

The Langley Files: CIA's Podcast
File 010
CIA Travel Safety 101

(music begins)

Walter: At CIA, we work around the clock and across the globe to help keep Americans and others around the world safe. Secrecy is often vital to our work.

Dee: But we're committed to sharing what we can when we can. So let us be your guides around the halls of Langley as we open our files and speak with those who have dedicated themselves to this mission.

Walter: These are their stories.

Walter and Dee: This is The Langley Files.

(music continues)

Dee: So imagine you've just landed in an unfamiliar city in the middle of the night.

Walter: You collect your bags, get a taxi ride across town and check into your hotel. But just as you're settling into your room, something unexpected happens.

Dee: There's a knock on the door.

Walter: And you didn't order room service.

Dee: And as you take stock of your options and consider what to do next, you might wonder ...

Walter: What would a CIA officer do in this situation?

Dee: Well, it would be a fair question, because wherever and whenever you're listening to this right now, CIA officers are preparing to travel.

Walter: They might be packing their bags or they might keep a bag ready to go. Their destinations might be glittering global capitals, or sleepy small towns, or remote outposts, where nature adds to the challenges that they have to contend with.

Dee: Because uncovering threats that might be emerging around the world means traveling it constantly. And at CIA, that's part of the job. It also means traveling safely, returning home to take on yet another mission tomorrow.

Walter: But how does CIA officers do that? How do they travel to some of the most volatile places on Earth while doing so as safely as possible?

Dee: And with summer travel season approaching, is there anything you can learn from their best practices to stay safe while you, your friends, and family set sail away from home?

Walter: Well, on this episode, we're going to be unpacking just that. We're sitting down with one of the Agency's security specialists to share everything we can on this subject so that you can incorporate the CIA's travel savvy into your summer plans.

Dee: You could call it Travel Tradecraft. We'll just call it File 010 of The Langley Files.

(music ends)

Dee: Well, welcome back, everyone. I'm Dee.

Walter: And I'm Walter.

Dee: So, Walter, at the beginning of the season, we promised that we would be sharing some helpful tips and tricks to our listeners. And true to our word, we are here today to devote an entire episode to doing just that.

Walter: That's right. Last year in CIA's long running "Ask Molly" forum, where anyone from anywhere in the world can submit questions for CIA to answer...

Dee: And just so you know, there is a real person that does answer those questions. If anyone is wondering.

Walter: That's right. And last year in that forum, CIA shared some of the travel safety tips that its own officers use when crisscrossing the globe, and it generated a lot of interest. So with summer travel season again around the corner, we've decided to do an even deeper dive into the subject here on The Langley Files, in the hopes that whether you're traveling to a different neck of the woods or a different time zone altogether, you'll learn something here that will help you and any travel companions stay safe.

Dee: And to do that, we've brought in one of CIA's senior security officers. His name is Kyle. Now, on our last episode, we talked with David who is one of our CIA's security protective officers, the group that is our first line of protection for CIA's headquarters and everyone who works here. And Kyle is in the same part of CIA as David but has different responsibilities, including providing security guidance to CIA officers as they undertake a range of job functions, including travel. So he's the ideal person to sit down and talk travel safety with us today.

Walter: Indeed.

Dee: So, Kyle, welcome to the podcast.

Kyle: It's great to be here.

Walter: So, Kyle, you've worked in a range of security functions here at CIA, right?

Kyle: I'm what we call a Multi-Disciplined Security Officer or MDSO. We support the CIA's mission by providing comprehensive worldwide security support that protects CIA personnel, information, facilities, programs, and activities. I've been fortunate to have a number of these experiences since I joined both here at headquarters and in the field.

Dee: So it's probably pretty fair to say that you've given several security briefings over time?

Kyle: Oh. More than my fair share.

Walter: And for some context for our listeners. As you might expect, CIA officers receive a range of training and briefings before they travel, and it varies based on the destination and the assignment they're

headed off to. So some of it is very specialized, as Deputy Director Cohen mentioned on our sixth episode. It might include, you know, for instance, training in evasive driving.

Kyle: Not going to do that today.

Walter: Smash cut—we're in the back of a car, right now. Um, but all officers do get globally applicable travel training and guidance, best practices to follow, no matter where in the world they're going and what they're going to be doing there. And that's what we're going to share as much as we can of with you all here today.

Dee: So, Kyle, we thought the best way to approach this subject would be to, uh, talk through, like a hypothetical trip that we're taking together to a new destination. So we'll go through like, the wide range of scenarios you'd encounter on a on a standard trip—thinking about preparing for the trip, you know, getting to the airport, checking into the hotel, doing some activities. And we're just going to ask kind of your best guidance on how to approach each of these tasks.

Kyle: That sounds great. Let's do it.

Dee: Awesome.

Walter: And for the sake of this episode, Dee and I are going to pretend that if we've ever taken any of these trainings, we have at this point, forgotten them in part or in whole.

Kyle: And this will be the first time that you ever forgotten anything you learned in training before?

Walter and Dee: 100 percent.

Dee: Oh, my gosh. We didn't even plan that. All right, so let's let's walk through a scenario. You want to start us off Walter?

Walter: Sure. Okay, so let's start before we even set foot in an airport, seaport, bus station, train station, any kind of port or station. Let's start while we're planning our trip.

Dee: So for purposes of this scenario, I'm not a big planner, Kyle. So why don't we just take off somewhere?

Walter: Show up at the airport and point to the big board at random and see where it lands us without telling anyone... What do you think, Kyle?

Kyle: Well, do we at least have our passports with us?

Dee: Yes.

Kyle: You got that. Do we have a visa for where we're going? Or do we need one?

Dee: So we should probably think about that. Okay this is fair.

Kyle: Why don't you check that out, and then once we've figured out where we're going, we probably need to let a few folks know where we're going to be. What if something happens while we're on that trip? Need to make sure someone can get in touch with us.

Dee: Excellent point. Ok.

Walter: So these should be people on the trip? So it should be like you in this instance, Kyle, coming with us?

Kyle: Well, would I be helpful for you an emergency if I'm right there with you in the same emergency that you're in?

Walter: Okay, so people not on the trip. Good copy. Is there anything else you recommend that we do heading into this trip?

Kyle: Well, so it's gonna depend on how spur of the moment we're going, but presuming we've picked our location of where we're heading, and we have a rough idea of what we're going to do and where we're going to be, we probably should register with the State Department, their Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, so that in case anybody needs to reach us from the embassy or consulate where we're going to be traveling to, they have the ability to do so. Think of this as establishing communications with your home base. Registering with your country's embassy ahead of your travel enables that embassy's staff to contact you in the event of an unfolding crisis or weather or natural disaster. And once you've done all that, make a note of those important numbers that have come up in planning your trip – your emergency contacts, your country's local embassy or consulate, that kind of thing.

Walter: I want to say for the record here that we on this show always talk about the amount of paperwork we have to fill out at CIA, including for travel. And we are now advocating that the whole world fill out paperwork for travel.

Dee: Please fill out the paperwork. And we will link it in our show notes so you know how to do it or where to go. How about in terms of - do I really need to know much about the country that I'm going to be going to? I mean, we're pretty, you know, savvy over here at the CIA. Do I need to know about my destination?

Kyle: Well, you at least need to know a bit. I mean, how are you going to dress? What do you need to pack? Is there anything that you need to know about the environment you're going to? There are definitely some areas that have some interesting wildlife, flora and fauna there that you may not want to get too close to, or at least, you know, know what's going on, in that location. You know, poisonous or dangerous snakes, you know, spiders, other creepy crawly things, you know. And this also might be one area that, you know, even in elements of diseases, you may need to have a vaccination before you go.

Walter: Has this become relevant for CIA officers?

Kyle: As we do our operations across the world, we need to be prepared for any sort of environment or any location that we might be going to. So, having a good awareness of what your medical situation is or your medical needs are extremely important.

Walter: Okay. Good advice.

Dee: Didn't Director Burns mention something about a particular operation that was going on... They were working in, like, negative 30 degree weather?

Walter: Yeah and I think you and I were both there when somebody was telling a story about dangerous snakes being one of the foremost concerns he had on an operation...

Dee: That is right. So good points to do some research ahead of time.

Kyle: If you are traveling somewhere you don't speak the language, try to learn a little bit. You don't need to go full incognito here, but if you have time, try to pick up key words and phrases in the language of your destination. We tend to think that "hello," "goodbye," "yes" or "no," "help," and "police" are just a few of the essentials. These phrases come in handy if you find yourself in a tight spot. And we have some great resources on the CIA World Factbook to help out, including even some travel briefings already staged for the nation to use.

Dee: That's actually a good point. We, we plug the CIA World Factbook quite a bit. So we'll throw that up in the show notes as well.

Walter: We will. Okay, so Kyle, running out the door, you know, I did think a little bit ahead, so I grabbed a handful of dino-shaped multivitamins and threw them in my pocket...

Kyle: Are you a Flinstones kid?

Walter: 100 percent.

Dee: He is 100 percent a Flinstones kid.

Walter: So, assuming I'm good to go there?

Kyle: Well, you know, I think the dino-shaped ones might be okay, but if you need any additional sort of prescription medication or or something else, you know, we probably need to check the local laws, make sure that we can actually bring in any of our medication or other items that we might be packing into the country. Certain countries have different laws when it comes to types of medications that they'll allow, or even other content that might be appropriate in the United States, but maybe a little less thought highly of in other countries.

Dee: Those are things that you just don't think about all of the time. So that's a really good tip.

Walter: Can we go back to medications for one second? Any tips on how you should carry those with you in the event that you learn that they are indeed permitted in the country you are going to, that kind of thing...

Kyle: So we want you to make sure you have them in their original packaging with the prescription on that bottle or container that you have.

Dee: So I also am ready to jet out the door. I think I'm ready. I've looked at the climate on World Factbook, and I think I'm packed. Is there anything I need to leave behind for anybody before I run out the door?

Kyle: So one of the things that as best you can, knowing that we're doing this spur of the moment, the best itinerary that you have to let your family member, or at least a good significant point of contact know where you're going to be. But you also want them to have a copy of your passport.

Dee: And why is that?

Kyle: Well, if there is anything that happens while you're while you're over in your vacation or otherwise, if something happens to your passport, this will at least give an opportunity for you to get a

copy sent to you. And that could be your lifeline in order to be able to get out. Or at least have a new one produced.

Dee: So we've packed. We've prepped. We've left copies of passports behind. Emergency contacts. We've done our research and we hopped on a plane and we are arriving at the destination.

Kyle: Alright. How was our flight?

Dee: I thought it was okay. Little, little turbulence.

Walter: I slept the whole time.

Dee: It's the Flinstones vitamins.

Walter: I took eight of those and conked out. So we find ourselves at the airport arrival gate, one of my favorite places to loiter for really as long as possible. There's so much to see. We can get food. We can check out the gift store off the bat. Who knows if we'll have time on the way back...What should we be doing right now in in this moment?

Kyle: When I travel, I want to grab my bag as soon as possible. Get it off the carousel because, you know, if I have my bag, that means somebody else isn't going to pick it up for me.

Walter: Okay. So, um, any anything else we should be bearing in mind here?

Kyle: You know, Walter, I'm gonna I'm gonna have you, you know... Come, let's stretch our legs. Let's get out toward the taxi stand. You know, the arrival area of the airport tends to be a little less protected than the departure area. So let's just get our bags and head on our way.

Dee: Ok. I think that's fair. So you mentioned, let's head over to the taxi stand. I think any old taxi will do? Just jump in? What are we doing here?

Kyle: On arrival, ask either the airport official or travelers aid how much it should cost to catch a public shuttle or taxi to your location. If you choose a taxi, be sure to negotiate the price before loading your baggage and getting inside. I'm going to the taxi stand and looking for one that actually has, you know, a full placard, has the driver's information, you know, posted on one of those cards behind the seat. Um, also one that has a working meter. I want to make sure that we are going into a legitimate area of transportation and not necessarily someone that, you know, is just trying to pick up lost travelers at the airport.

Dee: Okay, windows down, though, right? Because it's hot.

Kyle: I know it's hot. Let's ask the driver to turn the air conditioning on, because, from a safety perspective, we want to make it as difficult as possible from someone outside to reach in and grab something that we might have, you know, if we're, you know, making our arrangements, we're texting on our phone, really easy just to reach in through the window and grab that out while our attention is distracted.

Walter: And Kyle, as I open the door here, I notice that there's no door knob on the inside. There's no, sort of, door handle... That's... that's... some cars just come that way, right?

Kyle: Well, at least the cars that we make sure you're in, we childproof them, you know, as best possible.

Dee: That's a good tip for, for Walter in general.

Walter: Okay, so I'm in the car with no door, no handle to get out...

Kyle: But, you know, at least for everybody else, you know, look for things within within the taxi or other cars services that you're using. You should be able to exit out your door on your own accord.

Walter: Okay. And Dee actually is a big rideshare fan.

Dee: Totally.

Walter: And so she I think she insisted on taking her own ride.

Dee: I did. I finally got through on the app. You know, I've had enough of you guys for, like, you know, several hours. So I'm gonna hop in this car by myself.

Kyle: Alright, but let me just ask – have you at least verified that the driver who the rideshare service paired you with is the person who's picking you up?

Dee: I mean, he kind of looks like the picture.

Kyle: Does the license plate match?

Dee: Maybe.

Kyle: Does it look like the same car?

Dee: So I'm looking to make sure that the car is correct. I'm making sure that the license plate matches what is on my app. And I make the driver say my name.

Kyle: As well as his or her name as well. That might be a good idea to make sure that you're paired together.

Dee: Perfect. Got it.

Walter: Good thinking. Okay, so we arrive at the hotel separately because, you know, that's fine.

Dee: Because I'm special.

Walter: No big deal. No hurt feelings here.

Walter: So we we get to the check in desk and they ask for a copy of our passport. I'm kind of suspicious at this point. Why would they want my passport? I'm gonna hold on to that. Right, Kyle?

Kyle: Well, one thing that we try to do is if they will accept a copy of your passport, that's great. That way you can maintain the original document for your own purposes, in case you need it either later in the trip or if you have an emergency that comes up. But it's not that uncommon for other countries to have to ask for some identification including a passport to hold during the length of your stay.

Walter: Hmm. Okay.

Dee: And you know, such a world traveler that I am, the lady at the desk was nice enough to hand me some key cards to the penthouse, Kyle.

Kyle: That sounds lovely.

Dee: Doesn't it? So I think she said it's the 27th floor...

Walter: The higher the better when it comes to floors in hotels.

Dee: I mean really. Luxury is up there, right?

Kyle: So luxury is definitely up there. But one of the questions is what would happen in case of an emergency? Now, what we usually advise here at CIA is stay between the 2nd and 6th floor.

Dee: Oh, interesting. And for a particular reason?

Kyle: Absolutely. So we don't want anybody to be on the ground floor because that makes it too easy for someone just to enter in off the street level. But don't forget, you know, if an emergency were to happen - say, you know, high rise fire, you know? Would emergency services be able to reach you at those locations? Sometimes, ladder trucks only are able to get up a few flights.

Dee: That is a fair point. Alright, so we respectfully decline the offer for the penthouse suite... maybe we just head up to the fifth floor.

Walter: Fifth floor. That's my favorite.

Dee: Does that work?

Kyle: Lucky number.

Dee: Awesome.

Walter: Choose five, stay alive. That's what I always say.

(Laughter)

Walter: They give you four and you're like, I'm gonna get a different hotel actually...

Kyle: Meanwhile, every hotel has a surge of people requesting the fifth floor...

Walter: Okay, so we've got our our keys ready to go. I'm headed to the stairwell. I want to get my steps in. I've been in the airplane for a long time, and this stairwell has the added bonus of being really dimly lit...

Kyle: Well Walter, I know you're in the middle of your pedometer challenge but this might be one that you want to just hold off for a little bit, and let's take the elevator instead.

Walter: Okay... How come?

Kyle: Well, you know, if we're looking at a personal safety sort of standpoint, most issues within a hotel take place either in dimly lit areas or in secluded places like stairwells.

Dee: Alright, so we took the elevator up and we arrive on the fifth floor, and we're just gonna mosey around till we find our our particular suite and, uh, head on inside. Right?

Kyle: So one of the things that I'm doing as I, you know, make my way to the room is I'm trying to at least count the number of different doors that I'm passing before I get to the room. Especially however many doors there are in between the stairwell and the room, in case there's a fire or emergency where we need to evacuate and we can't access the elevators. You know that's the time when using that stairwell is paramount, but I want to know, say it's smoke filled, or, um, there's no power, I want to be able to understand where that stairwell is if I can't see where it is.

Walter: So it's kind of the the hotel equivalent of what you're supposed to do on an airplane where you check out how many rows are between you and the nearest emergency exit. So you can hold that in mind if it's filled the smoke, or, you know, heaven forbid, obviously.

Kyle: And just remember your nearest exit may be behind you.

Dee: Excellent. Kyle is on top of it.

Walter: In this case, it literally is, here in the studio.

Dee: It really is.

Kyle: It's two in the front, two in the back, and four over the wings.

Dee: He's doing full flight attendant signing right here... Alright, so we've done our homework. We've counted the number of doors on our way to our beautiful suite. It is pretty beautiful even though it's the fifth floor. Um, I'm tired, though, so I'm just going to set down my bags. I mean, we're good. The door locked behind me. I heard it click, right?

Kyle: You know, hearing a click at least is a step in the right direction. But, you know, turn around, flip that deadbolt. It's going to be one of your best safety precautions that you have.

Walter: I was just going to use the chain, Kyle...

Kyle: Those chains could be cut, or they could be worked around by a crafty individual. You know, one of the things that I always do, it's really, you know, a cheap and easy way to add a little bit of security into your hotel room is I pack a rubber doorstop in one of my bags.

Dee: Just a plain old rubber doorstop?

Kyle: Plain old rubber doorstop, and then wedge it in the door upon the entry. That way, it makes it so much harder for someone to push that through.

Walter: So okay, so we're, we're getting unpacked here. We're getting taken a load off. I see a safe in the corner, I'm going to put all the cash I took out and also my valuables, which I brought many of from home, as well as my passport into the safe and assume that's good to go. Right Kyle?

Kyle: Well, you know, there are a lot of people, you know, either through, lock outs or just folks who have been in the industry who know what the override code is for that safe. So, thank you for letting me know that you have all your valuables there. I will, you know, reimburse that 20 bucks that you owe me from the last time we went on the trip.

Dee: Boom. But, Walter why are you bringing like a treasure trove? I mean I mean, is that something you would really recommend, Kyle? Bringing everything you own and shoving it into the safe?

Walter: Well, and actually, Kyle also, you know, just to be fair here, if I'm not going to put it all in the safe, is there any other way that I can sort of get or hold cash here at the hotel, that you'd recommend?

Kyle: Alright. Well, your best bet is if you don't need it, don't bring it. You don't want to make yourself attractive to someone to increase your likelihood of being a target of of crime or other activities. So, you know, if you don't need to bring the expensive watch, the extra electronics, just go ahead and leave it at home, that way you know it's safe there. But, Walter, one of the things that you can consider investing in is, you know, either a concealment device, or a pouch, or even, you know, even a fanny pack to wear. Having your valuables located in front of you is a great way of reducing your risk of being a victim of crime. Even something as simple as just moving your wallet to your front pocket.

Walter: Okay, so, um, done all that. And now we find ourselves in the situation we described in the intro here, where there's a knock at the door, and, uh, and we didn't order room service.

Kyle: You didn't?

Walter: Uh, no.

Kyle: Maybe it was Dee?

Dee: It wasn't me, but I probably should have. I'm kind of hungry.

Walter: But you know what? Let's go check it out. I'm gonna open the door...

Kyle: Stop, stop, stop. Stop right there. You know, let's at least look through the peep hole, you know, or if there's not one and we're not expecting it, let's call down to the front desk and see if they actually did send somebody up.

Walter: Hmm. Okay, that's fair.

Dee: Alright. So we called the front desk, and it turns out that it's a complimentary fruit platter.

Kyle: I've never gotten a fruit platter in my per diem. Well, at least this is a personal trip.

Dee: This is true. And maybe they just felt bad because we declined the penthouse. I don't know.

Walter: I was thinking the same thing. And Kyle, what would we do if it hadn't been a complimentary fruit platter? And they just kept knocking? We call the front desk. Are they in a position to help?

Kyle: You know, front desk can send someone up and either determine, you know, what their purpose is for being there, or if it's a serious situation, they could even call the police for you and have them arrive, But the number one rule is here, don't open the door unless you know who's on the other side.

Dee: Okay. Absolutely. That's a good tip just in general life.

Walter: Good copy, yeah.

Dee: At this point I think we're all really tired. It's been a long day. I think we should just turn in for the night. Let's hit the town tomorrow.

Kyle: I'm glad we're hitting the town in the morning. You know, I'm really not that keen on going out at night, especially if it's an area we haven't been, or, you know, especially if we might be traveling alone. Let's use the time to get some daylight and see where we're going and plan our route before we go.

Walter: Okay. Are there any things, Kyle, we should look out for when we're planning our route?

Kyle: So one of the things that we can do is we can talk with our concierge, talk about what sites that we wanted to see and, you know, let him or her guide us into what might be the best way to go about. That way we don't travel through any dangerous neighborhoods, even what might be some more interesting sights to see along the way.

Dee: That's a good tip. All right, um, so we are ready to head out. Um, I think this time let's rent a car, right?

Walter: Let's do it.

Kyle: So you know, same thing as we have with the taxis. Let's make sure we lock the doors. Um, roll up those windows. Make sure that only Walter has the...

Dee: The childproofing?

Kyle: ...the childproof door lock.

Walter: Yeah, I'm in the back.

Kyle: Yeah, yeah, as we go forth, you know, but also, when you know we're renting a car, one other thing that we advise our officers is to keep your gas tank at least half full. We don't want you to run out of gas in an unfamiliar area. And this way you have the best chance of being able to get yourself to safety if you need.

Walter: Okay, so we've kept the doors locked, windows rolled up. I have topped off our gas, um, personally. We get out of the car and we're ready to start strolling around. Kyle, I'm gonna take out my phone and start taking some pictures.

Dee: And I have a good book that has all of the cool, touristy spots to look at, so I'm gonna pull that out, so we have a reference of where we're going.

Walter: Take out the map. I'll hold the map in my other hand...

Kyle: Okay, so we're gonna just fully look like lost tourists during this?

Dee: I mean, because we kind of are at this point.

Kyle: Well, yes, but we don't need to necessarily give it away. Let's go into, perhaps, a hotel lobby or so and let's, you know, regroup and set ourselves up there. We don't want to look like we're completely lost and then fall prey to someone who might want to do us harm or, take advantage of us.

Walter: Okay. So what what kind of demeanor should we try and strike here? If not, you know, lost tourist... maybe lost in thought tourist?

Kyle: Oh, interesting. But at least how I usually try to conduct myself is by, you know, staying alert. At CIA, we try and have our officers be highly attuned to their surroundings, you know, and maintaining situational awareness about what's going on. This is where you can use all five senses. You know, one - it'll provide you a great experience and great memories for your travel as a whole, but also keep yourself safe. And you know, if there's a telltale sign of something amiss you'll be able to understand it.

Walter: So anything in particular we should be looking out for as we remain attuned to our surroundings here, Kyle?

Kyle: If something doesn't feel right, it often isn't. If someone is standing too close to you, following you across multiple locations, loitering outside your room. If the situation raises your suspicions, remove yourself or seek help.

Dee: Ok, so we are definitely paying attention to our surroundings. So let's go check out that local bakery over there. Um hey, Walter, why don't you head over to the ATM? I see that over there. Um grab some cash. In the meantime I am going to maybe start uploading some pictures that we've already taken because, you know, I need to share with my friends back home.

Kyle: Alright. I'm starting to wonder whether I should be traveling with you guys again. From a security aspect here, okay, Walter, where is this ATM?

Walter: So it's just in the corner, and it looks pretty interesting. It has these sort of looks like additions over where I punch in the pin, probably to make sure that I'm getting it right.

Kyle: Walter, that is a telltale sign that that ATM may not be legitimate. Or it may be one that uh, could be prone for cyber criminals to be used to gather your financial information. So why don't we get our cash either from the hotel, we can exchange some money there, or we go into a bank and actually do our transaction inside so we're not being seen by other folks on the street?

Dee: Sorry I recommended it. My apologies.

Kyle: It's alright, Dee. Now, as for your social media, I know how much you know, we always love to see your photos and instantly put up as as quickly as possible. But you know, but with that, you know what you're doing is you're advertising that, one - you're not at home, and two, where you are and who you're with. So the things that we advise our officers to do is, wait until you've returned back before posting all of your social media. Now I'm gathering you're probably using the cafe WiFi?

Dee: I mean, they said it was free, so yes.

Kyle: It is free, and the price is right. But usually that could come with some risk too. So with that, let's check our encryption settings that we have on our own device before we, you know, engage in that. Or better yet, you know, let's resist using free public WiFi entirely. They are prone to increased risk from cybercriminals who might be trying to gather your financial information.

Dee: Definitely don't want that. So okay. Noted. No WiFi. And don't upload the pictures, Walter. We can wait.

Walter: My thumb's over half of them anyway. Okay, so we've we've ordered. We've used some of those key words and phrases that we learned while researching this trip on CIA's World Factbook. Um, and we're headed out to take a walk and up the street, I hear what sounds like a commotion...

Dee: Oh, yeah. We should, we should check, right?

Kyle: Stop, stop, stop, stop, stop. We don't know what's going on there. You know, what if it's a demonstration, what if it's civil unrest? If you hear something unfolding, let's just stay clear. That ruckus you hear might be a situation, or it might be a distraction aimed at enabling pickpockets to target you while your attention is focused elsewhere. If it's something that we actually have to have the CIA officers gather some intelligence about, let's let those who are not on their vacation do this. Let's get the professionals there. Our mission is to get home safely. The fastest way to get out of crisis is let's avoid the trouble in the first place.

Walter: So, Kyle, are there situations in which that might not be possible?

Kyle: So this is a call you'll have to make in the moment. If an assailant is trying to move you to a second location, that's a serious red flag. That, and other signs of imminent threat to your life, are things that might want you to make a switch to a run-hide-fight approach.

Dee: So any time that you possibly could be transported to a different location, that's the time to to push back. And that's general guidance that you would give a CIA officer. Is that correct?

Kyle: That's correct.

Dee: So let's just say that we want to see more sites, and the afternoon turns into evening. We head back to the hotel. We're going to return our rental car at this point because we're going to head to dinner and we're gonna want to grab a taxi or a rideshare.

Kyle: So good thinking about taking that taxi, especially if there might be alcoholic beverages at dinner. In addition to impairing your driving ability, alcohol can also impair alertness, overall. You want to be especially careful with adult beverages in unfamiliar places.

Dee: And one of the other things that I know that most of us are cognizant about is just being mindful of your beverage or your food when you're at dinner or in a bar.

Kyle: Yeah, we don't want anybody to add anything to your drink that might cause you to become ill.

Dee: So just being mindful of that as well.

Walter: Um, and we hold that in mind, Kyle, as we arrive at this restaurant. But sometime later, as dinner winds down.

Kyle: Was it good?

Walter: It was good. Yeah. Thank you.

Dee: It was delightful.

Walter: But after we pay our bill and we head out, we realize something. The taxi stand outside the restaurant is now deserted.

Dee: So we could just probably just hail a car at this point, right?

Kyle: You know, so that might happen, but if there's no cabs in sight and, you know, I guess your ride sharing app isn't working?

Dee: It isn't. But, you know, this gentleman just drove by and rolled down his window and said he'd take us.

Walter: He seems pretty friendly.

Dee: Absolutely.

Kyle: You know I'm, I'm gonna pass on that offer. We can head back to the restaurant, ask them to call us a cab, or you can even call the hotel and ask them to dispatch us one directly. That way, they know that the cab's gonna go right to them.

Dee: So we do that and a trusted, marked and metered taxi arrives to pick us up. We get back to our hotel, deadbolt our door, throw that door stop under there. All in all, another day of travels has been completed and we are safe and sound back in the hotel.

Kyle: There you go. And you're starting to think like a CIA officer overseas. Each day should be a little bit easier knowing that you have the wherewithal and the tools you need to enjoy your time on your much deserved vacation.

Dee: Much deserved, he said.

Walter: Excellent. Kyle, thank you so much for sharing your expertise with us today. And we're just curious, what kind of vacation you prefer here? Are you more of a beach guy, a mountains guy? Some far off land adventure, or maybe kind of an all-inclusive cruise kind of guy?

Kyle: For my holidays, I'm looking for great scenery, great food, and unplugging from technology.

Dee: Sounds good to me too. Alright, Kyle, we truly appreciate you coming on The Langley Files today. Thank you very much. We hope that our listeners are a little more attuned to how to travel safely.

Kyle: Thank you. Stay safe.

Walter: Almost made some real bad decisions on that trip.

Dee: I'm glad Kyle was there to help us.

Walter: I'm glad we made it home safe and sound.

Dee: How about some trivia?

Walter: Let's do it.

Dee: On our last episode, the trivia was based on a conversation about the normal routine of a PDB briefer and the fact that many officers here at the Agency work late hours or overnight shifts. And for years, one particular vending machine here at headquarters provided the fuel many officers needed for their overnight shifts. Our question was, what food item do you think that vending machine was known for?

Walter: The answer is, drum roll please, hot dogs. That's right. Hot dogs. For several years a vending machine at headquarters, right here, served up this well-loved meal to the delight of many Agency officers. It was both a welcome sustenance in the evening hours and throughout the day. Really any time a hot dog was appropriate. And the machine itself was such a unique novelty that people would often stop just to watch it operate. Sadly, when the owner of that beloved vending machine retired, so... did the hot dogs.

Dee: Sad day for many I am quite sure of that. Um, just curious. Did you partake yourself?

Walter: So I never did. But I actually remember the day the machine appeared at the end of the hallway, down from my then office, like an omen. Folks were working some pretty long hours at the time and it was decided that a hot dog vending machine was just what we needed.

Dee: Just what you needed. That's that's a sad day then, and I'm sure this is going to be forever part of Agency lore from this point forward.

Walter: I'm just glad I was there for it in my own small way.

Dee: So how about uh another trivia question there, Walter?

Walter: Yeah, let's do it. So we've been discussing all things travel here, and we thus thought it would be more appropriate than ever to bring in another CIA World Factbook question. And as summer travel plans are ramping up, many of our listeners are probably going to be headed to a beach somewhere, perhaps to some island, to enjoy the ocean and inland excursions. But even though islands are a popular destination of choice, not everyone can name the top five largest islands on planet Earth. So the question is, can you? Bonus points if you can name the top 10 as well.

Dee: You know, I think I can envision several islands, but the largest ones? It might take a minute there.

Walter: Well, you'll need to tune in next time to hear the answer to that trivia question. Or, as always, you can head over to the CIA World Factbook right now and try to find the answer for yourself.

Dee: Thanks, everyone, for listening. That's it for this episode.

Walter: Until next time ... we'll be seeing you.

(music begins)

Walter: Glad Kyle doesn't know that I drove to work with a quarter tank of gas today.

Dee: I'm just glad you parked where you were supposed to.

(music ends)