

## **Guidelines for International Travel and Home-sharing or Ride-sharing**

ISO routinely receives inquiries from faculty, staff, and students about the use of ride-sharing and home-sharing services while abroad on University-related activities. This information sheet is intended to provide guidelines for their use. If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact our office at [studyabroad@virginia.edu](mailto:studyabroad@virginia.edu) or [projectsabroad@virginia.edu](mailto:projectsabroad@virginia.edu).

### **Home-sharing**

The use of home-share services, such as AirBnB, is not endorsed by the University, and the Office of Procurement does not typically allow the use of Travel and Expense Cards for these services. UVA programs abroad are also not permitted to use them. Concerns involve safety – both the safety of the lodgings as well as for guests. Home-shares are notoriously difficult to monitor and regulate for standard amenities like fire safety, cleanliness, adequate locks, liability insurance, and there have been real documented risks to personal and property harm with little to no emergency support available. Consistent with other employers and peer institutions who support international travelers, UVA does not condone the use of home-share options.

### **Ride-sharing**

The use of ride-sharing services poses many of the same risks as home-sharing, including a number of places where ride-sharing is illegal (check local laws!) In some instances, however, the case has been made for the increased safety benefits of ride-sharing – such as the ability to track a vehicle in real time, to avoid the exchange of cash, or to call a ride to an exact location rather than hailing a vehicle on the street. Consistent with other employers and our peer institutions, ISO advises travelers to decide whether to use ride-sharing services on a case-by-case basis and in close consultation with hosts and reliable local contacts at the destination.

### **Tips for Arranging Safe Lodging and Transportation Abroad**

- Always plan ahead for where you will stay and how you will get around. [US Department of State Country Information](#) includes recommendations for safe transport.
- Talk with hosts and reliable local partners about reputable places to stay and safe and legal ways to travel, particularly for foreigners or visitors who do not speak local languages. Ask for their recommendations and help in making arrangements.
- Have a back-up plan in case your pre-arranged lodging or transportation falls through. This is especially important for the first days and nights in a new place.
- Share your plans with someone local and let them know in advance when to worry and what to do.
- Understand cancellation, refund, and reimbursement policies before committing to or pre-paying for services.
- Understand the laws and expectations in your destination, your rights as a consumer, and how to get help in an emergency.
- On arrival, check that the lodging or transportation matches what was advertised and reasonable expectations (eg lock on door, seatbelt in car, etc.) In the case of hired rides, make sure the driver and vehicle match who and what you expected.
- Trust your intuition. The best way to be safe is to avoid being in the wrong place with the wrong people at the wrong time. If something doesn't feel right, go to Plan B or C.