

HOW TO FOIL A SCAM ARTIST

Con artists come in all shapes and sizes. In order to thwart them, you need to understand how they most commonly work. Here are a few of the most common scams, with instructions on how to avoid falling victim to them.

LUGGAGE GRAB

How the scam works

This airport scam involves two people. Scam Artist #1 gets in front of you on the line for the metal detector. You place your bags on the X-ray machine's conveyor belt. Scam Artist #2 abruptly cuts ahead of you in the line. Scam Artist #2 has lots of change and other metal objects in his pockets. You wait as he empties his pockets and goes through the metal detector several times until it stops beeping. Meanwhile, Scam Artist #1 grabs your bag as if it were his own and makes off with it. When you finally get through the metal detector, your bag is gone, and neither man is anywhere to be found.

How to foil the scam

- 1** Carry a bag that is distinctive and difficult to mistake for another.

- 2** Know what to expect.

Orderly lines may not be the norm in all countries. In some places, pushing and shoving are more accepted, which makes the scammers' job easier.

- 3** Never let valuables out of your sight.

Angle your body so you are able to see the far end of the X-ray machine.

- 4** Do not allow anyone to cut in front of you at the metal detector once you place your items on the conveyor belt.

- 5** Watch your luggage and be assertive with security and customs officials.

- 6** If you are traveling with one or more companions, do not go through the metal detector one after another.

Space yourselves several people apart, and give the majority of your valuables to the last person passing through. The first person through can watch the X-ray machine until the bag with your valuables appears.

PASSPORT AND CREDIT CARD COPY

How the scam works

When you present a traveler's check to a merchant, the merchant asks to see your passport to make sure the signatures match. She says the signatures do not match, and asks to photocopy your passport and a

credit card as proof of identification. She copies your information and uses it for unauthorized charges at a later date.

How to foil the scam

- 1 Always sign traveler's checks in front of the merchant.**

She cannot claim the signature is forged if she watched you sign the check.

- 2 Never allow your credit cards or passport to be photocopied.**

- 3 Pay cash, or leave the store immediately.**

CARDBOARD CHILDREN

How the scam works

Small bands of children (usually 6 to 10 of them) confront you for change. The children swarm you, beg loudly for money or candy, while at the same time pressing pieces of cardboard against your body. The shouting distracts you, while the cardboard desensitizes you to the small hands entering your pockets or bags. The scam takes just a few seconds at most. The children suddenly disperse in different directions, taking your valuables with them. Even if you were to realize you had been robbed, you would have no way of knowing which child to follow.

How to foil the scam

- 1 If you are alone and are approached by a group of begging children, get to a well-populated area.**

Walk into the nearest store or restaurant.

- 2 If there is no place to hide, hold your wallet tightly in your hand so that it cannot be snatched.**

Even better, distribute your money in multiple pockets beforehand.

- 3 Make as loud a scene as you can.**

Be Aware

- A money belt or waist pouch, while better than a wallet for securing valuables, can be breached by experienced thieves. If you wear a waist pouch, always make sure it faces forward and is not worn as a "fanny" pack.
- Keep your passport in a hotel safe and carry a photocopy. If you must travel with an original passport, secure it inside a pocket with a safety pin.