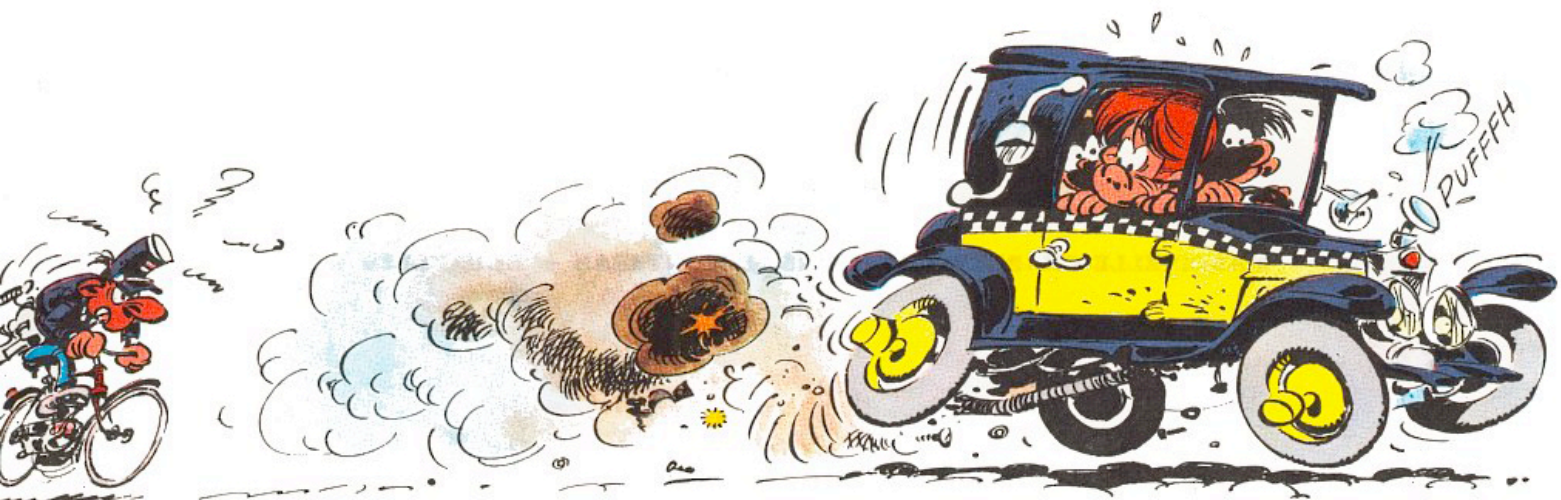


Security & Safety Instructions for Field Researchers



compiled by the
Division of Human Geography
Department of Geography
University of Zurich



Zürich, March 2007

Security and Safety Instructions for Field Researchers

compiled by the Division of Human Geography,
Department of Geography, University of Zurich

These instructions present the very basic rules you are asked to observe when leaving for a research field trip. Depending on the region/country you are going to, some of the rules might need some adjustment – just make use of your common sense and own experience.

This document can be downloaded for free from the DSGZ homepage at: <http://www.geo.unizh.ch/~ugeiser/indexdsg.html>

Before departure

Insurances

It is within your own responsibility to arrange for your personal insurance. You are therefore strongly advised to **contact your private insurance companies** (*Krankenkasse, Haftpflicht, Unfallversicherung*), in order to **clarify your maximum coverage abroad** for: medical expenses, medical rescue and recovery measures, evacuation, temporary or permanent partial or total disability, and loss of life. Many insurance companies offer an additional insurance for coverage abroad (*Zusatzversicherung* *Auslandsdeckung*).

Contacts

Make sure that you know the full address (including phone numbers) of the local partner institution or host you are going to work with, e.g. the local research project coordination

office. Besides your email, leave at **least one secure contact number/address** each with your relatives and your supervisor.

Schedule

Set up an approximate **work schedule** for your time in the field, and leave each one copy with your relatives and with your supervisor.

Vaccination

At the latest one and a half months before your departure, check whether your destination requires any **vaccinations you don't have yet or that need to be renewed**. This can be done with the *Zentrum für Reisemedizin der Universität Zürich* (<http://www.ispmz.ch/impfzentrum.cfm>, Hirschengraben 84), or with your family doctor. Note that most health insurances cover vaccination costs.

Documents

Make sure that you take along all necessary documents (e.g. passport

with visa if required, insurance certificate, vaccination certificate, flight tickets, driving license). Take along a copy of each document – in case you lose your papers, this can save a lot of trouble.

Country-specific information

Inform yourself about the **current security situation** in the country you intend to visit (see also link section at the end of these instructions).

Upon arrival

Contacts

Exchange **contact numbers** with your partner institution or hosts (guesthouse etc.), so that they can reach you and you can reach them in case of emergency.

Instructions

Your partner institution and/or host usually know best what to do and what not to. Ask them for specific security instructions and particular rules of behaviour.

Copies

Make a **copy of your passport so that the entry stamp on your visa is clearly visible**. If possible, **carry only copies of your documents with you** – check with your research partners whether local police accepts a passport copy for identification. If possible, keep original documents in a safe place (e.g. check whether your partner institution or host has a safe). However, **remember to always keep (copies of) identification papers on you**.

Register

In some countries, it is necessary to **register with local authorities** within a few days after arrival. Ask your partner institution and/or host for help. If you intend to stay for a few weeks or months, you should also **register with the next Swiss embassy** (a call before queuing up in front of the embassy might save a lot of time). In case of a political crisis, they will

contact and eventually evacuate you. If there is no Swiss Embassy, contact the local SDC coordination office.

Going to the field

Contacts

Besides contact numbers (see above), **leave a detailed work schedule** with your partner institution and/or host, so that they always know where you are.

Passage letter

Ask your partner institution to issue a **letter of passage** (best with official stamp and signature). In case local authorities try to prevent you from doing research, this might help you out.

Transport

Driving in cars, buses and taxis is one of the biggest safety risk when travelling or working abroad. Therefore, take these rules serious. Most companies obey the same or even stricter transport rules!

- **Never drive at night.** Driving after sunset multiplies the risk of accidents.
- **Do not drive yourself.** Whenever possible, use local drivers of your confidence. If you have no choice, make sure that you have an international driving license with you.
- **Choose your driver carefully.** For long journeys (i.e. fieldtrips), ask your partner institution for a reliable driver.
- **Check a car before you enter it.** A quick glance at the tyres (pressure, profile) usually tells you whether a car is maintained or not.
- **Always fasten your seatbelt** (if there is one), even though locals might joke about it.
- **Do not hesitate to rebuke the driver.** If you think your driver is

driving too fast or risky (e.g. writing SMS while driving), do not hesitate to rebuke him. It might save your life.

Dealing with officials

Always **stay calm and friendly** when dealing with officials. Hand out the required (copies of) identification papers and/or your passage letter at police and border checkpoints. When going to state agencies or departments, **take a local (research partner) with you.**

Visiting sensitive areas

In many countries, visiting certain regions (especially border areas) requires a **special permit**. When planning your field trip, check with your partner institution whether such a permit is required, and if, where and how to get it.

Emergency

If anything happens, report to others. In any case, report immediately to your partner institution, and as soon as possible to your supervisor. In case of a serious incident (heavy accident, robbery, arrest, threat by a third party) you are also obliged to inform the Swiss embassy or the SDC office.

Update

If you change your work schedule / itinerary while being in the field, **inform your partner institution** and/or host. Call them from time to time so that they know you are fine.

Sexual harassment

In order to lower the risk of sexual harassment, **try to keep a low profile** by adopting a culturally sensitive approach to appearance and behaviour. Avoid moving around alone during nighttimes. Ask your research partners and/or host for the neighborhoods that should be avoided.

Report

Regularly report back to your home institution/supervisor. Don't hesitate to mention if you don't feel safe.

Data security

Appearance

Do not openly carry around your electronic devices (laptop, camera, recorder). Put them in a normal bag instead a camera or laptop bag.

Back-ups

Make **regular back-ups of your data**, and keep them in different places. Possible ways of back-ups are copies to a memory stick, to an external hard-drive, to CD/DVDs or to other computers. You can also make hard copies (print-outs, photocopies, photos). It's really worth to do it.

Travelling

When travelling back home, **separate your original data and the respective back-ups** from each other into different pieces of luggage (e.g. original in the hand luggage, back-ups in the checked luggage). Leave a copy of your data with your partner institution, in case you lose everything. At the airport, showing maps, satellite images, or handwritten notes etc. too openly might cause troubles.

Further reading

<http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/travad.html> – General and country-specific travel advice and security information by the **Swiss government** (in German, French and Italian).

Macpherson, R. (2004). CARE International Safety and Security Handbook. Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE). <http://www.coe-dmha.org/care/pdf/EntireBook.pdf>

www.safetravel.ch – Swiss website with **health tips** for travellers (in German and French)