RAINN’s 2013 Spring Break Safety Tips

Whether you are headed to the beach or overseas or taking part in a service trip, it’s important to keep your safety top of mind this spring break. College aged students are at the highest risk for being sexually assaulted. That’s why it’s so important that to be aware of some simple things you can do to reduce the risk and prevent you or a friend from being the victim of sexual assault.

1. Trust your instincts. If you feel unsafe in any situation, go with your gut. If you feel uncomfortable or something doesn’t feel right, leave and get to a safe place immediately. If someone is pressuring you, it’s better to lie and make up a reason to leave than to stay and be uncomfortable, scared, or worse.

2. Be wary of the “You Only Live Once” mentality. Being spontaneous and adventurous goes hand-in-hand with spring break. However, being too carefree can lead to dangerous situations. Don’t leave your normal logic at home just because you’re in a foreign place.

3. Don’t let your guard down. A spring break destination can create a false sense of security among vacationers. Don’t assume that fellow spring breakers will look out for your best interests; remember they are essentially strangers.

4. Protect your location on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Foursquare etc. Think twice before sharing every detail of your spring break on social media. Before leaving for your trip, review your security settings to ensure that information you post to social media is as private as possible. However, even with strict security settings, be aware that posting information about your whereabouts or activities can still reveal details that are accessible to the public. Use your best judgment when “checking-in” on Facebook or Foursquare and geo-tagging images you post to Instagram. Be cautious of revealing personal information through status updates or tweets with Twitter trends like #SpringBreak and #SB2013.

5. Get local. Know your accommodation address and the safest routes to and from your local destinations. Before leaving a hotel, ask the concierge for a business card with the hotel address or write the address down if you are staying at a rental property to ensure you have the correct address. Have the number for local cab companies on hand too and always keep enough cash on you to take a taxi home. Know who to contact in the event of an emergency, such as 911 or local authorities. If traveling internationally, have the contact information for the U.S. Embassy with you.

6. Be a good friend—stick together & have a plan. Check out your surroundings before you go out and learn a well-lit route back to your hotel or rental property. Avoid putting music headphones in both ears so that you can be aware of what’s going on around you, especially if you are walking alone. Be alert and aware at all times.

7. Use your cell phone as a tool. If you find yourself in an uncomfortable situation, shoot a quick text for a “friend-assist.” Make a back-up plan before you go out just in case your phone dies. If you are traveling internationally, buy a pay-as-you-go phone or contact your cell phone provider to activate international coverage during your trip.

8. Drink responsibly and know your limits. Establish a meeting spot in the event your friends get separated. Before you go out, identify a safe way to return to your hotel or rental property.