

Safe Spring Break Survival Guide/Travel Safety

Spring break is a great time for students to relax, hang out with friends, and enjoy time off from school; but it has also become notorious for traveling to party spots and engaging in risky behaviors. That being said, just because spring break is associated with risky behaviors, it doesn't mean that you have to put yourself at risk. You can have just as much fun being safe, and you lessen your chances of ending up in the hospital, jail, or worse. Below is a guide to help you make safe choices during spring break.

Road Trips

1. Before driving to your destination, have your car checked out by a mechanic to ensure it can make a long trip.
2. Always keep your car doors locked and your windows up high enough that no one can reach in.
3. Drive on heavily-traveled highways and avoid making your way too far off of the interstate. Being lost decreases your vigilance and increases the possibility that you could become the victim of a crime.
4. Don't pick up hitchhikers or stop for anyone on the side of the road. You never know who the person might be or what they are capable of doing if they sense an opportunity for personal gain.
5. If you have car trouble, especially if you are driving alone, stay in your car with your doors and windows locked and call police for assistance. Be wary of individuals who stop to help.
6. Do not allow anyone in the car to drink alcohol. Many states have open container laws that prohibit any person in a car from drinking alcohol.
7. If you are tired, trade-off drivers or stop for the night. A night in a motel is cheaper than the potential costs of falling asleep at the wheel. You can also stop at a rest stop to nap, but make sure you keep your doors locked. Rest stops are available on U.S. highways every couple of hours. Some states may restrict the length of time one can stay at a rest stop.

Alcohol Tips

1. Spring break is not an excuse to drink excessively or drink more than you normally would. Drink no more than one drink per hour and alternate alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic drinks. Eat a real meal before drinking and snack throughout the time you are drinking.
2. Watch your drink. Watch your drink being made, do not accept a drink from anyone else, and keep your drink in hand. If your drink is out of sight for even a moment, throw it out and get a new one. Keep your hand over your cup or your thumb over the top of your bottle. Date rape drugs, such as GHB and Rohypnol, could be placed in your drink while you are distracted to facilitate rape or other crimes.
3. Use the buddy system. Watch out for your friends and ask that they watch out for you. Make it a rule to never leave without anyone you came with.
4. Always make sure there is a designated, non-drinking driver if you are drinking. If your designated driver takes a drink, they are no longer your designated driver. Call a cab.
5. Know the signs of [alcohol poisoning](#).

Safer Sex Tips

1. Just because you're on spring break, doesn't mean you have to engage in sexual activity!
2. Watch your alcohol intake. 70% of college students admit to engaging in sexual activity they wouldn't normally engage in because they were drinking.
3. Always use a condom and/or dental dam. Carry them with you and refuse to have any kind of sexual relations with your potential partner if they don't agree to use them.
4. If you choose to "hook up," be careful of who it's with. Spring break is a great time for would-be assailants to prey on unsuspecting, drinking college students. Make sure your friends see the person, know his/her name, and where you are going.
5. Trust your instincts—if it feels uncomfortable, don't do it! Spring break is much more enjoyable without regrets for what you did the night before.

Sun Safety Tips*

*These tips are important if you're going to the beach or hitting the slopes! Remember that snow, like water, increases reflection of the sun's rays and makes it easier for you to be sunburned. Follow these tips any time you are outdoors for maximum protection against sunburn.

1. Wear sunscreen with a "sun protection factor" (SPF) of at least 15 (higher if you burn easily or are taking medications that increase risk of sunburn). Remember to reapply the sunscreen after swimming, sweating, and after the recommended time on the bottle. Wear sunscreen even if it is cloudy and definitely if you are doing any activity in the snow (skiing, snowboarding, etc.).
2. Wear sunglasses. The FDA has implemented a system to help you decide which type of lens is best to block out harmful UV rays A and B:
 1. **Cosmetic:** provides the least protection and is for those activities conducted in indirect light. Less than 60% of visible light, 70% of UVB rays, and only 20% of UVA rays are blocked.
 2. **General Purpose:** adequate for most outdoor activities. 60-92% of visible light, 99% of UVB, and 60% of UVA rays are blocked.
 3. **Special Purpose:** especially useful on tropical beaches and ski slopes. 97% of visible light, 99% of UVB, and 60% of UVA rays are blocked.
3. Wear protective clothing and hats.
4. Follow the shadow rule: If your shadow is shorter than you are, the sun's rays are at their strongest, and you are likely to be sunburned. Get out of the sun or limit your exposure.
5. Avoid mid-day sun. The sun's rays are most intense between 10:00am and 3:00pm.
6. Drink lots of water to avoid dehydration if you are in the sun.
7. Read the complete instructions for or talk to your pharmacist about any medication you are taking. Some medications, especially antibiotics, increase the possibility of sun damage and rashes.
8. If you are prone to cold sores, use Chapstick or lip balm with a SPF. Sunburn is often a trigger for cold sores, especially in combination with dehydration or fatigue.

Other Health Concerns

1. Dehydration is a serious concern if you are spending time in the sun and drinking alcohol. Drink non-caffeinated, non-alcoholic beverages to help replace fluids that your body may be losing. Warning signs of dehydration include feeling thirsty, dry mouth, weakness, dizziness, headache, and decreased urine output.

Special Tips for Traveling to Mexico or Elsewhere Abroad

1. Research your destination carefully for information on safety, law enforcement, entry/exit requirements, food/water safety, etc. The U.S. Department of State maintains [Consular Information Sheets](#) that provide extensive details about travel in other countries. [Travel warnings](#) can also be found on the U.S. Department of State web site.
2. In addition to researching your destination, take special care to research your tour group, hotel, side trip companies, and car/recreational equipment companies. Check with a travel agent before your trip to receive recommendations on legitimate, safe options.
3. Be aware of any special medical care you need before travel to another country. Travel to many countries requires special vaccinations or medications to prevent diseases common in those countries. The [CDC](#) provides comprehensive health and vaccination information by country of destination.
4. Make copies of all of your identification and plane tickets. Keep the copies locked in the hotel safe (not a room safe).
5. Inform a family member or friend in the U.S. of your travel itinerary. Make sure he/she has hotel information, transportation information, etc. Make sure he/she also has copies of all of your important documents (passport, visa, driver's license, plane tickets, etc.).