



State highway rest stations are usually very safe for drivers and families to pause for relaxing, bathroom breaks and snacks. Visitors can usually depend on good lighting, cleanliness and personal safety.

However, when on long road trips, some basic self-protection rules should always be in place. They'll help you feel more secure. **Bring toilet cleaners:** Rest stops don't always have quick and efficient restroom maintenance. Bring paper towels and plastic bottles of liquid soap. Before using the toilet, put a disposable toilet sheet on it or clean off the seat with a soapy paper towel.

Wipe the bathroom sink: Also, wash your hands thoroughly before and after you eat at the rest stop.

Never leave kids alone: Use the buddy system when they roam inside and outside the buildings, including restrooms. Each buddy must never let the other out of eyesight throughout your visit.

Keep the car locked: When you first arrive, stay in your locked car for several moments to look around the parking area. Get out only if you determine the area is safe.

Report problems or call 911: If you see suspicious activities, report them in the restaurant or shop. If you have any reason to fear violence, stay locked in your car and call 911 on your GPS or smartphone.

Follow fire regulations: Don't light matches in the gas fill-up area. In picnic table grounds, if fires are allowed, light them only in marked campfire and grill locations. Before leaving, be sure all

fires are thoroughly extinguished.

Park only in designated areas: If at the rest stop at night, park where there's plenty of light. If you nap, park in your locked car close to the busy gas station or restaurant entrance. Keep your well-charged smartphone in a handy pocket for instant use, if necessary.

State-sponsored rest stops and rest areas are usually the safest places to stay during long road trips. However, if you see isolation and inadequate security, follow sensible rules of personal safety while there.