



International Field-Based Research: Health, Safety, & Security Advice

When conducting field-based, you will be operating within complex social and political contexts. Both the quality of your research and your well-being are connected to your ability to understand the local setting and the risk environment. Health, safety, and security should be an integral part of your research design and proposal.

Research Prior to Departure:

- Inform yourself about the local and regional risks through resources like the U.S. Department of State, International SOS, the Center for Disease Control, travel guides, local and regional contacts, etc.
- Carefully consider your risk tolerance and discuss the known regional risks.
- Identify recommended hospitals and health care practitioners in-country.
- Research local transportation options and identify safer options, which have licensed drivers, safe driving reputations, etc.
- Investigate safer accommodation options based on the reputation of the neighborhoods and security features. Also consider alternative options in case you don't feel safe later.
- Inform yourself on the social, historical, political, and cultural complexities of where you will be living and learn about international perceptions of your identity groups.

Be sure to review DU's higher-risk destination [policy](#). If you are an undergraduate student traveling to locations with a 'high' risk rating, or if you are a graduate student traveling to locations with an 'extreme' risk rating, you must submit a petition to DU's International Travel Committee for approval. Regardless of the risk rating, all DU travelers must register their travel in DU Passport before departure.

Below are specific considerations to research well in advance to help mitigate associated travels with field-based research –

Health Guidance:

- Visit a Travel Clinic or your normal physician to ensure adequate health preparations have been taken, including vaccination, personal hygiene and malarial prophylaxis, if applicable.
- Before you travel ensure that you have adequate and appropriate insurance coverage for your trip.
- Take an up-to-date first aid kit including basic medicines.

- Try to prepare for and anticipate social, emotional, and psychological reactions you might experience.
- Think about how you will manage stress and access coping mechanisms in the field.
- If working in severe heat or extreme cold, remember the right kind of clothing and equipment can significantly reduce health issues.

Transportation Guidance:

- Arrange an airport pick up upon arrival in country to take you safely to your accommodations.
- When you travel to the field, establish a communications plan. Notify others of travel times, destinations and steps they should take if you are late/do not contact them.
- Make sure you have information about the risks of public transport.
- Get local advice about reliable transportation providers.
- Ensure that seatbelts are available and that you wear one at all times
- Plan for any checkpoints or known hazards *en route*.
- Plan for delays and have food, water, and medicine in sufficient quantities in case the trip is longer than expected.
- Try to anticipate the quality of the transport and the driver, and if you feel unsafe, make other arrangements and always trust your instincts.
- Never travel by motorcycle or in unofficial forms of public transportation (such as truck beds, illegal taxis, etc.).
- The University strongly discourages travelers from renting or driving any motorized vehicles while abroad because they can be difficult and dangerous to operate in unfamiliar conditions.

Accommodation Guidance:

- Determine whether or not your accommodations have a gate, security guards, other protections.
- Consider how reliable is the power and if there are alternative power supplies (i.e. generator).
- Ensure doors and windows can be securely locked.
- If possible, take a room on the first or second floor. The ground floor is more vulnerable to opportunistic theft, and the higher levels can increase vulnerability in event of a fire or earthquake.
- Determine whether or not your accommodations have fire escapes, working smoke detectors, and fire extinguishers.
- If there are no smoke detectors, purchase a portable one to bring with you.
- Secure your passport, money, laptop, and other valuable materials.
- Bring padlocks and a rubber doorstop/door wedge for added safety when inside your room.
- If someone knocks at your door, do not assume the person is who s/he claims to be.

Field Guidance:

- Take time to get to know your local support and coordinate with them about your research.
- Make clear agreements in the first week about roles and responsibilities in case of emergency.
- Understand your local support's core activities and how these are perceived in the local context.
- Be considerate/sensitive in discussing political, religious or other potentially contentious topics with those you do not know well.
- Find out about local law and abide by it.
- When you arrive, ask your local support for a security briefing.
- During emergency situations, the ability to communicate effectively and quickly with others is essential.
- Carefully consider what emergency preparedness are available and be prepared to develop your own communications plan for emergencies.
- Update DU and your emergency contacts on your status should any incident occur close to the areas where you live or travel.
- If your plans or projects change while you are abroad, please update your emergency contacts and DU.