Passport problems can’t put real physical ex- periences in tourists. On a blazing afternoon in Ja- rama a few years ago, I realized I didn’t have en- ough pages in my passport to go my next desti- nation beyond Indonesia. I had one of those skin-crawl- ing, heart-racing moments of terror. Reason went out the window, and chaos settled in for the ride. But that kind of response is exactly what most experts tell you to avoid. “My first word of advice when somebody loses their passport in Don’t panic,” says Beth Bernier-Toth, the State Department’s managing director for Overseas Citizen Services. The problem is more of a inconvenience and a monetary cost than a reason to go. Instead, take a break in the fact that it happens all the time and consider it one of the most common problems you’ll see at travel agencies across the nation. If you’ve misplaced your passport or you are the victim of theft, you’ll need to keep a clear head and jump into action right away. The first step will be to figure out where the nearest American em- bassy or consulate is. It doesn’t hurt to call abroad and ask officials leave your situation. Check the time before hand in order to see off your travel nightmares, many embassies and consulates can’t issue emergency passports after hours or during weekends. Once you’re in, report your missing passport to the consular section. “We can make sure you can get through the door in time. Make sure that you have the documents you need to apply for the new passport,” Bernier-Toth says. “When you come in, if you’re fully prepared, we can see travel as quickly as possible.”

Make 100 percent sure that your passport is gone before you begin the process — officials are going to cancel your exist- ing passport over the phone, and it will be impossible if you do find it. Traveler Ali Wunderman had her passport and a copy in the same bag when she was traveling through Europe as a teenager. “I was in an almost-empty train station in Barcelona, a simple layover between Valencia and Interlaken (in Switzerland), when the bag with my passport, wallet, and money postransformed from nabbed right under my nose,” Wunderman says. “I was 19 and naive enough to think the Australian girl — the only other per- son in the train station — would watch my bags instead of taking them, but here we are.”

After an uncharacteristic ploy to local police for help, Wunderman went to the American consulate with her now-husband, who could vouch for her identity. Her parents did the same over the phone. “Even though it took a while,” she said. “I learned a lot about being vigilant while traveling, as well as how to be reassuring when it seems like there has been a lapse,” Wunderman says. “You have to be calm, ask for help, and, most importantly, learn how to avoid that situation in the future.”

Wunderman now travels with multiple hard copies of her pass- port, along with a digital version on her phone, which is ex- actly what the experts recommend. Keeping several copies in dif- ferent places — one on you, one in your bag, and one in the hotel — can help. But although having different forms of photo-identification can expedite the process, don’t worry if you find yourself without any. Officials will be able to look you up in the system either way.

At the embassy or consulate, you’ll need to fill out forms and pay fee. If you’ve been a victim of a violent crime or disaster, the fees for your emergency passport may be waived; otherwise, you’ll be charged the same as you would at home ($145 to $120 for the emergency passport and fees in most cases). “We do charge the full amount,” Bernier-Toth said. “Then, the person can bring that emergency passport back to the United States and swap it out for a full-validity passport.” That means that while your emergency passport is only temporarily valid, you can exchange it for a standard one without additional charges once you’re home.

There are limitless things that can go wrong when you’re travel- ing. Leaving your passport in a boisterous cafeteria, not the most devastating tragedy. Don’t let a passport setback ruin the rest of your trip.

“Bad things happen when we’re home and when we travel,” Wunderman said. “All that matters is that we grow from whatever we experience.”

For more information on your passport, visit travel.state.gov/consist/travel/en/passtport.html.


don’t have to be calm. Ask for help, and, most importantly, learn how to avoid that situation in the future.”

Wunderman now travels with multiple hard copies of her pass- port, along with a digital version on her phone, which is ex- actly what the experts recommend. Keeping several copies in dif- ferent places — one on you, one in your bag, and one in the hotel — can help. But although having different forms of photo-identification can expedite the process, don’t worry if you find yourself without any. Officials will be able to look you up in the system either way.

At the embassy or consulate, you’ll need to fill out forms and pay fee. If you’ve been a victim of a violent crime or disaster, the fees for your emergency passport may be waived; otherwise, you’ll be charged the same as you would at home ($145 to $120 for the emergency passport and fees in most cases). “We do charge the full amount,” Bernier-Toth said. “Then, the person can bring that emergency passport back to the United States and swap it out for a full-validity passport.” That means that while your emergency passport is only temporarily valid, you can exchange it for a standard one without additional charges once you’re home.

There are limitless things that can go wrong when you’re travel- ing. Leaving your passport in a boisterous cafeteria, not the most devastating tragedy. Don’t let a passport setback ruin the rest of your trip.

“Bad things happen when we’re home and when we travel,” Wunderman said. “All that matters is that we grow from whatever we experience.”

For more information on your passport, visit travel.state.gov/consist/travel/en/passtport.html.