



Pre-Travel Preparation

T R A V E L F A C T

Preparation is the key to successful travel. Smart travelers learn about their destination before leaving and they understand the pitfalls that can await the unprepared.

On every trip:

- Make sure your passport does not expire within 6 months from your date of travel. Make a copy in case you lose it while on vacation (or it gets stolen) so you can send the copy to your Embassy. Do you know what your entry / visa requirements are? If not, it's too late when you get to the airport!
- If you plan to drive outside of the United States get an international driver's license. Many car rental services insist on an international driver's license. Be sure to review the rules of the road before you start the ignition.
- Bring an extra supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication that you take regularly. Pack some of your supplies in separate luggage just in case a piece is lost. If you require needles for medication, be sure to bring enough of these also. Carry some of your supplies and a written prescription for drugs and needles in carry-on luggage.
- Remember to pack an extra pair of eyeglasses and/or contact lenses.
- Bring a standard first-aid kit. Items to include are adhesive tape and bandages, sterile cotton, tweezers, small scissors, an elastic bandage, and a thermometer. Also bring antiseptic, anti-fungal preparation, sunscreen, aloe lotion for sunburn, pain reliever (aspirin, ibuprofen, or acetaminophen), and medication for motion sickness.
- Pack Pepto Bismo® or Immodium A-D® to battle a bout of traveler's diarrhea.
- Remember your insect repellent. You may need calamine lotion, hydrocortisone cream, witch hazel, or some other preparation to relieve bites.

Health care away from home

If you are planning a long trip or have a chronic health problem you may have need for either acute or ongoing medical services abroad. The American Embassies or Consulates usually keep lists of English-speaking physicians. The U.S. State Department maintains a 24-hour emergency number for overseas citizens (202-647-5226). You also may decide to join the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers (IAMAT), which can provide lists of English-

speaking physicians in most countries. Finally, teaching hospitals in foreign countries can usually be counted on to provide good care with at least some physicians who speak English.

Additional items to consider for extended trips include checking your health insurance policies with regard to illness or accidents occurring abroad, carrying the phone number of your personal physician and dentist, obtaining a telephone credit card or making arrangements with family to accept collect calls. Keep an accurate list of names and dosages of current medications and eyeglass/contact prescriptions, and keep your vaccination certificates with you throughout your trip. Consider getting extra travel insurance. If you are a senior on Medicare and you are traveling outside of the United States, be aware that Medicare does not cover any of your medical bills. The prudent thing to do is get a trip insurance policy that also covers medical costs.

If you get in trouble

The U.S. Consulates provide consular services to American travelers abroad. To locate Consulates before you travel, an excellent web resource is the State Department Travel Page, located at <http://travel.state.gov>. This site provides information on regions of high crime and political unrest and also gives safety information and tips on local laws and customs.

Check out the weather at your destination

Be sure that you pack appropriate clothing by checking the weather before you go. What does it say about tropical storms, hurricanes, or unseasonable weather? When traveling by car in bad weather, make sure to have supplies such as road flares, lights, food, water (to last a couple of days at least), and extra clothing.

Finally, learn a few essential terms in the native language of the country to which you are traveling. Essential words, such as hello, please, food, water, restroom, etc., can be very helpful. Not only will the locals appreciate your effort, your trip will be more enjoyable and you'll get around easier. And don't forget to bring extra film!