could take one medication with you on your trip, what would it be?
A. PeptoBismol tablets; B. Sunscreen; C. Analgesic; D. Immodium; E. Dramamine
5. How is Hepatitis A transmitted?
A. Kissing; B. Food and water; C. Sexual contact; D. Animal bite; E. Puncture
6. What kinds of foods are safest to eat?
A. Washed; B. Peeled; C. Cooked; D. Prayed over; E. Vegetarian

✓ **Anthropology Department**

A cultural anthropologist prepares the students for culture shock (forward and reverse), and covers the highlights of cultural sensitivity.

✓ **Traveling Faculty**

You have a priceless resource in the battle-scarred faculty who have led programs for you in the past. We hosted an upscale catered lunch that attracted them to an occasion for shoptalk with their colleagues. As they regaled us with accounts of students' harebrained antics (clambering up an armed embankment in the Middle East, dancing on the precipice at the White Cliffs of Dover), we took copious notes of the events and their impact on the faculty. These notes were then organized into an outline of the issues faculty face, forming the basis for what we then knew had to be built into our risk management plan. Thus, we were able to customize our plan and at the same time build a vital bridge with faculty by listening and attending to their felt needs.

¹ 1-A; 2-B; 3-E; 4-A; 5-B; 6-B

Another useful tool for faculty is an orientation especially for them. Of course you'll want them to attend the student orientation-so they'll know what the students were told. But also get them together for a special time in advance to offer them support for their often unanticipated-and usually unappreciated-round-the-clock role as mother/father/teacher/guide/disciplinarian. This will open their eyes to the not-necessarily-glamorous reality ahead, and will also give them encouragement by seeing that they're not entirely alone in coping with the expectable unexpected.

✓ **Legal Counsel**

It's commonly said that waiver forms "ain't worth the paper they're printed on." Still, they have their place-especially when seen as an educational opportunity, not just more rigmarole. The main thing here is to realize that your counsel is your counselor, not your mommy. You don't have to say it in legalese. You can make the content readable (ie, plain English) and still cover the important points of acknowledgement and assumption of risk. One value of waivers: at least some of your students will have the ethical gumption to not sue you after they said right there on paper that they fully understood and voluntarily accepted the risks of foreign travel.

✓ **Links with Other Departments**

Student Life (prepping the Dean for the parent calls), the business office (collecting and explaining the fees that defray orientation and insurance program costs) ... many departments have a role in helping you be ready to send your students abroad with a good measure of confidence.

✓ **Risk Management**

Finally, yet crucially, the Risk Manager's task-beyond presenting the travel safety orientation segment-is to quietly and diplomatically see that all the parties do their part. Putting the resource network in place (see below) is just the beginning of the coordination role. Ongoing vigilance will help to ensure that gaps and overlaps in services are addressed and prevented. And the enlightened risk manager will ensure that common sense, and the frank acceptance of inevitable risk, permeate the overall plan.

Preparation

✓ **Documentation**

Each school will have its own forms related to the safety dimension of travel planning, but the titles and summaries of those we use may point to one or more you've not yet considered (see samples in Appendix):

- **Participation Agreement** (aka Informed Consent, aka Assumption of Risk, aka Waiver) - The form that outlines the risks and solicits the student's agreement to voluntarily accept them.
- **Medical/Health Information Form** - This form gathers basic personal medical information for the purpose of ensuring that resources are available in advance when appropriate, and in response when necessary.
- **Travel Safety Manual** - A compendium of key points in personal safety management, some of which are highlighted in the orientation presentation.
- **Risk Management Strategy Overview** - Provided to students and their parents so that they'll see that we've taken steps to be poised for action if misfortune arises while abroad.

- **Health Care Agent Designation** (& Instructions) - This California form may have counterparts in other states. The wording and signature process are hard-wired into California law, so although we consider the form cumbersome, there's nothing we can do about that.

✓ Insurance

You already have the standard liability policies in place (general liability², employment practices and/or educators legal liability, domestic workers' compensation, and others). Exposures and insurance requirements differ by country and by activity; all insurance issues should be reviewed by and discussed with your insurance consultant. Here are some additional insurance products that can help distribute your risk.

- **Student Health Coverage** - A study conducted by USC found, under close scrutiny, that of 32 students in the foreign travel program being investigated, only 2 of their parents' health insurance policies would have provided meaningful coverage for their student in the event of an accident abroad. Consequently, at Westmont we now require all students to be rostered on our standard student health policy, which is expressly worldwide in scope. This is modest, "safety-net" coverage; that is, it remains (like for our on-campus students) secondary to any parental coverage that may be available. But we, and the students, are assured by this arrangement that if a medical need arises, there will be some help ultimately.³
- **Foreign Auto** - If there's any possibility that a faculty member will be driving a vehicle in another country, this policy will cover important gaps that may arise between the statutory-limit insurance you must purchase in that country, and the level of limits typically carried at home.⁴ For instance, Mexican law requires basic insurance, but it is very basic. However, when we get a car (whether owned, rented or borrowed) insured with an admitted carrier in Mexico, the liability limits of our international auto coverage will kick in to provide supplemental protection. Remember, this coverage is strictly for employees driving on official business. It does not cover pleasure side trips by faculty, or any motor vehicle use by students. Also, this coverage protects *only* the institution and does not replace any statutory obligations which may remain with the driver.
- **Foreign Workers' Compensation** - Many domestic policies will provide coverage for US hires while traveling on company business subject to certain limitations, including duration of travel. If you hire employees overseas—local nationals or third country nationals—check with your insurance advisor to ensure the proper coverage is in place. It's crucial to realize that what constitutes an employee/employer relationship varies by jurisdiction. Laws and exposures vary greatly by country and should be addressed on an individual basis. Insurance coverage will vary by carrier and by state. Confused? No wonder. You'll want to verify your policy terms with your broker. The exposure here is high; don't get caught off-guard.

Check, too, to be sure you have medical evacuation and repatriation coverage for your employees. Many workers' compensation policies include this, and there may be overlap

² Make sure your GL policy: a) does not exclude any countries you'll be traveling in; b) includes suits brought in the US (even for occurrences outside the US); and c) does not exclude students [some do!]. The majority of claims involve student injuries.

³ Explaining the complex relationship between parental health insurance, college health insurance, and international assistance provider coverages is very challenging. No matter how clearly or cleverly we've heretofore tried to describe it during the orientation, we've found that when a need arises our travelers have been completely clueless about who will pay for what. This is discussed further below.

⁴ This coverage is strictly excess to the legal minimum limits in the applicable country. Therefore, if you fail, or elect not, to purchase local insurance, you will be liable for all claims under the local limit.

with your IAP coverage (see next checkpoint). Just be sure you have a way to get your faculty and staff home in the event of a medical emergency.

- ***Kidnap & Ransom*** - This coverage is very affordable, and can offer significant peace of mind. Some policies include a limited but helpful amount of consulting on prevention and crisis planning. The agency retained by the carrier to be on tap in event of emergency may offer ancillary services such as evacuation planning and assistance, included or for a fee. (Caveat: It's generally advisable to keep very short the list of those people who are privy to the existence of this coverage.)

✓ **International Assistance Provider (IAP)**

An absolute must-have is the firm that will immediately jump in to assist with any crisis that occurs. While the specific services and limits of each agency will be somewhat differentiated, they all typically provide:

- Pre-trip emergency planning services
- Round-the-clock communications support (emergency message-relay and translation)
- Medical services coordination, and payment or advances as necessary to secure such services
- Supervised medical evacuation (sometimes with family accompaniment)
- Repatriation of mortal remains
- Assistance with lost items (passports, luggage, etc)

Westmont has selected Worldwide Assistance, offered thru the United Educators program. This plan is inexpensive (\$20 per traveler per year), broad (\$100,000 medevac limit), and effective. We've appreciated their able assistance with medical situations in Honduras, Thailand and India in recent months.

Some IAP's offer medical insurance, legal insurance, baggage insurance, and other travel-related services.

✓ **Advisor Network**

Altogether, eight entities participate in the coordinated support of our off-campus programs.

- The Off Campus Programs office
- Risk Management office
- Insurance brokerage (preferably a worldwide firm)
- Liability insurance carrier
- Student accident and sickness coverage
- Kidnap/security/crisis management consultant
- International assistance provider
- Campus crisis management team

Your students, and their parents, should be comforted to realize that you've assembled this team of specialists who are ready to respond to any misfortune that may arise.

Orientation

A high-quality orientation program will include the elements identified here:

✓ **Students & Faculty**

Students and faculty both need to hear the same story-the former for the obvious reasons, and the latter so they'll know what the students were told.

✓ **Focused Time**

Ample time needs to be set aside for the orientation program. We've found that a Friday evening and most of Saturday works well.

✓ **Careful Topic Selection**

These key topics are essential parts of the program:

- **Cultural Adjustments & Sensitivity** - Many students have never experienced a cross-cultural immersion. Training on culture shock will help them to not be caught off-guard by the sensations and emotions they will predictably experience. Guidance on how to relate with people of other cultures will enable them to act and relate in more appropriate ways. And a warning to expect reverse culture shock upon their return prepares them for typical responses they will have, including: a) being overwhelmed at seeing our malls and well-stocked supermarkets again; and b) realizing that what has been so profound for them may engender little more than idle curiosity among their friends and family, whose lives stayed pretty much the same during the time away.
- **Medical Factors** - The quiz you took earlier gives a good sense of what the students need to hear, and why. Some comment on eating disorders is also in order, as this has become one of the most common and vexing challenges on alien soil.
- **Safety Briefing** - The following pages will summarize what we've found good to tell travelers, as they pack, about how to increase the likelihood of their safe return.

✓ **Engaging Presentation**

We want our entertainment-glazed students to stay awake for this important material, so we use variety and pacing to make the program interesting for them. Video clips can capture their attention: Baraka (a spectacular music-only travelogue) can run in the background during Friday's dinner; excerpts from Bamboo Palace (two American girls jailed in Bangkok as unwitting accomplices to a drug smuggling operation) can serve as an object lesson in not being naïve.

The well-considered use of real-life stories, and of PowerPoint tools, can captivate and hold them. Crisply organized presentations will keep the precious time from dragging, or feeling wasted. Contest, games and quizzes (see sample in Appendix)-as long as they're not too corny-can keep the pace lively. Prizes and refreshments should be available as well.

✓ **Follow-up**

Two kinds of follow-up are recommended, one before departure and one after return. Initially, a checklist of who needs what information, when, from whom, and in what sequence (see sample in Appendix) can ensure that no important steps were overlooked before they head up the boarding ramp. And then finally, an evening set aside for post-excursion debriefing allows them to process, in a safe and understanding environment, what they experienced both abroad and upon return. This is also an excellent occasion to inquire about which aspects of their orientation session were useful to them, and which should be enhanced for optimal effectiveness.

Credit Where Due

We're about to shift gears here, but before we do we'd like to pause and acknowledge the input and generosity of the following individuals and organizations, whose contributions were crucial to our designing a comprehensive program that, less than three years after inception, could be ranked as state-of-the-art in study abroad preparedness.

- ✓ **Pam Rypkema, *United Educators***
- ✓ **Debbie Russell, *Aon Risk Services***
- ✓ **John Watson, *Pepperdine University***
- ✓ **Michael Leming, *St Olaf College***
- ✓ **Bill Stevenson, *John Brown University***
- ✓ **Dick Hildreth, *Corporate Risk International***
- ✓ **Faculty & Admin, *Westmont College***

And now we'll go ... There & Back (Sample Safety Briefing)

(Technical Aside)

Before we get started, let's talk about the why's and the wherefore's of the graphical elements used for the presentation's varying spectators. Basically, the student version is designed with an energetic, contained-wildness effect. The online version for professional program planners (similar to the following) is, on the other hand, rather emasculated in order to keep the download times short and avoid offending that audience; it is essentially a stripped-down demo. Both electronic versions can be viewed from links at www.westmont.edu/risk. Obviously, the printed version forsakes all hope of being "dynamic".

✓ **"Chiller" Font**

The student generation seems to think us old windbags may be okay after all when they see us use a contemporary font like Chiller. In the real show it's used throughout, but in here we've mostly used Tahoma because it's a bit easier on our tired old eyes.

✓ **Graphics & Animation Effects**

A number of the graphics and slide objects are animated for the student version, but bandwidth limitations led to their being pulled from the professional demo.

✓ **Varying Background Colors**

Both electronic versions use solid background colors that change with each section of the presentation. This is a subtle form of interest-maintenance, which of course cannot be replicated here.

Zoomin'

We've got to move lickety-split thru a lot of material, so we give the audience a clue about the range of things they'll be hearing about in the next hour or so.

- ✓ **Intro**
- ✓ **Resources**
- ✓ **Health Fees**
- ✓ **Preparation**
- ✓ **En Route**
- ✓ **Upon Arrival**
- ✓ **On Site**
- ✓ **Emergency**
- ✓ **Forms & Documents**
- ✓ **Conclusion**

Intro

✓ **Not Scare - Prepare**

We want our students to travel. We want them to experience the exhilaration and the mind-bending that can only be found outside the comfort zone. We don't want to scare them away from the program. However, we need them to know that they must assume the attendant risks deliberately and voluntarily. We want their consent to be informed, so that's how we frame what follows.

✓ **Westmont Stories**

The vignettes you read at the beginning of this article are taken from our own crucible. We speak first-hand of the current-era Westmont students whose lives have been touched by trouble along their itineraries. Bad things do happen to good people—we tell them—people we know and love.

Resources

✓ **Resource Network**

We point to the network described earlier, the eight entities ready and waiting to help them in time of need.

✓ **Embassies & Consulates**

Yet another resource available to them is the US State Department. But just as the two coeds in Bamboo Palace discovered, the local embassy is not armed with magic bullets. A very helpful summary of what one can and cannot expect from the State Department is included in their information packet and called to their attention at this point in the program.

Health Fees

✓ **On Campus = Ins + Svcs; Off Campus = Ins + Svcs**

At Westmont, all students studying abroad are charged a fee similar to the health fee charged to those who remain on campus. The latter pays for accident and sickness insurance, and helps defray the cost of operating the campus health center. The former pays for accident and sickness insurance too, but for academic travelers the balance of the fee contributes to covering these off-campus-program costs:

- **Insurances** - as identified earlier.
- **Orientation** - program materials and other expenses
- **Pouches & Kwikpoints** - All students are provided a passport pouch designed to be worn under clothing and around the waist or neck. It is suitable for keeping cash hidden from the bad guys. It also contains the Kwikpoint card, a multi-paneled plasticized compendium of graphic images representing the most common kinds of situations and transactions one may encounter abroad (emergency, medical, dining, transportation, currency, numbers and so on)-pictures worth a thousand words in any language you can't speak. (Check out www.kwikpoint.com.) The pouch and Kwikpoint card cost roughly \$5 each.
- **Program Admin** - Some of the funding is available to partially defray other costs involved in helping create the opportunity for students to have this experience.

✓ **The USC Study**

To help them understand our mandatory health insurance plan, we tell them what USC learned in their 2-of-32 analysis cited earlier.

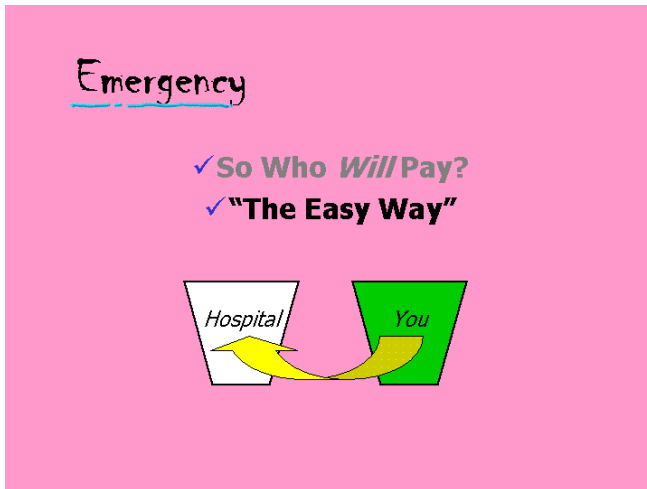
As indicated in an earlier footnote, we've learned the hard way that the complexities of who-will-pay-for-what, if a student is injured abroad, are very difficult to effectively communicate. We're going to try something new in our next orientation and you, dear reader, get to be our guinea pig. See if you think students could follow this⁵...

[For most of the rest of the article, our voice will be addressed to the student audience as if actually giving the presentation.]

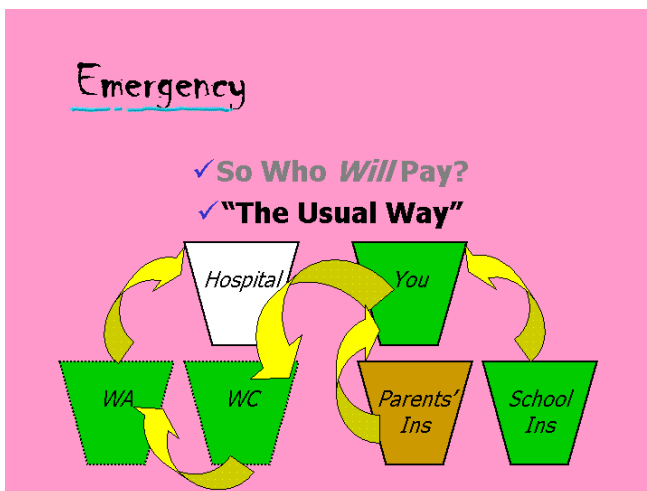
✓ **Health vs IAP vs Parental Coverage?**

There are two main ways to pay medical costs accrued abroad: the easy way and the usual way. Let's look first at **Figure 1**.

⁵ We expect that animated arrows and changing colors will help dramatize the "Usual" sequence (in Figure 2) and make it more memorable. Your feedback would truly be valuable to us. Send an email with your impressions to risk@westmont.edu.



See why it's easy? You pay the hospital, and it's all taken care of. Now look at **Figure 2**.



In order to perform medical services, the hospital requires money up front and you and your friends can't scramble up enough, so Worldwide Assistance advances the money. WA charges the bill to Westmont College, whereupon we add the charges to your student account. You then pay us back and seek insurance reimbursement, first from your parental health insurance. If they won't pay (which they probably won't-but the school's policy won't pay until the parental insurance says in writing that they won't pay), you do all the paperwork a second time, alas, to collect from the school insurance. Not efficient; not easy; not quick; simply the way things go in this adult world we're welcoming you to. (Maybe we should have used upside-down walnut shells to illustrate this sequence.)

The one saving grace is that medical services in many other countries are drop-jaw inexpensive. An overnight stay in Bangkok, tests and all, was out the door for \$130.

✓ **NOT Your Property!**

We hasten to add that we currently have no coverage for your "stuff". And usually the airlines won't cover some of your most valuable things-even if the airline lost them. WA can advance money to replace some things, but they've got to be reimbursed-triggering something like the "usual" payment process just described. Caramba!

Preparation

Even before you depart, there are things you can do to help you return home safe and well.

✓ **Wallet: Sanitize It; Fake It**

Take the things that really matter out of your wallet and put them in your hidden passport pouch. Then put an expired driver's license, a cancelled credit card, some color copies of your favorite photos, and a little cash in the wallet that you'll offer the robbers to make them go away.

✓ **Luggage: Distinguish It**

Make sure that as everybody's baggage meanders around the carousel, you can immediately spot your black roller bag among the thousands of virtually identical others that just came off the same plane.

✓ **Documentation: Copy It**

Put a copy of your itinerary in each piece of luggage so that when it gets left behind in Greece, the airline knows where to ship it to you in Italy.

✓ **Prescription?: Pack It**

Take with you a copy of prescriptions for any medicines you need, in both brand-name and generic form. And don't overlook your corrective lens prescription (pack an extra set of these).

En Route

Here are a few of the hazards to be alert to as you head for your destination.

✓ **The Scams**

- **Airport Shuttle** - You get on at parking lot and toss your flight bag on the luggage rack. Big group gets on at Terminal A, pushing you to the back. Well-dressed woman with child gets on at Terminal B. It doesn't dawn on you until the shuttle is heading for Terminal D that the nice-looking lady and her kid hopped off at Terminal C-with your flight bag. Protection: We think you can figure this one out.
- **Fanny Pack** - Young track star comes up behind you and uses his exacto knife to slice the strap on your fanny pack. Are you gonna chase him? And leave the rest of your valuable gear unattended on the floor of the waiting room?? Protection: At the very least, the fanny-pack model with a metal-cabled strap. In any event, keep your essentials in your hidden passport pouch instead.
- **Hooks in the Head** - One airport removed the convenient hooks on the back of the restroom doors in the ladies room, to prevent purse-snatchers. They were surprised to find them re-installed a week later-by the purse-snatchers, of course, for whom the cost of a few purse pegs was only a fraction of their weekly net revenue. Protection: Keep it on your lap.
- **Late Boarders** - You don't like sitting crowded on board any longer than you must, so wait for the last call. Unfortunately, the only space they can find for your carry-on is near the front of the cabin, and you're seated near the rear. Hmmm, a ripe situation for the observant and opportunistic thief seated in row 4C. Protection: Be ready to train an eagle eye on your bag, and be ready to scream bloody murder.

✓ **They're Professionals**

Sad but true, a few of the smiling, well-groomed people in business attire can afford to dress well because of the good money they pull in roaming the airports. No wonder they're smiling! These

crooks wake up in the morning thinking about which terminal they'll go for today, and hopping in their car to join the rest of the commuting public on their way to work.

En Gard

Here are a few more ways you can guard against unpleasant surprises along the way.

- **Scanner Buddy** - Have your friend go thru the body scanner first, waiting on the other side for you to send the luggage thru the parcel scanner. That will foil the other team that works like this: after you lay your luggage the x-ray conveyor, Bad Guy One butts in front of you as you step toward the body scanner. The metal in his pocket is there on purpose-so you'll get stuck behind his feigned confusion while Bad Guy Two heads down the concourse with your treasures.
- **Baggage Claim Race** - Hot-foot it to the carousel. Given the context here, we shouldn't need to explain why.
- **Farthest Stall** - Take a stall next to a wall so there are only two sides instead of three for the thief to reach under.

✓ **Don't Risk Your Life**

Remember, in some countries what's pocket change for you could be a year's wages for the locals. Money is not worth fighting over.

Upon Arrival

Once you arrive in your destination city, here are other tips to remember.

- **Taxis** - If possible, settle on cost of trip in advance. Then, pay up while you're still in the car so the milling crowd doesn't see the wad of cash you're peeling from.
- **"Watch Out For Pickpockets"** - In Rome, the cops took down this sign, but the pickpockets kept putting it back up. Why? Because when people see the sign they slap the pocket containing their wallet-just to be sure it's still secure-and the surveilling pickpockets can see right where to aim for maximum effectiveness.
 - o Remember, pickpockets often work in pairs or teams, using distraction as their basic ploy. Carry your valuables in a concealed and inaccessible location, having within ready reach only what you may need for expected transactions-and being ready to let go of that for the sake of your personal safety.

✓ **Register at Consulate**

Let the State Department know you're in the country. Despite their limitations, there are a number of ways they can be extremely valuable to you in a tough situation.

✓ **Phone Home ... Collect**

Work it out with your folks that they'll accept one collect call from you in each country where you alight. That will give you a chance, primarily, to be sure you can use the phones successfully, and secondarily, to reassure your anxious parents that you're still safe and well. In addition, have your phone card (with your PIN memorized) and some local coins with you at all times, so that you have backup means for making calls.

✓ "Watch Out For Pickpockets"

In Rome, the cops took down this sign, but the pickpockets kept putting it back up. Why? Because when people saw the sign they'd slap the pocket containing their wallet-just to be sure it's still secure-and the watching pickpockets would see right where to aim for maximum effectiveness.

Remember, the pickpocket's often work in pairs or teams, using distraction as their basic ploy. Carry your valuables in a concealed and inaccessible location, having only what you may need for expected transactions within ready reach-and being ready to let go of that for the sake of your personal safety.

On Site

Now that you've safely arrived at your destination, stay safe by remembering the following measures.

✓ Attire

- **Dress as a Safety Issue** - Yes, how you dress can affect your safety in various ways. Here are a couple of them:
- **American Identity** - In some countries an American flag t-shirt might not be the wisest wardrobe choice.
- **Modesty** - Some cultures take deep offense at, or attribute inaccurate meaning to, the amount of skin customarily visible in America. "When in Rome ..." is a good guideline here. (Well, except perhaps in certain south Pacific islands where a loincloth suffices for both men and women.)

✓ Where Are You?

- **Avoid American Icons** - Recent developments have made obvious the dangers abroad of hanging out a McDonalds or the Hard Rock Café-or around US military installations.
- **Buddy System** - Do your window shopping and museum hopping in pairs.

✓ Harassment (Sexual and Otherwise)

Please don't wait till three months after your return to finally confide to your best friend that you were approached inappropriately. It's important, for the safety of your successors on such programs, that you come forward discretely but immediately to your faculty sponsor, so the matter can be handled as delicately as possible while it's still fresh and while the sponsor is still in-country to deal with it. Remember, they have access to resources back at home by phone to help them carefully weigh how best to respond for your protection and for the sake of future students. Obviously, we don't want you or your successors in travel to be harassed in any way, sexually or otherwise. Please report any kind of harm intended toward you.

✓ Vehicles

You do not, under any circumstances, have Westmont's official blessing to drive a motor vehicle in any foreign country. Your faculty advisors do not have the authority to override this rule. If you rent or borrow a motor vehicle, you do so absolutely, entirely, at your own risk. Don't expect Westmont to come bail you out of this kind of trouble, and don't look to us to pay any part of any resulting damages or liability.

✓ **Rules, Rules, Rules!**

We know you've heard it all before, but ... the rules are for your own good and the good of the whole group, and we have as few of them as possible. Remember, your absence, injury, or undue delay can wreak havoc on the hopes and dreams of your whole cadre of traveling companions.

Emergency

✓ **The US is a Dangerous Place?**

Murder, rape, riots, earthquakes, tornadoes-these get top billing on World News Tonight, which the whole world watches. As far as the foreigner knows-viewing TV from the comfort of his straw hut or igloo-mayhem is rampant in everyday American life.

Just as we know that's not entirely true, the same holds for the countries we'd typically be afraid to travel in. Most everybody in most countries lives a quiet, peaceful, normal life. There are places in the US generally regarded as unsafe; likewise in other countries. But a little common sense and paying attention can reduce one's risk of harm many-fold.

✓ **Increased Risk & Severity**

What is significantly different abroad, though, is the range of challenges confronting the victim of misfortune. The distractions and unfamiliarity of the traveler throw him/her off balance, increasing the likelihood of problems in the first place. Then, language barriers, varying laws and customs, different standards of care-all of these come into play, compounding the impact of any problem faced in a foreign land. As a result, even small problems can quickly become big problems.

✓ **One Worldwide Number**

Your Kwikpoint card has on it the one phone number for you to call (collect) from anywhere in the world, at any time, day or night. Also on that card, right next to the phone number is a list of the things you'll need to be ready to tell the emergency operator.

Whatever your need-medical, legal, lost or stolen property, or any other bona fide emergency-these are the people who are trained and ready to assist you. They are not magicians, and we can't guarantee that you'll be spared all pain or inconvenience if something bad happens. But we know from experience that they-and we!-will actively and diligently seek to help you in whatever way is possible.

✓ **Basic Crime Survival Training**

It's possible you may not be able to score 100 if we quizzed you on this tomorrow. But it's our hope that you will be listening well enough for the next few minutes so that if, heaven forbid, you become a victim of crime, your psyche will have this session to draw from and you will be able to minimize any consequences.

- **General Guidelines**
 - Do not try to intimidate or be aggressive. Instead, maintain a polite, open, and confident demeanor.
 - Keep your hands visible; move slowly with precise gestures.
 - Respond to requests, but do not offer more than what is requested.
 - Keep your emotions in check.
- **Robbery and Armed Assault** - If you are directly threatened by an armed person:
 - Never take physical risks for property or money
 - Remain calm and maintain personal composure.
 - Do not be aggressive. Do not try to escape.

- o Do what you are told within reason.
- **Shootings and Crossfire** - If you hear gunfire when on foot:
 - o Take immediate cover on the ground
 - o Determine the direction of the firing. Are you and/or your companions a target of the firing?
 - o If possible, improve your protection by crawling into a ditch/hole, behind a wall, or inside a building.
 - o Leave the scene only after the firing has ceased.
- If you hear gunfire while in a building:
 - o Keep clear of windows and doors.
 - o Take shelter in the best protected areas such as the bathroom, basement, etc.
- **Bombings** - If you are caught in the midst of a shelling:
 - o Take immediate cover on the ground. Lie flat, face down.
 - o Protect your eardrums by covering your ears with your hands and keeping your mouth open slightly to balance the pressure from the blasts.
 - o If possible, improve your protection from fragmentation of the shells by taking cover in a ditch/hole or the ground floor of a building with solid concrete walls. Never take shelter under a vehicle.
 - o Leave the area only after the shelling has ceased.
- **Civil Disturbances and Natural Disasters** - If you hear sirens, explosions, or gunfire:
 - o Stay where you are if at all possible
 - o Immediately take cover under a heavy object such as a table or stand in an interior doorway.
 - o Keep curtains closed and stay away from windows or open areas.
 - o Use good judgment in determining when it is safe again to move.
- Kidnapping and Hostage Situations - Basic Rules for Survival:
 - o Be cautious of heroics. This may lead to death at the hands of a nervous or inexperienced member of the kidnapping group.
 - o Remain calm, composed, and cooperative.
 - o Focus on pleasant scenes. Recall favorite Psalms, other Bible passages, or prayers. You might try to recollect the plots of books or movies. Mental activity is extremely important.
 - o Build rapport by drawing attention to your own and others' human needs like hunger and thirst.
 - o Be reluctant to give up your identification or clothes. Loss of such personal belongings is demoralizing. Hostage takers can use them for bargaining. Try not to accept an exchange of clothes with hostage takers. This could put you in greater danger in case of an attempted rescue.
 - o Be conscious of your body language as well as your speech. Do not say or do anything to arouse the hostility or suspicion of your captors.
 - o Encourage your captors to let authorities know of your whereabouts and condition.
 - o If several people are kidnapped together, consider appointing one person to speak on behalf of the group with the captors.

✓ **We'll Never Forget You!**

If you do get into a bind, you'll need to be patient. You'll need to pray. And you'll need to remember that we're doing everything we can to get you taken care of.

A couple of years ago, when Joe was in the Tijuana jail after the auto/truck accident that took him there, he began to assume, during some long and lonely hours, that we'd just headed back to the states without him. He had no way of knowing we spent every moment of those nine long hours seeking his freedom, chasing all over town in the wee hours looking for ATM's, withdrawing cash to tap the limit of all the cards we could find, trying to raise the "bail" needed for his release.

There may be times when your rescuers seem slow in arriving, but if we know you're in trouble, we'll stop at nothing to get you home safe!

Forms & Docs

[In the live presentation] We'll spend a few minutes introducing the documents listed here, helping you to understand why they're important and how to properly complete them. We don't want you to turn them in now, though. You need to take them with you, read them carefully, call if you have any questions, and then turn them in.

✓ **Participation Agreement**

✓ **Health Care Agent Designation**

We want to also call your attention to the manual that contains all of the tips we've suggested here, and more. Please carry it with you throughout your trip.

✓ **Travel Safety Manual**

Conclusion

At the beginning of this session [that is, in the live presentation, though not in the print version] we asked how many of you remember reading the exploits of Paddington Bear with your parents. Those who know Paddington will recall that in every chapter he precipitates a crisis, and by the end of the chapter he has miraculously escaped. That is our wish for you as you travel...

May all your disasters
turn out like Paddington's!

Post Script to the Professional

This article is subtitled "A Checklist for Student Safety Abroad," even though you've not seen empty checkboxes to tick off along the way. But we trust you've seen an idea, or a few, that can help make your comprehensive student travel program even more robust.

What you've just read is a work in progress, constantly being shaped, honed, refined. Please use it as a springboard to collaborate with your colleagues. Invest in the kind of preparation suggested above. And give your students an orientation experience that will seal in their minds two things:

- How much they can do to keep themselves safe; and
- How very much we will try to do to assist them in need.

We'll never prevent all calamity, but certainly our advance efforts can lean fortune in their favor. And by growing in our readiness to respond to the needs that do arise, we can enhance our ability to "Bring 'em Home Safe."