

Purses not in sight may be gone



abigail van buren

• dear abby

DEAR ABBY: In response to the question of where to place one's handbag in a restaurant, you replied: "If you're carrying a small, dressy evening bag, place it on the table. However, if you're carrying a large handbag, put it on the floor next to your chair or beneath the table so the server won't trip on it."

I keep my smaller purses between my body and/or trusted companion or the wall, and I place larger bags on the floor, making sure my foot is in contact with it at all times. (Usually between my feet.)

I was in a service business for many years, and customers would confide the most outrageous details of their personal lives. Once, a young woman told me she visited

large churches when it rained because she could use her umbrella to reach under pews and hook purses. Then she'd slip out before the final prayer.

Women need visual contact with their purses at all times. — OLDER AND WISER, SPRINGFIELD, MO.

DEAR WISER: It's sad to think that not even a house of God is safe from purse snatching. I received a lot of mail about that letter. Not everyone agreed with my answer to that question, nor do they agree with each other. Read on:

DEAR ABBY: Sadly, there are purse snatchers in restaurants, food

courts, picnic areas, etc. I have seen women sling their open bag over the back of a chair and — swoosh goes the handbag or wallet.

Other than an evening clutch on the table, I place my handbag either underneath the table, between my feet where I can feel it at all times, or sling the strap over my knee and let the bag hang or rest on the floor. It may not be the most comfortable option, but I still have my bag when I'm ready to pay my tab. — VAN-ESSAR, CHICAGO

DEAR ABBY: Placing a purse on the table inconveniences the person sitting next to you. If you're at a table for two with no one beside you,

it's still a bad idea. Even in upscale restaurants, the purse can be stolen.

You suggested putting the bag on the floor. Floors in public places are filthy! Large handbags should be left at home, but if you have no choice, it should be balanced on your lap, close to your knees. (This can be accomplished by keeping your feet flat on the floor or crossing them at the ankles.) — V.A.R., JONESBOROUGH, TENN.

DEAR ABBY: Any purse placed under or next to a chair is vulnerable to theft. If a woman puts it on the floor, she should put the strap around the leg of her chair, so if someone tries to take it, the strap

will be caught on the leg. Better yet, when she arrives at the restaurant, she should take out her billfold and lock the purse in the trunk of her car. — DAVID F., KANSAS CITY, MO.

DEAR ABBY: A portion of your answer to that question was correct. Abby, in restaurants in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, a chair is always provided to hold a large purse. Only "ladies of the evening" put their purses on the floor.

Granted, not everyone is going to be going to Rio to a restaurant, but it is "food for thought" here in the States. — JAN. R., BEVERLY HILLS, FLA.

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