

GROUP  
CHAT

# When Safety Isn't Clear-Cut

What do you do if the U.S. State Department, according to its new ratings system, suggests that you reconsider travel to your preferred destination? Here, Engin Kadaster, Greg Tepper, and Malaka Hilton, all members of the A-List, T+L's collection of the world's top travel specialists, discuss how to be proactive in your planning.

**Engin Kadaster, vice president, Turkey at Its Best** Take advisories seriously, even if some are more politically motivated. One has to make a personal, conscious decision. In the case of Turkey, for instance, there are advisories for the southeastern region near the border with Syria and Iraq, so I wouldn't advise someone to go there. But it's relatively safe to visit places like Istanbul and Cappadocia.



Cairo and the Pyramids at Giza are not on the State Department's short list of areas to avoid in Egypt.

**Greg Tepper, president, Exeter International** It can be a perception issue. Travelers should read the actual advisory and compare it with those for other countries on the list. You'd be surprised by what it may say for countries like France. The advisory for Russia refers to the Caucasus region, so it's not that people are at greater risk in Moscow or St. Petersburg.

**Malaka Hilton, president and CEO, Admiral Travel International** For me, it's case by case. Around 9/11, there was a "do not travel" warning for Egypt, but nothing was really happening on the ground. But in 2011, around the time of Mubarak's fall, I advised travelers not to visit because there was no police control, no government. Be careful, but also try to gauge why a warning was set.

**EK** Regardless of where you're headed, an advisor or tour operator can set up guides that will meet you at the airport and assist you throughout the trip. Also, use the same common sense you do back home.

**GT** Right. You don't want to be out inebriated at two in the morning in Russia.

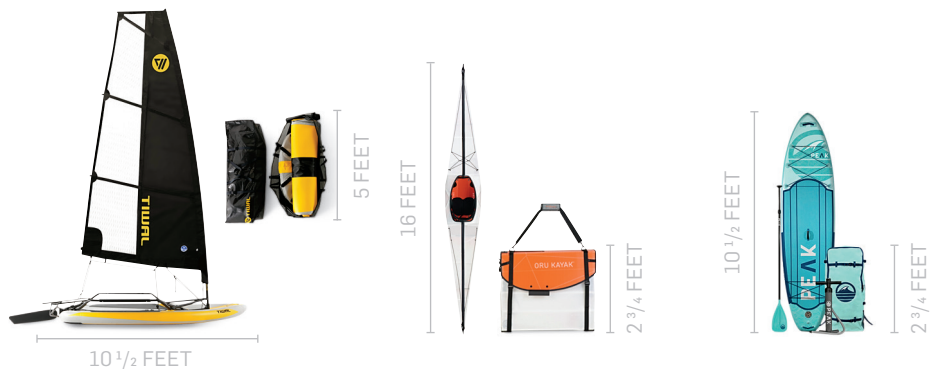
**MH** Beyond personal safety, I also tell travelers to make sure their credit cards are safe. Let your credit card companies know that you are going abroad, because scams happen quite a bit, unfortunately.

**GT** There's an opportunity for travelers who approach these situations with a fresh point of view and logic. People who've been going to Egypt are smart. Everything is less expensive, and everyone bends over backward for you. Strip away emotion and go to places like Russia and Turkey before they get crowded again—because they will.

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