

# SAFE TRAVEL?

by Chase Binder



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When Bud and I think about safety while traveling, our minds usually go to keeping our “things” safe from loss or theft—passports, cash, credit cards, jewelry, camera equipment, phones and other electronic devices. We have a myriad of packing protocols, back-up information and travel habits that have worked beautifully throughout our 25+ years of travel to 99 countries around the globe.

But a few weeks ago, the national networks broadcast a horrific story about a lovely family of four from Iowa—all dead from inhaling toxic fumes at their vacation rental

condo near Tulum, Mexico. The current thinking is that the water heater had an undetected gas leak. Wow...this is an entirely different kind of safety issue. This isn't about the inconvenience of losing some key items. This is life-and-death personal safety.

The Iowa family had booked their vacation rental through Home-away.com, a popular website now the parent company of Vacation Rentals by Owner (vrbo.com) and vacationrentals.com. Together the sites offer about 2 million rentals in about 190 countries. Airbnb.com is another website that connects the public to accommodations on virtually all the continents. The idea is to get high quality rentals—houses, villas, condos and more—directly from the owners, saving some (but not all) fees and gaining access to spacious home-like accommodations for much less than a traditional hotel or resort. Bud and I have been using this concept with nary a misstep for about two decades.

But here's the problem. The properties are not vetted by anyone at the website. You can get an inkling of the property's condition by looking at the pictures (be sure to notice any date stamps on the pho-

tos—photos should be recent!) and reading the reviews thoroughly. Is there a guarantee that all systems will be up to local electric, plumbing, fire, safety and building codes? No, there is not. Some of the sites provide and/or offer insurance if the deal goes bad—say, someone else is in residence when you are supposed to move in or the owner won't return a security deposit. But does anyone guarantee that there won't be a gas leak or an electrical fire? No.

To be sure, travel insurance—and even your credit card if you used one of the good ones—can provide benefits if you get sick or die while on vacation (see insuremytrip.com for good info). But heck...who wants that?

The fate that befell the Iowa family is tragic, but it is a rare instance and it doesn't mean you should abandon booking these types of vacations. What it does mean is that you might want to consider protecting yourself and your family by adding some inexpensive safety devices to your “must have” packing list.

For example, First Alert offers a plug-in Explosive Gas and Carbon Monoxide Detector (GCO1CN),

which is wireless, has a battery back-up and even works with a remote (not included). It can be found at most of the big box and discount stores, or on amazon.com for well under \$50. It is light and easy to pack and plugs into any AC outlet. It detects natural and propane gas as well as CO.

In terms of frequency, a fire event is more likely than a toxic fume event, of course. Sadly, I have not found an inexpensive and reliable plug-in travel smoke/fire alarm. But homes and accommodations both here in the US and around the world are more often outfitted with smoke/fire alarms than toxic gas alarms. Also, fire and smoke are visible to neighbors and passers-by, whereas toxic fumes are silent and deadly.

As for us, I have First Alert gas/CO on order and it will be one of the first things we pack from now on.



## The Bow Times 17 Years Ago in April

(reprinted from April 19, 2001 edition)

### Bow couple heads north on the run

By CINDY MARTIN  
Correspondent

BOW – There are many reasons to run a marathon, and for a Bow couple, none more rewarding than raising money for leukemia.

Doug and Chantal Kennedy, of Bow, are in training for the Mayor's Midnight Sun

Marathon in Anchorage, Alaska, June 23, to raise money for 11-year-old New Hampshire resident Taylor Birse. Birse's leukemia is in remission and she is doing well.

The idea of running the marathon came from Chantal after she spotted an ad in Shape Magazine, and mentioned it to Doug.

“Are you nuts?” was his immediate response.

At the time, they were only recreational runners and had never attempted a marathon. But with some consideration, Doug realized it was something he wanted to pursue.

“I had a math teacher in Montreal, in grade 9,” said Doug. “She got us into computers and took the fear out of working with them. She

really impressed me, and she was a fantastic person. She got sick that year and passed away shortly after the Christmas holiday,” Doug said.

She died of cancer.

“Reflecting on my education, she is what brought me into the work I do today with computers,” Kennedy said.

Doug and Chantal have been training with a volunteer coach. They also team up with Dan Mitton, of Hooksett, another runner in the area planning to run the marathon in Alaska.

Doug continues to battle shin splints and ices them as often as possible.

“I am praying that the shin splints allow me to run,” he said.

Both Kennedys will wear a bracelet during the race in honor of Birse.

“When we hit the wall at the last six miles, we will think of her,” Doug said.

The couple needs to raise \$8,100 before mid-May to be eligible for the race, sponsored by the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.



Chantal and Doug Kennedy, of Bow, prepare for a marathon to benefit cancer patients in Anchorage, Alaska. (Courtesy Photo)



On Saturday, April 7th, the geese were out on the Town Pond looking for Spring. Ice-Out isn't here yet!

Photo by Eric Anderson

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