

Risky and Unpleasant Situations Encountered in Urban Trips since 2011 till 2023

(travel report)

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Introduction

This article is complementary to *Summary of Global Amateur Wildlife Observations since 2011 till 2023* that was published by me earlier; a couple of notes from that document have been copy-pasted here for consistency. I suppose, the provided information may be primarily useful for novice travellers. The summary covers 13 years, and obviously, some cases could be forgotten. As you can see, the most important risks are not the ones that are typically listed in travel guidebooks. Sorting order is approximate, from the highest risks to the lowest ones.

Summary

| Type of issue | Particular cases |
|---------------|---|
| Food | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poisoning with meat dish from the previous day in a restaurant in Yerevan.• Severe poisoning in restaurant in Essaouira (the cooks smoked cigarettes).• Piece of plastic has been found in dish in another restaurant in Essaouira.• Poisoning with samsa in cafe in Osh (2 cases).• Sharp pieces of plastic and metal have been found in cooked supermarket food in Yalta (2 cases).• Sharp piece of metal has been found in bread purchased in supermarket in Kaliningrad.• Internals of fridges with sold food in cafe in Belgrade were sprayed with cleaning moisture while I was waiting in the queue.• Food in a cafe in one Adjarian village was covered with flies.• About 5 times after eating in cafes/restaurants in different cities where I lived for a long period of time (Nizhniy Novgorod, Bishkek, Osh) I hardly could run to toilet with a risk of getting into silly situation on a crowded street or in elevator. <p>As you may understand, I never got poisoned in Middle East, East Asia, South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America. So, reason is really in low quality of food and violation of sanitation norms in other locations.</p> |

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|----------------|--|
| Housing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bulbs and electric cables located in unsafe places in shower room and/or not having appropriate isolation (this issue is very widespread, I have met it about 10 times in my trips in hostels and rented apartments, even in new houses). • Wall socket hanged on cables in an apartment in Almaty. • Old apartments in Irkutsk and Vladivostok had enormous amount of cockroaches. • Rented hotel room in Kochi was on the ground floor without any protection and any glasses in windows, so anybody could enter the room from the street. • After coming to rented hotel in Addis Ababa I found that it is located in “red lights” area (although there was rather safe even at night). • Glass door in shower room in a rented apartment in Alanya broke into thousand pieces when I closed it; I was naked, but fortunately got just several scratches. • Bathroom in old house in Fez had large sharp piece of metal at the doorstep. • Hotel room in Kigali had common balcony with public areas of the building, so anybody could enter the room. • Several times in different cities bulbs exploded (I remember only Antalya, but there were some others). • Once in Bishkek gas leak from a pipe with dried out grease has been encountered. • In Zelenogradsk, the neighbors from the lower floor turned out to be old man and woman with psychic problems. The man insisted that I create a lot of industrial noise, and at one fine day he broke our common water pipe, it resulted in flooding of three floors. <p>It should be noted that my average acceptable price range for apartment or hostel/hotel room varied from 5 USD per day up to 30 USD per day. Sometimes, in low season I could rent luxury 2-bedroom apartments with sea view for 300 USD per month. And in some non-touristic or expensive cities I needed to pay up to 30 USD per day for real trash. So, correlation between rent price and amount of risks is not so strict as it may be supposed.</p> |
| Criminal risks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Couple of surprised street gangsters was met while walking in empty streets of Buenos Aires near second airport. Fortunately they were too far and I went into safe location easily. • Taxi driver in Mexico City did not like me, and while moving through night streets he offered me unexpectedly to change a seat to sit at front side of the car with obvious purpose to leave me in a dark city area while I would be going out and entering the car again. (As you can guess, I declined this offer.) • Another taxi driver in Mexico City did not return change from 20 USD with saying “<i>Thank you</i>” multiple times. • Taxi driver in Istanbul after receiving 2 banknotes one by one hid the first banknote and insisted that I gave him only the second one. • Many years ago in few cities I received several textual offers of sexual services of minors in the world known mobile dating apps from ladies who looked like adults on photos (apps had built-in lower age limit of 18 years). I removed these contacts immediately without talking to them. So, I cannot know whether it was official police check (as it is standard in some countries), or whether it was |

| Type of issue | Particular cases |
|--------------------|---|
| | <p>preparation for attempt of racket with local corrupted police, or whether it was criminal prostitution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several times in my life when I walked in broken exhausted condition along the streets or dined in cafes I was caught by local ladies who then asked money from me (Toamasina, Bishkek, Osh). Fortunately, I recovered easily while talking to them and limited the contacts with them just with kissing. • In Odessa somebody threw a cigarette at me from window. • In Manaus somebody threw a bottle at me from window. • In Belgrade large heavily built man followed me at night until the house entrance. • In Tetouan a helper pulled out 5 euros from my handbag instead of taking coins from me as a payment for his assistance. • In a hotel in Istanbul personnel dug in my baggage. • Attempt of robbery in Addis Ababa while I was exploring map in smartphone. • In Hurghada, Essaouira, and sometimes in Agadir all kinds of drugs are sold openly in public areas as at day as at night. <p>To avoid underestimation of criminal risks you should note that a) I consumed alcohol just few times in my life and it was 20 years ago and earlier, b) I never consume drugs, c) periods of avoidance of sex in my life may last up to many years (there is old Finnish joke on this topic, “<i>sex is better but New Year is more often</i>”), d) more than half of my sexual partners belonged to the same or older age groups as I did, e) I visit night clubs for occasional listening of folk and jazz music only. If you live differently, your risks may be much more severe.</p> |
| Car accident risks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Limassol I almost got under minibus (it was my first trip abroad, and the first visit of the country with driving on left side of the road). • In Istanbul the tram runs on very high speed (much higher than in other countries) in the center of the city where pedestrian side of the road is very narrow. • In Istanbul a metrobus came on very high speed (much higher than in other countries) to the stop when I stood on the edge of the pedestrian area and looked to another side. • In Bishkek at night a jeep moved at me quickly while I crossed the road very slowly (it was before mass attack of authorities against local organized crime). • In Kochi pedestrian areas along the roads are almost absent in spite of large size of the city. |
| Flights | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary hearing issues after travelling along mountain road and then flying with runny nose (from Yerevan to Tbilisi and then to Belgrade). • Smell of fuel in cabin of airplanes before start of the flight (I do not remember cities where I encountered this situation). • I felt myself nervous several times before the flights and it caused unnecessary attention of security services in Dubai, Istanbul, Alanya, and Kigali. Also, I quarreled once with another passenger in Tirana in check-in area. (It should be noted that I made more than 100 flights in my life, so these cases of being nervous before the flights were exceptional.) |

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|---------------------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a flight to Seoul via Beijing I was observed by Chinese security officer in civil clothes who came close to me while I was standing for 15 minutes to relax after many hours of sitting. (In fact I stand up often in long distance flights with this purpose, and many other passengers do the same, but such observation performed by security officer never was made in other 10-15 long-distance flights of European and Middle Eastern airlines.) |
| Walking risks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Antalya I stepped into dog's faeces on a lawn at night. • In Vlorë I stepped into human's or dog's faeces on a beach. • In Goiania I almost stepped on a dead pigeon on the street at night. • In historical center of Essaouira I passed near the used syringe. |
| Risks of diseases | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I scratched a knee by falling on ice winter streets in Almaty; then after coming to Ulaanbaatar I felt myself extremely bad for a couple of weeks, some infection put me down with temperature and respiratory issues (without hospitalization, however). Many years later, sick dying pigeon flied into my apartment in Kazan. Then I felt the same symptoms as described above but just for several days. So, I guess the reason of the previous condition was in some infection distributed by garbage birds. • Stray dog tried to play with me on the street in Osh and scratched skin on legs; that's why rabies vaccination was necessary. • In Entebbe I scratched knees several times with metallic chair constructions in city minibuses. (You should sit at front seat to avoid this.) <p>To avoid underestimation of medical risks you should note that I had almost all vaccinations recommended by CDC and performed almost all prophylaxis recommended by CDC.</p> |
| Natural accidents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small earthquake in Osh. • Storm in Nizhniy Novgorod caused little pieces of house wall to fall on me while I was walking near the house. |
| Overpricing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Hurghada, Cairo, and Addis Ababa some taxi drivers ask triple price; sometimes, after the trip has been completed, and sometimes, very aggressively. • In Budapest one taxi driver used counter with fake numbers to charge me double price. |
| Long-distance bus travels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the trip from Hungary to Latvia one of bus passengers defecated on his seat. |
| Ecology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smog at winter nights in Ulaanbaatar is terrible. |