

# Taking precautions against pickpockets

Brian Ralph

My wife and I had the misfortune of having first-hand experience of a pickpocket during our recent trip to New York. It was 10pm at night and we were making our way back to the subway through crowded streets after having just seen a live show on Broadway. My wife's handbag was securely tucked under my left elbow with the strap over my head. She was walking on my left but for a minute or so we changed places leaving the handbag exposed to the world.

The pickpocket struck quickly. He came up on my left hand side and put his right arm around me and wiggled his fingers so that I thought someone was touching me on my right side. I immediately looked across at my wife, wondering what on earth she was doing, but she was already looking past me at the man who was now right there next to me with his left hand madly trying to get into the handbag. By the time I turned to look at him and then started to pull away it was all over. He was gone.

Luckily my wife and I have always been extremely cautious in relation to pickpockets, no matter where we have traveled. Our passports were back in our hotel room safe, both of us had our cash, cards and other valuables safely stashed in deep zip pockets or hidden pockets and we never leave anything valuable in her handbag anyway. In addition, her handbag was one of those security handbags designed to thwart thieves. It has stainless steel mesh woven into the fabric to prevent slashing and the strap also has stainless steel wires running through it to prevent a 'cut and run'.

Obviously neither of these safety features would have helped us in our particular situation but it also has a zipper with a spring-loaded clip on the end of it so that you can clip the end of the zipper to the end of the bag and therefore prevent easy access to the bag. We always use the clip no matter how inconvenient it is to undo later. In this instance the thief got nothing, but it could have been a very different story had we not taken all of the above precautions ... and it was all over in a few seconds.

Pickpockets are all around us. They come in many shapes and sizes and use lots of different tricks. ***My best advice is to be aware at all times and stay up-to-date with their latest tactics.***

A quick search on Google for 'pickpocket advice' will provide you with plenty of information on this topic.

One of the best websites I have found for advice about pickpockets is this one:

<http://thesavvybackpacker.com/pickpockets-europe/>

In addition, a quick search for 'pickpockets' on [YouTube](#) will bring up any number of informative and interesting videos.

## Contributor details

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