

## Health and Safety Tips for Traveling Abroad

- health info for travelers
  - before leaving home medical
  - while traveling medical
  - before leaving home security
  - while traveling security
- Ten Tips for travelers

### Health and Safety Tips for Traveling Abroad

#### Health Information for Travelers

A traveler going abroad with any preexisting medical problems should carry a letter from the attending physician, describing the medical condition and any prescription medications, including the generic name of prescribed drugs. Any medications being carried overseas should be left in their original containers and be clearly labeled. Travelers should check with the foreign embassy of the country they are visiting to make sure any required medications are not considered to be illegal narcotics.

Additional information, including disease and immunization advice, risks in particular countries, and other health guidance, is available on the Travelers' Health web page from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC also maintains the international travelers' hotline at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747).

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, please consult the web site of the World Health Organization. The WHO also produces a publication on International Travel and Health .

For detailed information on physicians abroad, the authoritative reference is The Official ABMS Directory of Board Certified Medical Specialists, published for the American Board of Medical Specialists and its certifying member boards. This publication should be available in your local library. For more information, please see <http://www.abms.org/publications.asp#official>. U.S. embassies and consulates abroad maintain lists of hospitals and physicians, and many of these lists are posted on the embassy or consulate web site. Major credit card companies also can provide the names of local doctors and hospitals abroad.

Some countries require foreign visitors to have inoculations or medical tests before entering. Before traveling, consult our brochure on Foreign Entry Requirements , and check the latest entry requirements with the foreign embassy of the country to be visited.

If an American citizen becomes seriously ill or injured abroad, a U. S. consular officer can assist in locating appropriate medical services and informing family or friends. If necessary, a consular officer can also assist in the transfer of funds from the United States. However, payment of hospital and other expenses is the responsibility of the traveler.

Before going abroad, learn what medical services your health insurance will cover overseas. If your health insurance policy provides coverage outside the United States, REMEMBER to carry both your insurance policy identity card as proof of such insurance and a claim form. Although many health

insurance companies will pay "customary and reasonable" hospital costs abroad, very few will pay for your medical evacuation back to the United States. Medical evacuation can easily cost \$10,000 and up, depending on your location and medical condition.

THE SOCIAL SECURITY MEDICARE PROGRAM DOES NOT PROVIDE COVERAGE FOR HOSPITAL OR MEDICAL COSTS OUTSIDE THE U.S.A.

Senior citizens may wish to contact the American Association of Retired Persons for information about foreign medical care coverage with Medicare supplement plans.

To facilitate identification in case of an accident, complete the information page on the inside of your passport providing the name, address and telephone number of someone to be contacted in an emergency.

#### BEFORE LEAVING HOME — MEDICAL

- Have a dental check-up and complete medical exam (especially if traveling for 3 months or more).
- Address immunization needs with a health care professional (6-10 weeks needed for some vaccines).
- Check your health insurance coverage for international benefits.
- All parental contact information should be documented and secured on the person or in carry-on luggage. (Responsible adults traveling with minors should have all completed parental consents/information).
- Purchase an extra pair of eyeglasses, contacts and sunglasses or take a copy of your prescription with you.
- Fill medical prescriptions prior to departure and carry duplicate prescriptions in case of loss. (Keep prescriptions and medications in carry-on luggage.)
- If you have any physical condition that may require emergency care, purchase and carry some kind of identification on you at all times: a tag, bracelet or card indicating the specific nature of your problem and what should be done in the event you are unconscious or unable to communicate.
- Obtain sunscreen lotion with a sun protector factor (SPF) of 15 or greater, an adequate supply of personal care/hygiene items, and an insecticide lotion with DEET (10-35%). Permethrin is available for treatment of bedding, clothing and netting and is an effective deterrent to mosquitoes.
- A first aid kit is a good idea and should contain the following: mild analgesics, anti-diarrheal medication, elastic wraps, scissors, tweezers, safety pins, antibiotic ointment, adhesive tape, 2" gauze and Band-Aids of assorted sizes.

#### WHILE TRAVELING — MEDICAL

- Buy comfortable, closed and protective footwear to protect from fleas, ticks and various parasites.
- Wash your hands before eating or preparing foods.

- Try to learn key phrases in the local language, i.e.: "Where is the doctor?"... "I need help."

Avoid:

Jetlag by drinking caffeine-free drinks, eating light meals and avoiding alcohol during the flight.

Over-exhaustion and heat illness by drinking plenty of fluids, adding salt and minerals to your diet and wearing loose-fitting, light-colored clothing made of natural fabrics.

Motion sickness by sitting in the front window seat of a car or bus; sit over the wings or wheels on an airplane.

Tap water, ice cubes and local dairy products and eat only well-cooked foods that are still hot.

Salads, uncooked vegetables, raw seafood and foods sold at roadside stands. Seek advice from your program director or on-site host for referrals to local restaurants offering safe local foods.

Walking barefoot or wading in fresh water streams and lakes.

#### BEFORE LEAVING HOME — SECURITY

- Purchase a money belt or security pouch to carry valuables and passport. Carry important documents on your person.
- Provide your travel itinerary to your family/maintain regular contact while traveling.
- Make a record of your passport, credit card and travelers check numbers and insurance papers, as well as plane, train, or bus ticket numbers. Give a copy of the list to a family member or friend for safekeeping. (Make a copy of the first pages of your passport and retain with your luggage.) Bring along 4 extra photos in the event you need to replace your passport or obtain visas.
- Draft a list of important telephone numbers and addresses of the locations you are to visit and the telephone number of your nearest embassy or consulate. Leave a copy with your contact and take a copy with you.
- Use only your name and/or phone number on luggage tags. Do not carry unnecessary identification, which could cause problems.
- Pack your own suitcase and pack light. Often you'll be carrying your suitcase through airports and to hotel rooms from the bus.

#### WHILE TRAVELING - SECURITY

- Carefully obey all local laws and customs. Your civil rights will vary greatly once outside of the United States.
- Use the "buddy system"— try to travel in groups consisting of locals/classmates from the country. Avoid hitchhiking at all costs.

- Organize your funds into two separate packs each consisting of a credit card and currency. When in-country, one of these packs should always be left at your residence as a back-up. Keep the cash you need separate from the rest of your money.
- Always notify your local contact of your intended schedule and social plans.
- Stay away from illegal drugs entirely. Most foreign countries have extremely strict laws regarding even small quantities of drugs. In certain countries there is an automatic death sentence for possession of drugs no matter what the amount!
- Drinking age varies greatly depending where you are. Keep in mind that while under the influence your natural awareness is diminished and you stand out by the very fact that you are a foreigner.
- Women from more liberated cultures may be perceived as sexually promiscuous. Adopt a modest dress code and modify your social behavior in accordance, especially when dealing with locals of the opposite sex.
- Learn about your surroundings. Avoid problem and unlighted areas, especially alleys and parks.
- Do not carry luggage or packages for others.
- Know how to use public telephones and how to contact the police. Have necessary coins or phone cards available.
- Use a shoulder strap if possible when using a purse. Carry your wallet in an inside coat or front trouser pocket..
- Take credit cards to assure that you get the most favorable exchange rates. Know your credit limits in advance of leaving the U.S.; cards recognized internationally include: Visa, AMEX, MasterCard, and Diners Club.
- Don't leave your luggage or handbag unattended anywhere. Should you put a backpack down, place it on the floor between your legs or wrap a strap around a fixed object.
- Travel with a small, high-powered flashlight in your back-pack, purse, or pouch when out, and on your bedside table at night for emergencies.
- When riding in a cab, keep all the doors locked and the windows rolled up to within two inches of the top.
- Don't resist an armed theft.. If robbed, never pursue on foot.
- Be aware of the cultural differences and abide by the local customs. You are a guest in a foreign country and are expected to behave as such. Refrain from discussing politics or criticizing the lifestyles.
- Review pre-trip information including booklets from the State Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs and check relevant sites on the web.

- If you are staying for an extended period of time, register immediately upon arrival with the Consular section of your embassy.
- Report a lost or stolen passport to your embassy or nearest consulate, and cancel lost or stolen credit cards or travelers checks as soon as possible. Report stolen items to the police and get a copy of the theft report to include with your insurance claim.
- Don't become an easy target. Remain alert, maintain a low profile and trust your instincts.
- Do not wear ostentatious necklaces or other jewelry of real or apparent value, bring expensive cameras, or overburden yourself with packages.
- A cellular telephone can be very useful and can save a great deal of trouble.
- Avoid black market transactions of all types.

### Tips for Traveling Abroad

If you are traveling abroad here are the top 10 tips you need to make your trip easier:

1. Make sure you have a signed, valid passport and visas, if required. Also, before you go, fill in the emergency information page of your passport!
2. Read the Consular Information Sheets (and Public Announcements or Travel Warnings, if applicable) for the countries you plan to visit.
3. Familiarize yourself with local laws and customs of the countries to which you are traveling. Remember, the U.S. Constitution does not follow you! While in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws.
4. Make 2 copies of your passport identification page. This will facilitate replacement if your passport is lost or stolen. Leave one copy at home with friends or relatives. Carry the other with you in a separate place from your passport.
5. Leave a copy of your itinerary with family or friends at home so that you can be contacted in case of an emergency.
6. Do not leave your luggage unattended in public areas. Do not accept packages from strangers.
7. Prior to your departure, you should register with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate through the State Department's travel registration website . Registration will make your presence and whereabouts known in case it is necessary to contact you in an emergency. In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare and whereabouts may not be released without your express authorization. Remember to leave a detailed itinerary and the numbers or copies of your passport or other citizenship documents with a friend or relative in the United States.
8. To avoid being a target of crime, try not to wear conspicuous clothing and expensive jewelry and do not carry excessive amounts of money or unnecessary credit cards.

9. In order to avoid violating local laws, deal only with authorized agents when you exchange money or purchase art or antiques.

10. If you get into trouble, contact the nearest U.S. embassy.