LGBTQ+ Travel Advisory

While many destinations are safe and welcoming to LGBTQ+ travelers, legal protections and social attitudes vary significantly across regions. In some countries, same-sex relationships or gender expression may be criminalized or socially stigmatized. Travelers should research local laws and customs before departure and exercise discretion in environments where LGBTQ+ identities are not widely accepted.

In **Southeast Asia**, travel risks for LGBTQ+ individuals vary widely. Thailand stands out as a regional leader, having legalized same-sex marriage in 2025. However, countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Myanmar maintain laws that criminalize same-sex relations or restrict LGBTQ+ expression, particularly in conservative or religious areas. Travelers should exercise discretion, especially outside major cities. In **South Asia**, India has decriminalized same-sex relations, and Nepal has made progress in recognizing gender diversity. Yet, other countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka remain socially conservative, with limited legal protections and potential for harassment. **Central Asia** presents a high-risk environment, with no formal protections and rising anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment in countries like Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

The **Middle East** poses very high risks, with most countries criminalizing homosexuality and enforcing severe penalties. Social attitudes are extremely conservative, and LGBTQ+ individuals face systemic discrimination and violence. In contrast, **Europe** is largely welcoming, especially in Western and Northern countries like Germany, Belgium, and Iceland. However, Eastern Europe has seen regression in LGBTQ+ rights, with countries like Hungary and Poland restricting public expression and events.

In **Africa**, the risk level is high. Many countries criminalize same-sex relationships, and social stigma is widespread. Ghana and Mali have recently introduced harsh anti-LGBTQ+ laws, making discretion essential for travelers. **South America** offers a mixed landscape. Countries such as Argentina, Brazil, and Colombia have legalized same-sex marriage and provide legal protections, though enforcement and social acceptance can vary. Urban areas are more inclusive, while rural regions may be less tolerant. Finally, the **Pacific** region includes highly inclusive countries like Australia and New Zealand, which are safe for LGBTQ+ travelers. However, some island nations, such as Vanuatu, have enacted restrictive laws and maintain conservative social norms.

Travelers are advised to:

- Avoid public displays of affection in conservative areas.
- Refrain from discussing sexual orientation or gender identity in settings where it may attract unwanted attention.
- Monitor local news and official advisories for updates on legal or social developments affecting LGBTQ+ communities.
- Seek accommodations and services known to be LGBTQ+ friendly when possible.
- Contact local embassies or consulates for support in case of legal or safety concerns.

While travel should not be discouraged, situational awareness and cultural sensitivity are essential to ensure safety and minimize risk.

General International Travel Cyber Security Guidance

Travelers should take proactive steps to secure their digital information before departing internationally. All devices should be updated with the latest software, including operating systems, applications, antivirus programs, and firewalls. Automatic updates should be enabled where possible. Important data should be backed up to secure cloud storage or encrypted external drives, and any sensitive information not needed for the trip should be removed. Device encryption should be activated, and strong passwords combined with multi-factor authentication should be used to protect key accounts.

While abroad, travelers are advised to avoid public Wi-Fi networks, especially when accessing sensitive accounts. If internet access is necessary, a trusted virtual private network (VPN) should be used to encrypt traffic. Auto-connect features for Wi-Fi and Bluetooth should be disabled to prevent devices from connecting to unknown networks. Public charging stations should be used cautiously, as they may pose risks such as "juice jacking." Travelers should rely on their own chargers and avoid unfamiliar USB ports. Devices should be locked with PINs or biometric authentication and kept secure at all times.

Upon returning home, travelers should change passwords for any accounts accessed during the trip. Antivirus and malware scans should be run on all devices used abroad to detect potential threats. Account activity should be reviewed for signs of unauthorized access, and any suspicious behavior should be reported to the appropriate IT or security personnel.

Cyber Security Guidance for Travel to China

Travelers heading to China face unique cyber security challenges due to strict internet regulations and widespread surveillance. It is recommended that travelers use clean or temporary devices that contain only essential data and applications. Sensitive corporate or personal information should be removed, and unnecessary accounts should be logged out. A reputable VPN should be installed prior to departure, as many VPNs are blocked in China and downloading one after arrival may not be possible. However, travelers should be aware that VPN use may violate local laws. Devices should be fully updated, encrypted, and protected with strong passwords. Social media activity should be limited, and travelers should avoid posting or discussing politically sensitive topics.

While in China, travelers should assume that internet activity is monitored. Sensitive accounts should not be accessed, and confidential topics should not be discussed online. Encrypted messaging apps may offer some protection, but surveillance is still possible. Public Wi-Fi should be avoided in favor of mobile data or secure hotspots. Auto-connect features for Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and location services should be disabled. If using a local SIM card, travelers should be aware that it may be registered and monitored and should avoid linking it to sensitive accounts. Physical surveillance is also common, so discretion is advised in both digital and in-person communications.

After returning from China, travelers are recommended to change all passwords for accounts accessed during the trip. Devices should be scanned for malware, and if compromise is suspected, a full wipe and restore may be necessary. Any unusual activity should be reported to the traveler's IT or security team.

Step-by-Step: How to Contact AHIAssist in an Emergency

Before You Travel

1. Save AHIAssist Contact Info
    - Add AHIAssist to your phone contacts.
    - Download the AHIAssist card to your phone wallet (Apple or Google).
    - Install the AHIAssist App on your home screen for quick access.

If an Emergency Occurs While Traveling

2. Contact AHIAssist Immediately
    - **Phone**: +61 2 8330 1222 (Reverse Charge available)
    - **Email**: help@ahiassist.com.au
    - **SMS**: +61 428 829 755
      AHIAssist operates 24/7 and can help with:
    - Medical emergencies (including evacuation and referrals)
    - Safety and security incidents

- Lost passports, cancelled flights, or other travel disruptions
- Telehealth consultations and medication dispatch

3. Receive Support and Guidance
    - AHIAssist will guide you through the next steps, even if you're not submitting a claim.
    - Their team includes emergency doctors, nurses, aviation medical specialists, and security experts.

If You Need to Submit a Claim

4. Complete the Paperwork
    - Download the claim form from ahiinsurance.com.au.
    - Work with your university or organization to gather required documentation.
    - Email the completed form to: claims@ahiinsurance.com.au

5. Follow Up
    - AHIAssist will notify you if additional information is needed.
    - Once your claim is assessed, you'll receive the outcome.
    - If needed, escalation or dispute instructions will be provided via email.

Helpful Tools

- AHIAssist App includes:
    - Tap-to-call feature
    - DFAT travel alerts
    - Exchange rates
    - Country-specific safety and health information