

Watch out in St. Petersburg!

Keep your money and avoid trouble

Unfortunately, a visit to a foreign city sometimes comes with some unpleasant surprises. There are three main inconveniences in St. Petersburg that tourists are confronted with repeatedly: expert pick-pocketing as well as Police officers who use their official authority for self-enrichment. In addition, Persons of Non-European appearance might get involved in dangerous conflicts with fascist Skinhead gangs, which damaged St. Petersburg's reputation sustainably already.

But certain preventive measurements will help to avoid unpleasant experiences during your vacation:

All crowded areas are likely fishing grounds for pickpockets – foremost these are the Metro, souvenir markets or tight entrances and passage ways. Don't underestimate the deftness of crooks and their tricks of distraction: One will bump into or spill something on you, and a second one helps himself to your belongings. Therefore, carry documents and money in securable pockets and close proximity to your body! And in the Metro, as a basic principle always take off your backpack – let alone to be polite to fellow passengers.

Pickpockets

Highly frequented cafés downtown also make popular hunting grounds for thieves: here it is essential not to leave jackets, bags and mobile phones unattended.

A special issue are gypsy gangs, with their flock of children claiming pittance aggressively, but who might also collect that alone. In spite of the obvious misery of these people from Central Asia, never stand still in their presence or pull out your wallet – at best, while walking on, toss some change from your pocket. As soon as you notice hands on or in your clothes: Now only tough knocking away will help, even if it proves to be hard with a child or young mother. Threatening gestures and primal scream-like curses in your native language are impressive as well and can prevent physical contact.

Police Inspections

Facing the police you have to be more demure though, regrettably. Even if they approach you in similar intent and ask you for "documents, drugs, guns?" The former you will have to present, the latter items you better don't have with you. The potentially subsequent body check will mostly aim at your wallet, being relieved of larger bills rapidly. Stay cool in this situation and take the bills out of your wallet explicitly before handing it over for "drug inspection". In case of further nuisance demonstrate clearly to the officer that you are now memorising the number of the police identification badge on his chest. And speak the magic word "Prokuratura": the Public Prosecution is the supervising organ for the police and investigates these cases happily and in a meticulous way.

Reporting such a case – if possible directly with the Public Prosecution and with informing your consulate in St. Petersburg – is helpful to end this disgraceful hassle.

But investigations only prove to be successful if the claimant is in town for another two weeks and has remembered at least the duty number of an officer or the licence plate of the car.

Skinheads and Hooligans

in the face of potential racist rowdy squads sadly only two things will help. 1st keep out of their way; 2nd run faster than they will.