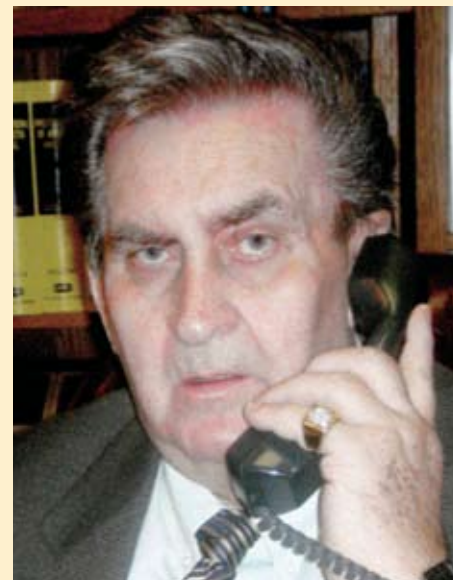


What *Every* International Traveller *Should* Know



People travel to foreign countries for many reasons.

One is to explore and see a country for what it is. Another is to meet the people, to have a better appreciation of their culture.

As a traveller, you must realize the freedoms we sometimes take for granted are not present in some foreign countries. You must understand a traveller has no special privileges and must abide by the social, religious, and written laws of the foreign country.

It is easier to get into trouble than to get out of it. You are a visitor and may be asked to leave the country immediately or be jailed.

Believe me, some jails are not comfortable or safe. One jail—approximately 12 feet x 20 feet—housing 20 or more prisoners, had one mattress, where the prisoners took turns sleeping. The room contained a bucket for toilet purposes and a drinking-water tap with very little water pressure. The available food was rancid leftovers you would not feed your dog. If someone on the outside was prepared to pay for extra privileges for you, such as food, you probably would receive a small plastic bag of spaghetti or rice.

Don't count on embassies or consulates to solve your problems if you have really screwed up. If the politicians of your country and the country in which you have just been arrested are playing nicey-nice, you may be sitting for a while in a cramped foreign jail.

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As a foreigner to them, you may be more prone to assault by inmates or guards. The possibility of extortion against your loved ones or friends is very possible.

Be cautious of possible kidnapping. In some countries, the kidnapers, through interrogation, may determine your financial worth and demand a ransom, which of course your loved ones or business associates will pay. In many cases, these types of crimes are not reported for fear of retaliation.

These are extremes. Be assured, however, that these situations do exist. Please use caution. Then there are countries that are wonderful to visit if you are a tourist. Clean and respectful of you as a visitor, they have laws based on civil rights.

If you research the country, your visit likely will be enjoyable and educational.

Investigate the currency and compare its value with your domestic money. Otherwise, you may be short-changed and in some cases cheated.

Be prepared to be respectful. Remember: You are the visitor who wishes to be accepted in that country. Don't flash your money or jewellery. Equip yourself with information about their values and laws and use common sense. It's so easy to lower your guard when you are having fun.

Be modest. Don't be demanding. Even your attire should be respectful. Be aware of the cultural male-female behaviour of a country. You are not going to change people's ways or attitudes in the 2 or 3 weeks you are there, so chill out and enjoy.

Be concerned about entering areas that may not be safe. Sometimes the local police are not sympathetic to tourists. On the other hand, their behaviour may be polite because they know you are leaving soon.

Of concern is the threat of contacting a disease that may incapacitate you while you are away or that you may bring home, with the possibility of infecting loved ones and associates. Immunization before you

leave Canada is important. Protect yourself from typhoid, hepatitis, tetanus, diphtheria, meningitis, and malaria, to mention a few.

And whatever you do, don't lose your passport!

Exploring a country is great and a lot of fun but the consequences of not taking precautions can be devastating. I don't wish to deter people from travelling and visiting Internationally, but do go armed with knowledge.

Visiting a country once does not give you insight into the people and their culture. I find it takes about three visits to form a general conception and create a relationship with the population. Once you have lived in their country and eaten among them, you have more indepth knowledge of their actions and desires.

In travelling around the world many times, I have acquired tremendous insight into countries—people, religions, and their politics—and have learned to respect them! Travel has also given me a greater awareness of the people who emigrate to Canada. In my business, I must be able to comprehend how people feel, how they think, and how they are guided by the politics of their country of origin.

As a globetrotting workaholic, I visited London, Paris, Rome, Moscow, New York, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Bombay, and Manila, to name a few, but for some reason, ignored the beautiful smaller cities and towns in Canada.

I have travelled throughout the Far and Middle East and Europe and the Americas, but somehow overlooked the splendor of the mountains, rivers, oceans, lakes, and prairies of my own country, Canada.

Here, we can enjoy cleanliness, relative safety, a high standard of living, and wonderful people. Spending our money to benefit the local environment—to give back at home—can be very rewarding. ▲

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Nobel Winner Speaks in Vancouver

Dr. Shirin Ebadi, 2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner from Iran, was Keynote speaker at the annual Women's Equality Breakfast this Spring sponsored by West Coast LEAF (Legal Education and Action Fund). Dr. Ebadi discussed the status of women in Iran and the importance of equality for men and women.

www.westcoastleaf.org



Dr. Ebadi with Mitra Pegahi