Personal Safety of Pedestrians

• Avoid crowds when you have to slow down. Every time you slow down while walking in a street, you become an easier target.

• Be suspicious if somebody slows you down (e.g., falls in front of you, clothing gets stuck on something). It may be a pretext to facilitate an accomplice who is behind you.

• Be aware of who is behind you. If the same person is behind you for a few minutes, be suspicious.

• A decoy wallet may help distract the thief. The thief will target your very visible wallet, while your money is somewhere else (e.g., in another pocket).

• Avoid walking with big luggage. The bigger the luggage, the more visible you are and the harder it is for you to defend yourself. Backpacks can be easily opened even while you are walking.

• In most countries, it is inappropriate to approach strangers (especially women). Anybody who approaches you, no matter how friendly, should make you a little suspicious. Keep your guard up and be careful when talking to strangers. Americans tend to be more trusting and open than other people. Understand that this may be used to put you in an unsafe situation. Locals know that Americans are raised to be nice to people who are nice to them. Do not smile at people you do not know. A smile can be interpreted as “I am saying no but meaning yes”.

• In most countries, women never respond to strangers. For a foreign woman it is not good to respond to men who approach her. The appropriate behavior is cold silence and indifference.

• Walk fast all the time. Every time you stop to browse, shop, write a postcard, or take a picture, you become an easy target.

• Dress modestly. Do not dress to call attention to yourself.

• Be suspicious of anyone who asks to see your money. Ask to be taken to the nearest police station before they search.

• Avoid hitchhiking.