



When wandering abroad during this festive season, as well as in big US cities, keep in mind lyrics from the musical “Oliver”. Chief thief Fagin told his kid pickpockets how easy it was to rob seniors: *“Dear old gent passing by, something nice takes his eye. Everything’s clear, attack the rear. Get in and pick a pocket or two.”*

The fictional setting was 19th Century London, but pickpockets continue to flourish today on streets there and in many other cities throughout the world. Unfortunately, the words “old gent” and “attack the rear” are still true today. Seniors are prime targets, specifically distracted elderly tourists. If you don’t want to be a street crime victim, here are some simple rules.

Secure in a locked pocket. Big, fat purses and hand-held smartphones are easy targets. No matter how safe you think the straps are, a sharp thief with a sharper knife can cut and run in a second. Instead of a purse, carry a securely hidden wallet in a jacket with inner and outer zipper pockets. Keep your smartphone in a secure pocket, too, except when you’re actually using it.

Your wallet, with cash and cards folded inside, should be in a front pocket protected by a buttoned flap or zipper. The best pocket is chest high on your jacket. That way it’s always in your control, rather than a side or back pocket or purse waiting to be pulled away.

Carry only a day’s worth. When walking daily in a city, carry only the amount of cash you’ll need for those hours. Leave the rest in your hotel room safe, along with extra paper copies of credit and ID cards. If the originals are lost or stolen, you can describe or display the correct information when reporting the problem.

Blend in. You entice thieves when you preen around as a flashy, loud-mouthed tourist. You may as well paint a target on your back. To avoid that, dress sensibly and learn some basics of the local language, so you won’t call attention to yourself as a clueless senior tourist.

Safety in numbers. You’re better protected when you travel with companions. It’s best to sightsee and shop in daylight with many other locals and tourists nearby.

