

PLAN. PACK. EXPLORE.



A SURVIVAL GUIDE
FROM THE EXPERTS AND
THE FOREIGN OFFICE



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office





Your Travel Check List



FCO TRAVEL ADVICE
know before you go
fco.gov.uk/travel

Get jobs

Which ones do I need?
How early do I need to get them?

Get insurance

Make sure it covers everything
Get European Health Insurance Card
for free → www.ehic.org.uk

Check local laws + customs

Visit the Foreign and Commonwealth Office
website to find out country travel advice
→ www.fco.gov.uk/travel

Money, money, money

Sort out access to emergency money
Check I have enough!

Check passport is valid!

Might need to be valid for longer
than my trip... Do I need a visa?

Copy passport and documents

Take a copy with me and store online
using a secure data storage site.



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INTRODUCTION

Travel overseas is like the British weather, frustratingly unpredictable, but for a lot of the time it can be wonderful. If you pop some extra money, wet wipes or after sun in your bag, then you're already anticipating that your time away may not go according to plan.

The fact is, it rarely does, but that's the fun of going on holiday. And no one wants to spoil your well-earned break; this is why experts at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, often referred to as the Foreign Office, and the travel industry have used their wealth of personal experience to bring you some bright ideas.

We've put together this survival guide that's portable and easy to use, with top tips that will hopefully make your holiday escape one that you'll remember for all the right reasons - for all the things you planned before you went, and all the things you thought about when at your final destination.

We cannot advise you on what sunglasses to take, what clothes to buy or what beach to hang out on, but we can tell you a thing or two about **passports, places to avoid, security, insurance** and a lot more - snippets of advice that are likely to help you out overseas.

We know there's no such thing as a perfect holiday plan, but there are a few checklists and topics worth thinking about before you go and while you're away. You never know what might happen on the road - and knowledge is a key factor when it comes to safe and fun travel.



Photographed by Rachel Chelwynd-Cowieson, SBA



And experts at the Foreign Office and across the travel industry have got years and years of it - they've also travelled round the globe extensively to bring you this guide. They hate to talk about those worst case scenarios, but when they do it's worth listening, they've seen it all happen before... mostly to British travellers.

Last of all, if you're reading this, you're already thinking about your safety. We're concerned about the thousands who aren't, so tell them about this book and the top tips you've learnt on holiday.

Then order a copy for them online at the link below.

www.fco.gov.uk/publications

WHERE ON EARTH? HOTSPOTS

WHERE DO MOST
ISSUES OCCUR WHEN
BRITS TRAVEL?

This map illustrates the top 10 destinations for British nationals based on the average number of visitors and residents over a year. For each of these destinations the figure shows the three most common incidents involving British nationals, in terms of the total number of cases and reported incidences.

4. USA

Arrests: 1,391
Deaths: 147
Hospitalisations: 133
Total Cases: 1,808

Average yearly no. of visitors and residents:

1. France 17,768,667
2. Spain 15,005,089
3. Germany 7,484,578
4. USA 6,628,667
5. UAE 4,418,339
6. Italy 3,403,086
7. Greece 2,591,000
8. Turkey 2,385,438
9. Portugal 1,888,767
10. Australia 1,848,556

6. ITALY

Arrests: 41
Deaths: 110
Hospitalisations: 11
Total Cases: 322

1. FRANCE

Arrests: 170
Deaths: 604
Hospitalisations: 216
Total Cases: 1,199

9. PORTUGAL

Arrests: 19
Deaths: 212
Hospitalisations: 94
Total Cases: 399

2. SPAIN

Arrests: 2,016
Deaths: 1,750
Hospitalisations: 865
Total Cases: 5,228



3. GERMANY

Arrests: 127
Deaths: 495
Hospitalisations: 41
Total Cases: 711

7. GREECE

Arrests: 190
Deaths: 133
Hospitalisations: 452
Total Cases: 868

8. TURKEY

Arrests: 63
Deaths: 103
Hospitalisations: 133
Total Cases: 408

5. UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Arrests: 259
Deaths: 69
Hospitalisations: 34
Total Cases: 423

10. AUSTRALIA

Arrests: 123
Deaths: 80
Hospitalisations: 43
Total Cases: 405

THE TRAVEL EXPERT'S CHECKLIST

We've already said that this guide is not here to shatter your holiday dream; but it has been written to help you avoid trouble. Planning helps, this is what travel experts tick off when *they* go on a trip:



CHECKLIST!!!

- Take out comprehensive travel insurance and check out visas, vaccinations and passport requirements well in advance. ✓
- Make copies of your passport and important documents. Keep them safe, scan or digitally photograph them and then store them somewhere secure online, such as an e-safe. ✓
- Check the Foreign Office travel advice on the destination you plan to visit:
www.fco.gov.uk/travel ✓



- Take enough funds in varying formats - credit cards, currency, pre-paid cards or travellers cheques. Take emergency funds and don't keep it all together.

- Be streetwise overseas, read guide books and check the Internet concerning local customs and scams.

- Tell a friend or family member where you are going and leave emergency contact details with them.

- Take this booklet with you whenever you travel, share your safe travel tips and order this book for others, free of charge online. www.fc.gov.uk/publications



AS YOU PLAN YOUR HOLIDAY

DO YOUR RESEARCH

Research your trip in advance if you are to secure cheaper flights, car hire or accommodation. Start making arrangements as soon as you've blocked out the time on your calendar. Booking last minute costs more, limits options and leads to impulsive, costly spending.

Research online using the Foreign Office website, and other websites such as: Trip Advisor, Lonely Planet, Rough Guides, Facebook, Twitter, message boards and blogs, as well as tourism authority websites. In addition, there are also many good guide books available.

Weigh up a mixture of sources for your travel tips: online, paper-based guides and more importantly word of mouth i.e. friends and family.

Talk with someone who has visited where you're going, a current experience is the most reliable information you'll get. Online you

can find other people who've had similar trips. If someone says there's a great party or a roadblock at a certain spot, check out the facts with another source.

Always note the date when the information was written as situations change and can quickly go out of date - guidebooks are especially prone to this, since print lead times are often long.

Don't forget the mantra: Yesterday's holiday hotspot is home to tomorrow's despot – and vice versa!

When you're about to book, read the small print; many hotel contracts include a waiver saying they're not liable for theft or damage, while car hire firms can have unannounced stipulations, such as limited mileage.

THE JOY OF TRAVEL

"Travel is a joyful, adventurous, educational, essential part of my life. I spend a significant amount of time in the most remote, challenging parts of the world and always feel safe on these expeditions because I take time to make careful risk assessments and prepare the team properly.

But when travelling to more mainstream, apparently simple, destinations I have in the past fallen prey to my fair share of difficulties such as getting

hopelessly lost, becoming embroiled in scams, thefts and health scares. I speak from hard won experience that it always takes a lot of energy and valuable holiday time to figure a way out of these situations. I now avoid these difficulties by doing proper planning for all of my journeys, even if they are to short-haul, popular holiday destinations and I encourage everyone to do the same."

*Paul Rose, Vice President
Royal Geographical Society*

TIPS FROM TRAVEL EXPERTS:

- Start researching at least six months in advance.
- You can never read enough reviews, yet people have different expectations of their holidays, hotels and services - so don't believe everything you read.
- Check out where a hotel is located on a map - cheaper prices can indicate it's miles out of town.



- Many attractions are closed at least one day a week, check opening times.
 - Subscribe to Foreign Office travel alerts; they'll give you the latest news on a destination.
- www.fco.gov.uk/subscribe



LOOK AT FOREIGN OFFICE TRAVEL ADVICE

The Arab Spring, the Icelandic ash cloud and the Japanese tsunami have all curtailed people's travel plans - you can get caught out at anytime. A place that seemed peaceful and calm when you booked could be devastated by the time you fly, while very local incidents can tarnish the perceived image of a whole country or region.

The Foreign Office updates its travel advice on a country-by-country basis the moment situations change, check out

www.fco.gov.uk/travel. The aim of this service is to provide you with up-to-date local knowledge, so you can make an informed decision about where to travel.

The travel advice will cover the whole country but may specify particular regions within that country to avoid. For instance the Red Sea resorts were fine

when trouble flared up in Cairo and many areas of Japan were totally unaffected by the tsunami and earthquake. You can cross-reference the advice given by the Foreign Office with any other local information you may have.

There are five levels of warning for each country - the lowest indicates that there are no travel restrictions. The other levels combine two factors: whether the advice covers the entire country or just a specific region, and whether the Foreign Office advises against all travel, or all but essential travel.

If the advice is against all but essential travel, it's up to you to decide if your journey is essential or not - for example you may have urgent family or business commitments to attend to.

Foreign Office travel advice can affect your travel insurance - contact

your insurer or refer to the policy wording. A policy may be invalid if you visit an area to which the Foreign Office advises against all travel.

For most holidays, your insurance will cover you for a trip that you began at a time when no travel restrictions were in place. But if the travel advice changes when you are away, you may need to follow official advice – such as a Government-ordered curfew - not doing so may invalidate any claim. If the security situation suddenly becomes unstable and the Foreign Office advises against travel, tour

operators usually provide flights to bring you home.

Travel companies and airlines often take Foreign Office travel advice into account, but cancelling or rescheduling a booking is their decision, so is the question of refunds or compensation.

No country is problem-free:

You can experience issues anywhere at anytime, even at home. Ultimately it is your responsibility to decide whether you travel - please make sure it is an informed decision.

That's excellent!

WHAT FOREIGN OFFICE TRAVEL ADVICE PROVIDES:

- *Security and safety warnings based on local knowledge, information from Embassies and intelligence services.*
- *Advice is reviewed monthly and can be updated several times a day in a crisis.*
- *Sign up for alerts giving you the latest country updates: www.fco.gov.uk/subscribe*

MANAGING MONEY

Taxis, taxes, treats and tourist trips all eat into your budget when you're on holiday, so it's best to fix a firm budget that takes into account everything from flights to hotels, meals and day-trips - then stick to it.

Before you focus on a destination, look where sterling is strong and where it's weak - from the Eurozone to Asian destinations or countries that use the U.S. dollar. See how far your pound will go by comparing the cost of big-ticket items, such as accommodation, petrol and car hire.

Shop around early for the best deals; flights usually go on sale up to eleven months in advance of departure. Be flexible about when you travel - midweek can be cheaper and avoid school holidays if you can.

Look out for airline sales; discounting periods happen in the New Year, but budget airlines, as well as many others launch sales at anytime, so sign up for email alerts to get the newest deals first.

Consider all-inclusive holidays - set your price in sterling and get meals, drinks and activities in one price. Check whether they actually save you money and what packages specifically include such as added-value extras. Many companies now offer in-flight meals or hotel breakfast as optional extras.

Always take account of those hidden costs - online, credit-card or late booking fees and excess baggage charges; check-in fees are even levied by some airlines. Also pre-book all the other extras, including travel insurance, transfers, airport parking, car hire and activities. Bank on having to tip extensively from the U.S. to Asia, even as much as 20%. In some places it is very much part of the culture.



A whiff of trouble at a holiday destination can send prices plummeting, so check the Foreign Office travel advice for that destination, but don't dismiss a whole country if trouble is localised.

Head to www.fco.gov.uk/travel for the latest travel advice information.

BUDGET BUSTERS:

- *Do your research: travel firms can charge very different prices for the same, or very similar, holidays. Price differences are even bigger for specialist breaks.*
- *Think about where to buy your holiday money, rates can vary hugely between airport exchanges, when you land or the high street at home.*
- *If you don't mind stopovers adding time to the journey, you can make significant savings in airfares.*
- *Overspending on food and drink is the easiest way to blow your budget.*
- *You can find good deals for hotels that have recently made improvements, but where the prices quoted are still based on a previous lower standard.*
- *Some resorts offer extra nights free at certain times of year and remember that brand new hotels usually discount their opening rates.*

PROTECTING YOUR HOLIDAY



Most of us wouldn't ever think of going away without making sure our homes are secure. But we can be remarkably lax about safeguarding our holiday, especially when it comes to dealing with the unexpected.

Volcanic eruptions in Chile, extreme weather incidents at UK airports, or the collapse of tour operators or airlines in these tough economic times have left many of us stranded overseas or out of pocket.

It's therefore worth looking at holidays protected by leading bonding schemes - mainly through ATOL, ABTA, or AITO. If you buy a trip from an operator that's a member of one of these organisations, there's a chance you'll get your money back if things go wrong.

Travel companies display the relevant logos on their websites and

brochures, and if your agent offers protection make sure it is in writing and read what they're offering.

If the Foreign Office advises against all non-essential travel to a country and you've booked through a bonded tour operator you may be eligible to a full refund or an alternative holiday.

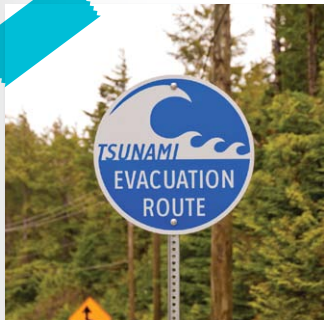
By law, all travel firms that sell you a package holiday which includes flights must have an Air Travel Organisers Licence (ATOL). If the airline fails, either the tour operator or the Civil Aviation Authority will come to your aid.

If you haven't got on your flight, you'll get a refund, and if you're overseas, they'll fly you home at the end of your time away. But bonding is not a substitute for good insurance there's a limit to what these schemes cover.

However, these days many of us book independently, which means you're not automatically covered – check when booking that your operator is protected in one of these schemes.

The risk of airlines going bust is high; some credit cards offer protection on flight bookings over a certain value, while many accommodation-only suppliers have taken out bonds to protect travellers – again you need to ask.

None of these schemes are cast-iron guarantees – enquire specifically as to what financial protection is offered and don't assume you're covered just because you see the bonding logo. It's always good to take out travel insurance before you book the flights for further peace of mind.



• **ATOL – Air Travel Organisers Licensing**

This scheme, run by the Civil Aviation Authority, covers all package holidays booked by travellers that include flights. Some flight-only bookings are covered but only if bought through an ATOL registered company.

www.atol.org.uk

Tel: 020 7453 6424

• **ABTA – Association of British Travel Agents**

This represents thousands of agents and operators across the UK and has a code of conduct for members. Many travel arrangements are protected in case of the financial failure of the company, but you should always check.

www.abta.com

Tel: 0901 201 5050 (check charges)

• **AITO – Association of Independent Tour Operators**

If you travel using an independent tour operator, rather than a package holiday provider, it is likely to be a member. There are more than 100 tour operators in AITO offering 100% consumer financial protection.

www.aito.co.uk

Tel: 020 8744 9280

WHEN YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT BOOKING

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

Your passport is arguably your most important possession when travelling. Without it, you're not going anywhere. It's your responsibility and nobody else's, allowing you to cross borders, check onto flights and prove your age.

Look for the expiry date on your passport - right now. Some countries and tour operators insist that it's valid for up to six months beyond your travel date and that you have at least a clear double page. The onus is on you to sort out passports and visas, it's not the job of a travel agent.

If you're applying for your first passport or renewing an old one it does take time and paperwork - get advice from the Identity and Passport Service (IPS). If it looks like the dog has bitten it, it has a peeling photo page or is falling to bits - get a new one.



With people travelling to Europe so frequently and easily, visas can often be an afterthought. Many countries still require one, so check. You need to allow lots of time to apply for visas as they can take weeks, especially by post or through an agency. You may also need to go to the destination's embassy in person - not the British Embassy. Most countries only have one UK embassy that's based in London.

Many embassies have websites where you can look up visa requirements or you can ask your travel agent. Remember countries don't have to let you in once you get to the airport if you don't have a visa. Plan ahead.

Some destinations require you to pre-register before arrival i.e. the United States, or obtain an electronic permit i.e. Australia. In all cases you do need to plan at least one month ahead before you travel.

There are many types of visas: tourist, student or working holiday and they vary in terms of how long you can stay and the number of entries to a country.

You do need to find out the terms and conditions - some have strict dates of entry and exit, while others are flexible within a specific period.

It's worth remembering that most standard visas are single entry. You may not be able to pop over the border to a neighbouring country and then come back again – there are going to be restrictions.

Only the country you plan to visit can provide up-to-date information about its visas.

Remember the rules can often change and without notice. Time is the factor here, give yourself enough of it, especially if you are getting multiple visas.

Check out: The Identity and Passport Service website

www.passports.gov.uk

For advice call: 0300 222 0000



TIPS ON RUBBER STAMP ISSUES:

- Don't wing it at the border. Check if you can get your visa before you travel or whether there is a legitimate visa counter at the border. www.fco.gov.uk/travel has more information.
- Leave plenty of time to apply for your first passport; you'll need a lot of supporting documentation and may even be asked to attend an interview.
- Make sure you fill in the emergency contact details in your passport, as well as your next of kin.
- If you lose your passport or it's stolen, report it to the local police immediately and get a statement about the incident, then contact the British Embassy. You will be able to get an Emergency Travel Document, but not a full passport, from the Embassy, High Commission, or Consulate.
- Carry at least four spare passport-sized photos with you, in case you need them for visas or if you lose your passport; you'll often need two photos for one application.
- Some countries may deny you entry if your passport contains a stamp from somewhere they consider to be a prohibited nation.

READY OR NOT?

"I was ready to fly to Cape Town for a family holiday and arrived at the check-in desk, full of excitement for the trip ahead. That excitement quickly turned to distress when I was told I needed a clear double-page spread free in my passport – and the check-in official couldn't find one.

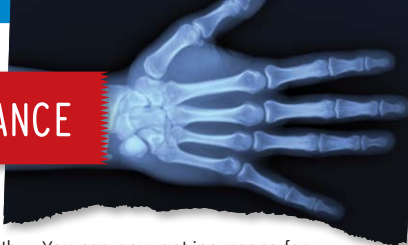
After some agonised checking of my passport myself and still no luck, I was on the verge of giving up the flight and waving off my family as I stayed at home. But then a manager from the airline came to check what the fuss was about and went through my passport page by page. By some miracle he found that two pages had slightly stuck together – at a free double-page.

So we all made the holiday! But I never forgot the lesson and now wherever I'm going, I always check the entry requirements in good time before I fly."

Lynda St. Cooke
Foreign &
Commonwealth Office -
Know Before You Go team



TAKE OUT INSURANCE



Travel insurance may sound contrary to the devil-may-care attitude of many of us, but it's worth getting and it isn't a waste of money. Bad luck hits us all at some stage and holidays are also unpredictable: you may fall ill, lose your luggage or get mugged.

Take for instance medical care. Many countries do not have a nationalised health service like the UK, so hospital costs can be astronomical. Getting sick or injured overseas could leave you with an eye-watering bill you'll be paying off for years.

Insurance varies by age and type of policy - but it's not that much of a cost, compared to say flights, hotels or all your meals. Go for comprehensive insurance and it will cover you for most health problems, theft and loss of possessions.

It's very easy to organise and you can shop around the Internet for instant quotes and price comparisons so you buy the best policy.

You can now get insurance for almost everything. Yet many of us never check to see what our policies actually cover, say if an airline goes bust - and they do - or your flight is delayed or cancelled.

If you plan to do extreme sports or adventurous activities such as safaris, paragliding or hot air ballooning, make sure your insurance covers these activities.

Make sure the policy covers all the countries you plan to visit. Some policies may not cover destinations that the Foreign Office advises against travelling to.

If you think your plans could be subject to change, check your cancellation cover as some don't include this either.

It's good to declare all medical conditions prior to your holiday; if you don't it could invalidate your policy. When drinking abroad, don't forget that many policies will not cover accidents as a result of excess alcohol consumption.

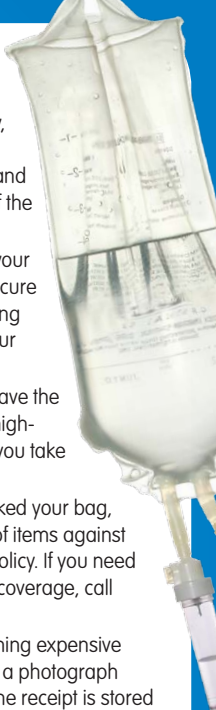
The World Health Organisation (WHO) issues advice against travel to areas affected by outbreaks of disease. Some insurers may include WHO advice in their policies and refuse to cover people, even if the Foreign Office hasn't issued an advisory.

When taking out a policy:

- Reputable companies should offer you a 24-hour help line while you're abroad.
- Check out whether your insurance covers belongings such as phones, iPods or laptops and any other items of value.
- Don't rely on free credit card travel policies as they may not cover you fully.
- Frequent travellers should consider multi-trip policies that cover travel within a certain time period - annual travel insurance is often the cheapest option.
- If you transfer your plans to a new destination check that you can transfer your travel insurance to cover your new trip.

When on the road:

- Take all relevant policy documents with you and leave photocopies at home.
- Photograph your expensive items such as jewellery, handbags or electronic items and make a record of the serial numbers.
 - Store images of your valuables to a secure online e-safe along with a scan of your passport.
 - Make sure you have the receipts for any high-value items that you take on your travels.
 - Once you've packed your bag, check the value of items against your insurance policy. If you need to increase your coverage, call your insurer.
 - If you buy something expensive while away, take a photograph and make sure the receipt is stored in a safe location.
 - Theft of your luggage should be reported to local police and make sure you ask for a police report - essential documentation for any insurance claims.
 - Check that the safe in your room is actually safe. Many are not bolted in place and can be easily stolen - so check how secure they are before putting all your valuables in there!



TAKING A LONG BREAK

Call it a gap year, snap year, a career break or the trip of a lifetime, going overseas for months or years takes more planning than a week's holiday. It's not just about making the mental leap, but some hard decisions about what you really need for a long trip.

Planning is crucial, especially when it comes to finances and having the right tools to travel, from visas to insurance. No one wants to have their trip cut short, or worse get stranded with no cash, because they didn't plan.

Check your passport has plenty of validity, as some airlines and cruise operators require you to have a minimum of six months left in your passport from the date you plan to return. Remember multiple visas take longer to apply for, so do working ones. Consider a long-term mobile phone plan that allows cheaper calls and texts from overseas. There are also many international SIM cards on offer too.

Take out insurance that lasts for more than 90 days - most people think they're covered with an annual policy. But this may only allow you to be away for 31 to 45 days *per single trip*, despite allowing multiple holidays.

Read the small print and make sure every destination you're visiting is covered, as well as those once-in-a-lifetime activities you're planning - from scuba diving to skiing.

If you are taking a year out rather than a few months it may be worth giving someone you trust back home power of attorney over your bank account, assets and finances. This will allow them to pay any of your bills while you're away and track you if necessary.



IDEAS FOR THAT LONGER STINT ABROAD:

- If you are planning to earn extra cash overseas make sure you have the correct work permits and visas. If you don't get the right visa, you could be detained, fined and barred from the country.
- Book a flexible ticket that will ensure that you can come home or leave whenever you want without being restricted.
- Learn the lingo. It can go a long way...
- Your age can affect the cost of your travel; if you're under 26 look out for discounts and travel schemes.
- It is possible to set up a direct debit to pay off your credit cards in full each month; it is also easy to get online access to check statements.
- Try to secure a debit card that doesn't charge for purchases and cash transactions abroad as these small fees can soon mount up over time.
- As a national of the European Economic Area (EEA) or European Union (EU) country, you can work in any other member state, without a permit.
- If you are staying in one country for a long time, then try buying a local SIM card as it's often the cheaper option for calls.
- Set up an online bank account so you can use Internet cafés to keep track of how much you're spending.
- A house or flat left vacant for more than a month can invalidate a home insurance policy, so ask your insurer about the rules.



THE BIG

BAD BAG BLUNDER

There are few things worse than losing your bag. Except losing your bag in a foreign country that doesn't speak English, you don't speak their language and you're about to set off on an 18-hour coach journey from Cusco in Peru to Nazca to see the Nazca lines.

"About 40 minutes before leaving, we grabbed some food to tide us over for the journey. We sat near the door and the five of us took turns to sit with the bags at the table while the others ordered food. Right as we were about to leave my friend asked, "Where's my bag?" A question you never want to hear. She'd had it slung over the back of her chair as we ate. There was always someone manning the table but it was nowhere to be seen as we asked people at the restaurant if they had seen anything; even scoured the square outside, we knew we weren't going to find the bag. With hindsight of course, we should always have had our belongings within our sight at all times.

And so the snap decision had to be made; take the trip or stay for the weekend and sort out the missing bag and contents. We took the trip. Luckily her passport was stowed away at the hostel and she carried a photocopy. One big headache - and expense - avoided. After bank cards - which all needed to be cancelled via phone calls home to parents, to find out the card numbers, and then to the banks - the biggest loss was personal: her camera with a memory card of photos; the last of her contact lens solution and her travel diary.

We immediately reported it to the local police. Luckily we had a Spanish-speaking friend who made the process considerably easier. Even though nothing was ever returned, filing and getting a copy of the police report meant that when she returned home she was able to claim on her travel insurance."

BUNAC participant in Peru;
organisers of overseas work
& volunteer placements



This is where
we were
going

JABS AND MEDICINE



There are some nasty bugs overseas. The fact that you come from an isolated cold island adrift in the North Atlantic means that you aren't immune to most of them: without jabs or pills, malaria, yellow fever or hepatitis could devastate you.

Check at least eight weeks ahead for any health precautions you may need to take before your trip, as some vaccinations require a period of time to take effect. Visit the NHS Fit For Travel website. It shows you which vaccinations you need for each country you may travel to.

GPs offer holiday jabs but getting an appointment for this service takes time - especially if you leave it to the last minute. Remember these treatments aren't usually available on an NHS prescription - check first.

Or you can visit a private travel clinic, which will also cover jabs for even the most far-flung destinations. Going to a specialist clinic is a good idea but getting vaccinations and travel medication isn't cheap.

Jabs vary greatly in price, with the standard hepatitis injection costing much more than polio. What vaccinations you'll need depends on where you're going and what you're doing.

Write up a checklist for your doctor or clinic so they can see which vaccinations you've had in the past - for example the MMR vaccine - and a list of countries you will be visiting and where you'll be going - i.e. rural or jungle areas.

If you're travelling to high-risk destinations where typhoid, rabies, tuberculosis or yellow fever could be rife you may need jabs for these. Jetting off without taking precautions could mean your insurance policy is also null and void.

Some countries require certain vaccinations before allowing you to enter. Others recommend certain jabs, but do not require proof. But remember - if you have been to a country that carries a health risk you may still need to demonstrate to other countries that you had the relevant jabs.

For example, if you have been to a yellow fever region, even if only for one day, you will still need to show a yellow fever vaccination certificate before entering countries which do not have yellow fever. To be safe always pack your vaccination certificates with you when travelling.

Some jabs don't work last minute. A first yellow fever vaccination is not valid for ten days; other vaccines take several weeks to become effective.

Some jabs do go out of date, so older travellers should get a check-up. Those childhood vaccinations may not work.

In the past ten years, the number of Britons visiting malarial destinations has risen, so has the incidence of people returning with this disease, which can be wholly unpleasant and sometimes fatal. Yet it can be prevented with a daily tablet and by covering up.

You need to start the course of anti-malarial tablets before you go and complete the course when you arrive home for them to be effective. The threat to health far outweighs any side effects, which may include headaches and stomach irritation. It is essential to finish the course of tablets. Be aware that protection

can be reduced if you suffer from sickness or diarrhoea.

Lastly, once you have a shopping list of the jabs and medication you need, compare prices charged by your GP and private suppliers. It's also worth checking how much your chemist charges for malaria tablets - it might work out cheaper.

Keep mosquitoes at bay:

Cover your skin, especially at night. Mosquitoes will bite through lightweight cotton and tend to target ankles. You can also take other precautions - they hide in dark places so shake the curtains in your hotel room and check behind furniture.

Also they get drowsy when it's cold so if you have access to air conditioning, turn it up and they're easier to swat!

Another top tip is to put socks over the top of the opening of your shoes at night to prevent any insects crawling inside.

For more information on travel health visit:


www.fifortravel.nhs.uk

www.8weekstogo.co.uk

www.nathnac.org

TWO TICKETS TO PARADISE PLEASE

(NOT QUITE)



"I couldn't believe it when the doctor said she had malaria. We were in Ushuaia in the far south of Argentina. There are no mosquitoes. "It's so cold there's not even any spiders," said the surprised private doctor with a thick accent at the hospital.

He only treated my partner after I had made a panicky call to an emergency number with a ream of insurance papers. After signed faxes were exchanged, they injected her. I was told on the phone that I was lucky I had taken out a comprehensive policy – but I had other things on my mind – her high fever and painfully high hospital fees.

It was early Summer in Patagonia port where they kick off Antarctic expeditions and it was still snowing; the cold had stirred up the malaria. Contracted in Papua New Guinea we had flown direct to South America. A tropical infection and treatment in Australasia had cancelled out the anti-malarial drugs we were taking.

The hospital staff in their fine white attire smiled, but behind the scenes they were making a frenzy of calls to Buenos Aires. Two days in we were told we were a public health

hazard. "We don't have this type of malaria here," said the doctor. They were worried about us escaping and infecting people in northern Argentina where they do not have our virulent Pacific strain.

We were flown to the capital and the Hospital for Tropical Diseases in a private jet with a new doctor in tow and guards at the doors. We were on local Ushuaia TV. 12 days later, and a lot of chloroquine, she was still sick so the insurance company decided to fly us back to the UK. Our round the world trip was curtailed.

We flew back business class, still in the hands of our insurers. The insurance company sent us a bill for £29,000. They said this is what it would have cost us if we had not taken out insurance. I gave a sigh of relief. "

Nick Easen,
Writer and Broadcaster



BE A RESPONSIBLE TOURIST

With an increasingly fragile planet and more of us travelling, there's greater interest in making our holidays more sustainable - whether it's giving local people a fairer cut of the money we've spent or ensuring forests aren't felled or rivers polluted.

Choosing where you go, how you travel and where you stay can make a real difference to people's lives and helps us preserve our cultural and natural heritage. Not only that, you're likely to get a more authentic experience.

Always book your holiday with your eyes open and understand the positive and negative impacts that tourism can have. There is

no universal rating system for responsible, low-impact or eco-tourism. A number of schemes exist, but be aware there's a lot of "green-washing" going on.

It is good to use suppliers that advance energy conservation; promote water and air quality; provide recycling; manage waste safely and provide experienced, well-trained local staff dedicated to strong principles of conservation.

To make your travels more meaningful, educate yourself about the geography, customs, manners and cultures of the place you're going to visit and do not buy products made from endangered plants or animals.

IT'S ALSO GOOD TO START ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT:

PEOPLE: Locals need to get a fair deal either by offering you goods or services, such as authentic food to handicrafts or being your guide. When you buy these things, your money should directly benefit the local economy.

PLACES: Trips should conserve the natural environment and the wildlife you're going to experience. It should not degrade the very place you're seeking; it's even better if your money goes to programmes and people that are preserving or reviving local landscapes.

CLIMATE: This concerns your carbon footprint, exacerbated by air, road and rail travel. Reduce your emissions whilst on holiday, tread lightly and book with operators who are trying to do the same.

TRAVELLING IS AN EXTRAORDINARY PRIVILEGE

"To return from your trip with the virtuous glow of a responsible tourist, don't spend all of your money in resorts, cruise ships or chain hotels. Instead try putting at least some of your cash into local guest houses and restaurants. We're often sold a vision of the world as a frightening, dangerous place, but in reality most of the world is friendly and endlessly hospitable. Stray from the tourist traps and in many places the warmer the welcome and the more authentic and memorable the adventure.

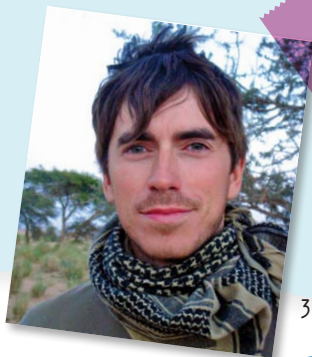
Your cash can go a long way abroad, and if you spend it wisely it can bring huge benefits. So while there are certainly environmental costs to travel, tourist money also funds wildlife sanctuaries and nature reserves around the planet.

Travelling is the most extraordinary privilege, and a holiday is an amazing experience that should be one of the most memorable events

of your life. So make sure you do a bit of planning before you leave to ensure you reap the full benefits of your trip. There are guidebooks to almost everywhere. You don't have to rely on every word, but why not take advice from those who have visited before?

The main reason we should all travel responsibly by opening our eyes and learning more about the places we visit is simply because it makes for a more interesting experience, and a more rounded adventure. So plan your trip carefully and spend your money wisely. After all, you worked hard for it. Happy travels."

Simon Reeve,
Adventurer & Broadcaster



COUNTDOWN TO YOUR TRIP AWAY

+ STAYING HEALTHY

A new country, a fresh environment, novel food and bugs; it's a heady cocktail that can floor the healthiest of us overseas. Take any person out of the home comfort zone and stress can kick in as well - in fact it's the traveller's main enemy.

Therefore it's best to be fighting fit before you get on the plane. If you are going on a long trip a full medical check-up can be worth it, alongside booking your vaccinations.

Don't forget the basics: headaches and colds can hit you hard whilst away as much as at home, so get those supplies from the chemist. Consider any specific requirements you may have - condoms or other contraceptives, diarrhoea tablets or water disinfectants.

Order enough prescribed medication for your trip - some are difficult to find overseas, and keep the original packaging. Also check if your medicine is legal in the country you are visiting. It is good to have a letter signed by your doctor

or pharmacist, certifying that the prescription is for you. Carry the letter with your medicine at all times, especially going through customs, as when entering some countries, it is a requirement.

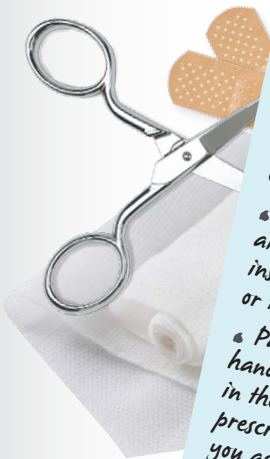
Last but not least, go and buy anti-diarrhoea tablets and fluid replacement or dehydration salts; they can prove invaluable. Also don't forget insect repellent - containing a high level of DEET - these also reduce the chances of infection from insect-transmitted diseases such as malaria and dengue fever.

If you're being adventurous, carrying a basic first-aid kit is a good idea. It should contain the following items:

- 1) Plasters & sterile bandages
- 2) Antiseptic wipes & disposable gloves
- 3) Scissors, tweezers & safety pins
- 4) Distilled water
- 5) Rehydrating salts
- 6) Painkillers

The lowdown on DVT

Elasticated socks can help fight deep-vein thrombosis (DVT). It is a blood clot that can occur in the lower leg when flying. DVT is also linked to sitting still for a long time. In rare cases, DVT can cause pain and swelling, even death. It is more likely to hit those who have a family history of clots or have been treated for heart problems.



TIPS ON HEALTH BEFORE YOU GO:

- If you wear prescription glasses or contact lenses, order spare pairs and take them with you as you may not be able to replace them easily.
- Familiar over-the-counter medicines may not be available overseas, so make sure you carry an adequate supply for your entire trip.
- Some popular UK medications are prohibited in other countries, for instance the use or possession of medicines containing Pseudoephedrine such as Vicks inhalers and some other common names are banned under Japan's strictly enforced anti-stimulant drugs law. Check before you go!
- Take medication to self-treat any ailments that you are prone to, for instance asthma, hayfever, cystitis or thrush.
- Pack prescription medicines in your hand luggage, in case your main bag in the hold is lost, and also keep your prescription or letter from the doctor with you as you may be asked for this.
- First Aid knowledge makes a difference between a minor health incident and a major one. Think about a course with the St John's Ambulance if you're going off the beaten track.

SET UP YOUR MIXED WALLET

If you've ever been stuck in rural Africa or the jungles of Borneo with nothing but a credit card and not an ATM within a hundred miles, then you've learned the first law of money overseas the hard way.

Seasoned travellers the world over recommend the "mixed wallet". This is a combination of credit, as well as debit cards, cash and perhaps a travel card or travellers cheques - don't rely on one source of funds.

Also make sure you keep them in different locations on your person, in your day bag and in your main bag or in the hotel safe. So if one is stolen or lost you have another source.

CASH

Arrive with a *small* amount of local currency in cash; you can then pay for the airport taxi or bus, then tips and coffee or breakfast before you find your main source of exchange.

- Some countries do not allow their currencies to be imported or exported, so you must take dollars or sterling to exchange when you arrive.
- If you're considering travelling with significant amounts of money

into or out of a country, check what the specific limits are.

- The U.S. dollar is still the most useful currency in the developing world. Where possible, take unmarked notes with you.

CREDIT & DEBIT CARDS

They are useful for paying hotel bills, activities and souvenirs providing that you don't go over your limit, but some cards are not accepted everywhere - so check. In rural areas, you may find you cannot use them. Cash is king.

Most debit or credit card providers charge a fee for using ATMs overseas. The same machines can also swallow your card. Beware of credit card fraud. It is best to have a back-up card with another account.

Tell your credit/debit card companies ahead of time when and where you will be going to avoid your account being frozen - this can happen automatically when the bank sees unusual spending patterns overseas.

- Check the expiry dates of your credit and debit cards before you go.
- Check credit card balances and limits on your accounts before you travel.

TRAVELLERS CHEQUES

They are not as popular these days, but in certain countries they remain a reliable, conservative stand-by. Cheques can always be replaced - although sometimes not as conveniently as issuers suggest - and are hard for thieves to use.

- Keep a copy of the serial numbers in a safe place.
- Not all banks handle travellers cheques, so head to the big cities and their central banks. Check which type of currency is best for your destination.

TRAVEL CARDS

You load this card for a fee. It offers good security and if you lose it, it can be replaced complete with the funds lost, for a small charge. You can also get keener exchange rates than at the exchange bureaux and lower withdrawal fees at ATMs. It can be charged online, by phone or SMS.

ONLINE BANKING

If you need to sort out any finances while overseas, Internet banking can be the quickest way to do it. But as with any important personal information, it's a good idea to take some steps to minimise security risks.

- Never access the banking site via a link. Instead, type the web address into the browser bar.
- Do not open other websites while logged into Internet banking; only have a single browser window open.
- When you complete your tasks, log off and close the browser window.
- Never provide your password over the Internet (by email) or over the telephone to anyone (including persons identifying themselves as bank officials).



DON'T MISS THE MONEY PENNY:

- Check what type of bank or credit card can be used in your holiday destination. MasterCard and Visa have ATM locators on their websites.
- Check your insurance policy; some claim "money cover" for a high amount but the actual cash cover can be low - the remainder is often for things such as travellers cheques.
- If you are stranded abroad without cash, instant transfers can be arranged through MoneyGram or Western Union.

PREPARE YOUR DOCUMENTS

Replacing documents and proving who you are is a real hassle overseas if your identity papers have been stolen. Just like a computer back-up, you need one too, here is a checklist:

MAKE COPIES

- Photocopy important documents, such as your passport, tickets, driver's licence and credit cards. Pack them in a separate place to the originals.
- Scan documents and store them online in an e-safe. Make copies of your vaccination certificates and EHIC card.

WRITE DOWN DETAILS

- Write down important numbers - such as the insurer's emergency number and credit card numbers. Store them on your phone.
- Email yourself and someone you trust details of your insurance policy, passport, itinerary and emergency contact numbers. Or, store everything in an online safe. This allows you to access them easily or send them to the consulate or insurer.

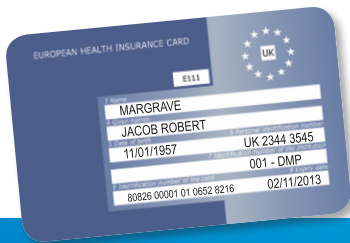
- Know the local number for emergency services, and the location of the nearest British Embassy.
- Find out how to report the loss of your credit cards from abroad. You will need a number that works overseas.

TAKE YOUR DRIVER'S LICENCE

You can use your UK licence in Europe. Some countries may apply their own age restrictions and you may need other forms of ID.

An International Driving Permit is needed in some countries; apply at the Post Office with a passport photo. There is a charge, and you must be a UK resident; have passed a driving test; and be over 18.

If you have a driving licence with a photo you will also need the paper counterpart with an up-to-date address if you want to hire a car.



A HELPFUL CARD IN EUROPE

If you travel to a European Economic Area country, or Switzerland, without a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) you could end up facing a huge bill when you need medical care.

Remember – not all European countries run the same system as the NHS, which means you cannot expect to be treated for free.

The EHIC card replaces the old E111 form - which was pretty much the same thing. If you are a UK resident, you can apply for the card which entitles you to free or reduced cost care during a temporary visit to any European Union country, as well as Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

The good thing is that the EHIC doesn't cost a penny, just apply online.

However, it is no substitute for a good insurance policy, as an EHIC won't cover any private medical care or repatriation to the UK and it's worth remembering that standards at state-run hospitals and clinics may vary compared to the NHS in the UK.

You can apply for the card free of charge on the official EHIC website www.ehic.org.uk or call 0845 606 2030. You can also apply by post using the application form available from www.nhs.uk/ehic.

You must complete an application for each member of the family.

The EHIC card is free, but be careful as there are a lot of unofficial EHIC websites out there and they may charge if you apply through them. The card is valid for up to five years. Leave up to two weeks to apply for the card.

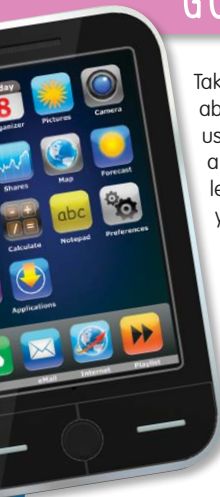
Things to consider with an EHIC:

- In an emergency, tour operators and hotels will often opt for private health care on your behalf, unless you ask them not to, this is not covered.
- It includes treatment of a chronic or pre-existing medical condition that becomes necessary during your visit.
- The card is of little use in many ski resorts, for instance where medical facilities and rescue teams are run by private firms rather than the state.

You can call 112 to contact the emergency services in any EU country.

***CRASH, BANG, BILL IN THE ALPS**
A student was racing down a black run in Méribel in the French Alps with some friends who were better skiers than him and he crashed and broke his collarbone. He was landed with a £3,740 bill for the mountain rescue, transport and medical costs because he hadn't arranged comprehensive travel insurance.*

GO GO GADGET



Taking your gadgets abroad for many of us is a no-brainer: a text message lets family know you arrived safely; while an emailed photo of you on the beach makes colleagues envious; and if you're in an emergency, of course you pick up the phone.

Gadgets don't come cheap – check whether your travel insurance covers you for all devices, if not boost your cover or leave them at home. You can always buy a cheap phone or take an old one with you.

The issue of succumbing to outrageous hotel phone rates can be avoided if you use your own phone. But overseas mobile and data charges can still be astronomical and can cripple you before you even know what you've

spent, especially in an emergency situation. Here are a few ideas:

MOBILE CHARGES

Know exactly what you're being charged for calls, texts and data downloads when abroad. Costs escalate significantly when leaving the UK or Europe, and you pay to receive as well as make calls.

If your phone isn't activated for roaming overseas, call your network and get this unlocked. You may be better off purchasing a cheap one when you arrive. Some handsets may not work in some countries such as Japan; you need a 3G phone here.

Sign up to a specialised overseas tariff or plan, it is one way to reduce costs, or buy a roaming bundle of minutes. Each network has different fees - so check.

Data downloads for smart phones can cost a bomb overseas. Make sure data roaming on your handset is turned off. If your phone regularly checks your emails without your knowledge, costs will go sky-high.

GO LOCAL WITH A SIM

When you arrive, it's a good idea to buy a local SIM card. You will get an overseas number, this means whoever rings you will be charged a higher rate. But you can use this to make cheap local or international calls.

If you are travelling to more than one country you should also consider buying a global SIM card. This allows you to receive free calls in many countries. These are available in the UK to purchase before you go. But, don't forget to store useful numbers in your mobile phone such as the local police and the nearest Embassy or Consulate.

VOIP: CALLS THROUGH THE WEB

It is not difficult to find Internet cafés across the globe and many provide terminals that offer Skype, Google talk, MSN messenger or other VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) connections. All you need is a headset and web connection. This will allow you to make free computer-to-computer calls.

You can also dial land lines and mobile phones more cheaply. The big issue is that you need good bandwidth and you may not be able to use the touchtone menus when using VoIP.



GUIDELINES FOR GADGETS:

- You can now charge mobile phones and other devices with wind up or solar chargers.
- Use free Wi-Fi hotspots at airports, libraries and hotels to minimise costs. At cafés you may have to buy a drink to use this service.
- Voicemail services can be useful, but aren't free to retrieve, as they often are when you're in the UK.
- Consider asking friends to send you text messages - they're free to pick up.
- Always load phone numbers in to your mobile starting with a plus and then the country code. This way you can call this number from any country.
- Buy a laptop lock - they are cheap and you can lock your computer in your hotel room. Remember not all laptops will fit in a hotel safe. And not all safes are secure, so check. There are many incidents of actual safes going missing.

THE FINAL

CHECKLIST

You are in countdown mode to going away on holiday, you've got a million and one things to think about, and you're also excited or stressed. This is the time when you'll forget things - take a deep breath and read on:

WHEN PACKING

Think about where you're heading, when you're going and what you'll be doing. This will help you plan what to pack. Roll clothes rather than fold them - you won't get creases that way.

If you are on the move, unpacking and packing each day, it is good to pack light.

WHAT LUGGAGE ?

If your travels will be extensive, a cheap bag might not survive baggage handlers or hotel porters.

Hard shell cases can be locked and are indestructible, yet they're heavy and more expensive compared to soft-side cases, which are good at expanding to cope with extra souvenirs. However, soft cases can easily be cut open, so consider where you are going and what you are taking.

All checked and carry-on bags should be properly tagged, inside and outside, with your name, address and telephone number. Use covered tags to avoid casual observation of your identity. Free tags are available at airport ticket counters.

Airport carousels are filled with luggage that looks identical to yours. Tie a bright coloured piece of cloth to a handle - this will help you identify your bag.

When it comes to hand luggage, size and weight is important. Keep within the standard dimensions and weight restrictions, which can vary with each airline - so check.

THINK BEFORE YOU PACK

✓ HALVE YOUR TROUBLE

For a long trip, the old saying goes that you should lay all the clothing you intend to take on your bed - then halve it. Remember - don't pack what you can't bear to lose.

✓ HAND LUGGAGE

Stuff essentials in your carry-on bag: toothpaste, medication, underwear in case your check-in luggage goes

missing. You may need to live with this bag for a few days.

✓ *LESS IS CHEAPER*

Many budget airlines have lower fares for people with no check-in luggage. Consider just taking a carry-on bag if you're only away for a short time.

✓ *LOCK IT UP*

Buy a decent lock and use it to lock your luggage, not only for the flight but it also works in a hotel room or when leaving your bag at the concierge.

✓ *POWER ADAPTORS*

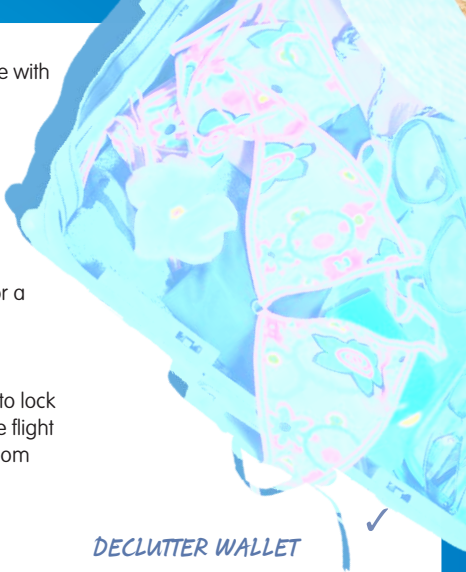
Worldwide multi-adaptors are best; they contain a round pin adaptor for Europe, a flat-pin adaptor for America and Australasia, as well as plugs for other destinations like South Africa. Check that your gadgets have switchable voltage.

✓ *TAKE MORE PHOTOS*

Pack an extra set of photos in case your passport is stolen.

✓ *PACK SUNSCREEN*

The UK is to the far north of the globe, where sun intensity is low. Most places beyond our shores have more sun than we do, so buy and use sunscreen.



DECLUTTER WALLET

Remove unnecessary credit cards, irreplaceable family photos, your work security card and similar items from your wallet and leave them at home.

✓ *LEAVE VALUABLES*

Leave your expensive jewellery and gadgets at home.

✓ *KEEP AN EYE ON BAGS*

When checking in, ensure destination labels or stickers put on by check-in staff stay on your bag as it disappears down the conveyor belt.



WHEN YOU'RE OVERSEAS

GO GLOBAL: THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL

Local knowledge can go a long way. First of all learn a few phrases in the local language - it not only ingratiates you with people, it can get you out of trouble and make a genuine difference as to how you are perceived overseas.

Be streetwise, know what's law and customary at your destination. Not only will it allow you to avoid danger, but will make it easier to interact with people, especially when you know more about their lives.

Research your destination. The Foreign Office website, guidebooks, the Internet, travellers' tales, as well as stories from locals are all good sources. Knowing where local people eat and drink, how they have fun and then joining them is part of the experience.

The local taxi driver, receptionist or the concierge always have

tips. Follow the lead from locals on everything from eating to handshakes, as well as small talk. Know how to use a local pay telephone and have the proper change or token on hand.

Be aware of how local people perceive you and your group wherever you go. The less you stand out from the crowd the safer you'll be. Keep a low profile and avoid loud conversations or arguments, as well as strong views on local politics, government, religion or the monarchy.

Modesty is the best policy especially if entering churches, temples or mosques. Keep a sarong or trousers handy to cover up arms, legs and shoulders whenever appropriate, and don't forget that topless sunbathing is not appropriate in some places and could get you locked up.

LOCAL LAWS AND CUSTOMS

Always obey the laws of the country you are visiting. Being British doesn't mean that you are above the law - you will be treated just like a local, charged like a local and prosecuted like a local. It's a fact. There's no immunity because you're British.

Don't assume that other countries have something similar to laws back home. Every country is different. There may be serious penalties for breaking a law that might seem trivial back in Britain.

For instance a pedestrian who steps out anywhere other than a specified crossing, without a green light is an offence in the U.S. and in many other countries. What's acceptable in Spain may not be acceptable in Greece or Turkey. Even within the same country different areas often have different rules.

The Foreign Office website (www.fco.gov.uk/travel) has information on laws and customs on a country-by-country basis; it's useful even for the savvy traveller.

Did You Know?

-Vietnam: Anyone found in possession of even a small amount of drugs can face the death sentence.

-St Lucia & Barbados: It is an offence for anyone, including children, to dress in camouflage clothing.

-Sri Lanka: Alcohol and meat are not usually for sale during religious holidays.

-Singapore: Smoking in a public place or indoor restaurant, chewing gum on the underground rail system and littering can lead to an on the spot fine.

-Australia: You must declare any food or goods of plant or animal origin, from nuts and fruit to cheese and vegetables.



GO GLOCAL

CONTINUED

Know how to haggle in China

"When in China don't be afraid to interact with the locals. Most importantly when haggling for goods at the Silk Market in Beijing don't be afraid to walk away. There are plenty of other stalls with the same products and nine times out of ten you'll get a final offer or the lowest price angrily shouted at you! If they're not mildly angry when you pay, chances are you've been ripped off!"

Marc Edwards, TV presenter for France 24 and Travelogue on China's International News Channel.



Two beers please, my friend will pay

"If there's one thing that will endear you to the local people when you're travelling, it's an attempt to speak their language. You don't need much. Sometimes if you just learn how to say, 'Hello...how are you?... Please... Thank you... Goodbye.' It shows you're making an effort and the response is always smiles and a desire to help you. I've got one useful phrase I say in ten languages – 'Two beers please. My friend will pay.' Never fails."

Oz Clarke, The Wine Man



MINDFUL

ABOUT YOUR SAFETY

Every veteran traveller has experiences that spook them. Most of us only realise in hindsight what went wrong after we walked down that dark alleyway, took the wrong taxi or took on an illegal guide. On arrival always assess your local environment.

It helps if you've booked your first night's accommodation in advance. You are at your most vulnerable when you arrive at a new, unfamiliar destination. There's a good chance you'll be tired and unsure of your surroundings, so plan ahead. Arrive in daylight if you can.

Nothing beats common sense, so make sure you constantly assess and reassess your personal safety. If you're travelling with someone - they can act as your extra pair of eyes and ears.

Remember that most accidents happen within 24 hours of arrival, as it's the time when you've just started to relax. When you arrive, look round your local area and know where everything is.

WHEN IN PUBLIC

Keep your wits about you in unfamiliar surroundings. Act confident and with purpose when you walk around - don't hesitate when heading out somewhere. Even if you are lost, act as if you know where you're going. If you're really lost, step into a hotel lobby or a shop to get your bearings. Carry and handle maps discreetly. Ask a police officer or shopkeeper for assistance if need be. Remember - tourists are often seen as the most vulnerable of potential crime victims.

Keep away from situations that make you feel uncomfortable and avoid potentially dangerous no-go areas, especially after dark. It's good not to use narrow alleys, short cuts or poorly lit streets. Avoid travelling alone at night and avoid public demonstrations.



MINDFUL

ABOUT YOUR SAFETY

MONEY AND VALUABLES

Cash is the least secure option – don't take all your holiday money out of an ATM at once. Never carry all your cash with you - lock some in your hotel safe and only carry as much money as you need for the day.

Since cash is non-traceable, it is the most likely part of your possessions to go missing. Select ATMs in visible, well-lit, busy locations - cover your hand as you enter your pin and do not flash large amounts of money when paying bills.

Make sure your credit card is returned to you after each transaction. It's good to see your card being used in a payment machine rather than it being scanned out of sight.

Use a money belt or a secure inside pocket if you have to carry large amounts of cash. Don't carry all your credit cards on your person - leave at least one in the hotel safe.

CONTINUED

Some travellers carry a second or "fake" wallet in their pocket along with a money belt - this contains small change just in case they are mugged. Money belts also counter pickpockets who tend to operate in crowded areas.



Also remember the value of your gadgets: the expensive camera dangling around your neck; your smart laptop perched on a café table; the smartphone in your hand can all easily be resold by local thieves, so best use them discreetly.

Try to stay in larger hotels that have more elaborate security. If not, consider booking a room from the second to seventh floors - high enough to deter easy entry from outside, but low enough for the fire service to reach you.

IN THE HOTEL

Don't leave valuables strewn around your room - lock them up in the safe. If you don't have one, ask the reception if they have a safety deposit box. Keep your passport in the hotel safe and carry the photocopy with you, unless you are required to carry the original.

Check whether the safe in your room is secure and locked down. There are incidents of people actually stealing the safe itself.

Make sure your hotel room door is locked, even when you're inside and if there is one, use the chain. Check all window locks, especially if you are on a low floor. Only let people you know into your room. Verify an unexpected visitor or delivery by calling the front desk and ask to see their identification. Always look behind you prior to entering your hotel room.



FRIEND OR FOE?



NOT EVERYONE IS YOUR NEW BEST FRIEND

Avoid strangers who approach you randomly and offer to be your guide or sell you a bargain. Ask for an identity card if they claim to be official. Do not discuss travel plans or other personal matters with strangers, especially your hotel details. Learn some local phrases so you can signal for help or the police.

Wear the shoulder strap of your day bag across your chest or wear your rucksack over both shoulders. Walk with your bag away from the curb to avoid drive-by snatchers.

If you are confronted, don't fight back. You don't know whether they have a weapon.

Give up your valuables. Your money and passport can be replaced, but you cannot.

WHEN ON THE MOVE

Only take taxis clearly identified with official markings. Many drivers display their ID where you, the passenger, can see it. Ask drivers to use their meter or fix a price before you drive off. For your safety exit at the curb side and pay after you've got the luggage out the boot not before.

You'll be most vulnerable when you first arrive, so be extra vigilant at airports and transport hubs and never leave your luggage unattended or with someone you don't trust. Check your luggage when the train or bus stops – that's when you need to keep an eye on it and lock up your luggage with padlocks, especially at the hotel concierge.

WHEN HIRING

Use reputable companies whether you're hiring a motorcycle, quad bike, scuba-diving gear, boats or skis or if you're bungee jumping,

climbing or skydiving. Hire the latest kit and be briefed and take a safety drill. Always use a vendor that's busy with tourists, as nine times out of ten you pay for what

you get. Get insurance to cover these types of activities. Be wary of handing over your passport as a deposit.

SCAMMED BY A PUNCTURE

"I was surprised to find that the tyre of my new hire car had been punctured. While I was beneath the vehicle fixing it I saw a man dressed in a highway maintenance uniform. The man approached the car and robbed everything - cash, credit cards, laptop, phone, passport, ferry ticket home, suit jacket and my sunglasses. To top it off, the thief slashed my other back tyre.

That morning I had been targeted while I was paying for my petrol - one of the rear tyres had been slashed, ever so slightly, so that the puncture appeared slowly. It was only when I was some distance from the petrol station that my tyre gave out. The road was isolated and I had no means to defend my car or belongings. I had to pay £400 to replace the tyres. I was really shocked by the whole incident; let alone having my holiday completely ruined."

David Andrews, from Brighton, Sussex



FALLING FOUL OF SCAMS

Every year many Brits get caught up in scams while they're on holiday. Tourists are easy targets. You can be tricked out of your money or possessions without realising it or you're complicit in the act and don't even know it.

There are 1,001 scams out there, and few are listed below. **The main tip is don't trust people you don't know.**

Be cautious at all times. Engage people on your terms not theirs. Question and consider motives - the kind stranger, the penniless traveller, someone who wants to take your photo. They could take your camera too.

Here are some common scams:

Tea Scam in Big Cities, China

A so-called student approaches you to practise their English. As your new friend they offer to take you to a traditional tea house for some tasting. No menu or price list is brought out when the tea is ordered by your new friend. At the end you are presented with an astronomical bill. Staff then demand payment, sometimes with menacing behaviour.

Visa scam in Thailand

You need more time in Asia? The visa agent (scammer) knows this and offers to get you visas or an extension. Your passport is returned with a fake visa stamp, which can result in you being charged for immigration offences. There are currently British nationals detained for this offence. Previously one individual received an 18-month sentence.

Love scam in The Gambia

Young men known as Bumsters chat up older female holidaymakers - telling them how beautiful they are and that "God has sent her to them". The age gap can be up to 40 years. As the holiday ends, love supposedly blossoms. The British woman offers money to support hard-up relatives and family members. She posts money on returning home. Yet the Bumster is a scam artist, receiving cash from other love-struck female tourists, leaving many out of pocket.



DRIVES OF HAZARD

Most of us are excited on landing at a new destination, especially when we've been handed the keys to a smart hire car to drive. You rush through all the documents quickly because you want to get behind the wheel, get out there and explore.

As you drive out on to the busy highway – SMASH - the once in a lifetime road trip starts with a costly mangled headlight. You didn't look in the right direction and worst of all you didn't look at the car hire small print – it can happen to us all.

It is a fact that road accidents are one of the biggest causes of injury and death for tourists overseas. You are around three times more likely to be involved in road accidents than locals. Even experienced drivers get disorientated on unfamiliar roads, especially us Brits who often have to drive on the other side of the road when overseas.

Our brains need time to adjust to a number of factors for even routine tasks such as driving. Familiarise yourself with local driving laws, wear a seat belt at all times, be extra observant, drive slowly and take your time. Before you hire, check the car, body and tyres.



Be wary of motorbike rentals and wear a helmet. Remember the following:

The first 60 minutes are critical:

Most accidents occur within the first hour after you've rented the car. You can be tired, have jet lag, be recovering from medication or alcohol, combine this with a new driving environment and for some the mental gear change can be too much.

So rest before you set off, mentally rehearse your new driving moves; think about the new controls of the car. Prepare and be alert for overtaking and turning safely.

Watch your speed: Overseas visitors are one and a half times more likely to have a serious accident when travelling at up to 110 km per hour than domestic drivers.

Don't drive when you're tired:

Tourists are twice as likely to have a serious accident as locals because of fatigue.

Failure to keep to the correct side of the road:

We are four and a half times as likely as domestic drivers to have a serious accident because of lane control.

Problems with oncoming traffic:

Overseas visitors are two and a half times more likely to be involved in accidents because they have to perform manoeuvres in the opposite way to their usual reflexes.

Avoid the wrong side of town:

Know where you are going, and plan your route. Ending up in a bad area could create a lot of safety issues.

Don't drink and drive:

The alcohol limit may be lower than in the UK and in some countries there is zero tolerance for drink driving.



TIPS FOR DRIVING ABROAD:

- Check your insurance covers you for driving abroad, including breakdown recovery and any medical expenses resulting from an accident.
- Drive cautiously and expect the unexpected - the local driving style may be different to that of the UK.
- If you're involved in an accident, contact your insurer immediately and take photographs of damage to your vehicle, with a time stamp.
- Rent a car from a reputable company and check your insurance cover as it is often limited to the legal minimum of the country you hire in.
- As a tourist in a hire car you may stand out, so keep doors locked and valuables hidden from view to help deter opportunistic thieves.
- There is more information on the Foreign Office website, with tips and ideas:
www.fco.gov.uk/drivingabroad



Bike vs Bus...which wins?

"I was in Tanzania and decided to hire a motorcycle to do a bit of exploring. The sun was shining and the Indian Ocean sparkled as I rode down the coastal road. The road was mostly a dirt track but it quickly filled with a variety of vehicles, livestock and people going about their daily business. I was riding behind an old beaten up 'Dala Dala' (a minibus being used for public transport) that was going very slowly and weaving in and out of the road. I decided to overtake so I accelerated ready to pass.

At that point the bus decided to slow down and attempt a U - turn. His brake lights and indicators did not work, and with dust flying around everywhere I could barely see him. I ended up having to forcibly put the bike down at about 30 mph to prevent a direct impact into the side of the Dala Dala. As I slid across the dirt track and came to rest I remember seeing the rear wheel of the Dala Dala rotating towards my head.

Luckily I was wearing a helmet that took the impact of the wheel, and other than lost pride, a bit of skin and some motorcycle bits, I was able to walk away. If I had not been wearing my helmet, I could easily have been killed.

However, it turned out that my licence was not valid for the type of motorcycle I was riding. Although I escaped any police penalty, I could not claim on my insurance! So I now tell everyone to take the local environment into account when riding and check the paperwork and whether you are covered for the type of vehicle you are operating."

Philip Lord
Foreign & Commonwealth Office



HERE'S TO YOUR HEALTH OVERSEAS

Sticking to hard-won healthy habits can prove problematic while travelling. A lot of it's beyond your control, whether you're changing time zones or eating new food. Here are a few ideas on being healthy:

THE O IN EAU

Water quality is one of the main causes of illness overseas. The best way to prevent diarrhoea and stomach upsets is to drink bottled water even when you're brushing your teeth. Stick to known brands and ensure the bottle seal is unbroken. Use purification tablets or iodine droplets to purify your water.

You can get sick from unlikely sources too – ice can be contaminated, watermelons retain bugs as do washed salads, some hotels even water down juice from the tap.

It is also best to avoid that enticing roadside, freshly squeezed juice.

FAIL ON FOOD

The mantra "cook it, boil it, peel it or leave it" is a good rule to follow. Avoid uncooked food, salads in buffets and cut fruit, instead eat produce you can wash and peel.

If buying from street vendors, food that is piping hot or cooked in oil will reduce the risk of issues. Avoid shellfish, ice cream, under cooked meat and raw fish, if you want to play it safe.

Stay away from stalls, buffets or restaurants where food is uncovered and looks as though it's been kept warm for hours.

Be prepared to treat yourself for diarrhoea with loperamide or antibiotics, although some products only treat the symptoms and not the cause.

Sufferers should drink at least two litres of water per day with rehydration salts. Alternatively, drink flat lemonade or cola that contains sugars and avoid dairy products, coffee and alcohol.

Vomiting and diarrhoea can affect the absorption of some other medicines such as the Pill, so use another form of contraception while it lasts.

STAY SAFE IN THE SUN

Most of us know that sun can cause skin cancer. The quest for a tan can often override common sense. Make sure that using sunscreen is part of your daily routine.

Don't underestimate how strong the sun can be especially if it is windy or cooler, radiation can still be strong. Always use a higher factor cream than you think you might need, especially for children. Also, try to stay

out of the sun in the middle of the day.

All skin types can get sunburnt, which can also lead to heatstroke, when the body becomes rapidly over-heated. So drink plenty of water and avoid physical exertion in extremely hot weather.

BITES AND MOSQUITOES

Be extra cautious around standing water sources. Mosquitoes carrying malaria only bite between the hours of dusk and dawn, although Dengue fever, yellow fever and chikungunya are all passed on by day-time biting bugs.

A BAD FEELING

"I was enjoying a visit to Zanzibar with my parents and one evening we found a nice looking restaurant overlooking the beautiful Indian Ocean. We were served surprisingly quickly, and although the food seemed slightly under cooked, we were hungry and decided to get stuck in.

Two days later my father started to complain of a stomach upset, which he bravely ignored for the next few days. However, the day before he was due to fly back to the UK he collapsed with chronic stomach pain and had to be hospitalised for two days. He missed his flight and recuperated in a different hotel for two more days until returning home. He lost over a stone in weight and remained unwell for over two months whilst back in the UK.

The good news is that my father took out comprehensive travel insurance which covered the hospital bills, the missed flight, and the extended stay in the hotel.

The other lesson learnt is that if your food does not appear properly prepared or cooked, simply do not eat it. If it looks bad, does not taste much better, then it probably is bad!"

HERE'S TO YOUR HEALTH OVERSEAS

CONTINUED

Dr. James Logan

MORE THAN JUST MOSQUITOES

"When it comes to holidaying in tropical climes, I can't stress enough the importance of preparation. Whether it's a relaxing package holiday in beautiful Thailand or an adventurous trek through the incredible Amazon rainforest, one thing's for sure, there are plenty of nasty bugs that could dramatically cut short your dream holiday!"

My work involves controlling diseases spread by mosquitoes and other biting critters. This means I travel to tropical countries a lot and as a consequence, as soon as holiday season arrives I can guarantee countless requests from friends and family about what precautions they should take.

So, here are my top tips:

- 1.** Get advice from your GP or a travel clinic; don't rely on friends or travel agencies. Remember, some jabs must be given weeks in advance, so don't leave it too late!
- 2.** Take anti-malarial tablets religiously if recommended.
- 3.** Wear loose clothing, cover up at dawn and dusk.

4. Sleep soundly by taking a mosquito net (preferably treated with insecticide). Tuck it in and make sure there are no holes.

5. Avoid mosquito bites by taking a good repellent! DEET (50% strength) should be used in tropical countries with high disease risk. Natural alternatives such as lemon and eucalyptus oils can also be used in low risk areas, as they include a natural deet-like ingredient (PMD).

6. Carry the repellent around with you. Most mosquitoes bite at dawn and dusk but some will bite during the day!

7. Apply the repellent to ALL exposed areas, like you would a suntan lotion.

8. Don't scratch mosquito bites! Sure it feels good, but it can break the skin leaving it open to bacteria and secondary infections.

As long as you are sensible, the chances are you will be fine, which will above all, allow you to enjoy your holiday!"

Dr. James Logan
Lecturer at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

AVOIDING JET LAG

Jet lag can strike anyone, no matter whether you travel first class or economy. It has the amazing ability to floor anyone. Humans are not designed for fast moving global flights that stretch across time zones.

Our natural circadian rhythms; popularly referred to as the body clock, can easily be put out of synch. The symptoms of jet lag can vary but may include fatigue, irritability, headaches, upset stomach, diarrhoea and sleeping problems.

Recovering from jet lag is all about kick starting the clock back into a functional day and night pattern again, here are some ideas:

BEFORE YOU FLY

Serious travellers flying long-haul change their time table a few days before leaving and align it with the destination they are heading to. If heading east go to bed earlier than usual; if travelling west, go to bed later.

WHEN ON BOARD

Eat small light meals during your flight and avoid alcohol and caffeine, which can affect sleep patterns. Drink plenty of water in-flight. Remember alcohol causes dehydration, which can make you feel worse.

WHEN YOU ARRIVE

Try to adopt the schedule of your new destination as soon as you can by sleeping at night, staying awake during the day, and eating at local mealtimes. Get fresh air and keep physically active when you arrive. Also make sure you get some sun - sunlight naturally resets your body clock.

WEST TO EAST

Jet lag is generally worse travelling from west to east because the body finds it harder to adapt to a shorter day than a longer one. Another contributor is sleep deprivation - so make sure you get enough shut-eye before, during and after you fly.

THINK ABOUT A STOPOVER

Stopovers rather than long flights are useful since a gradual transition to a new time zone is more humane and reduces the impact of jet lag.



Solo travellers have flexibility and independence, but they're also left to fend for themselves in an unpredictable environment. Whether you agree with it or not, women on their own can be doubly vulnerable in some situations across the globe - here is some advice:

GOING SOLO

It is worth checking into hotels on a busy street that has a number of restaurants and late-night stores. This may be safer than staying in a corporate area of town that can be quieter at night.

Never hitch-hike and avoid getting into a taxi on your own. If you have to, make sure it's licensed and the driver has ID - ask to see it if you can. Don't tell locals that you are travelling alone and let inquisitive strangers know that you are expecting your friend or meeting your partner at any time.

If you're travelling solo on a tight budget, consider a Youth Hostel Association membership. You'll get good value hostels in many parts of the world and you're guaranteed to meet other travellers.

WOMEN ON THE ROAD

Each country has their own views of 60

what is appropriate behaviour for women so it's best to take cues from locals.

If in doubt dress conservatively, covering your arms and legs and avoid wearing provocative, figure-hugging clothing. Be aware of non-verbal cues, which can project different meanings overseas and observe how local women interact with men.

Some experts suggest women wear a wedding ring if single to avoid harassment from potential suitors. Use only a first initial when checking into hotels - don't put Ms; Miss or Mrs.

Ask at your hotel or check a guide book to find out where the safest areas at night are and restaurants or bars where you will be left alone. It's worth knowing a few useful phrases to get rid of unwanted male attention.

Don't tell strangers where you are staying or give out too many details about your travel plans. Carefully consider whether you should leave the bar, club or party with someone you have just met.

Make sure you can carry all your gear at anytime and get around easily without assistance from anyone else. Use a handbag with an inner zippered pocket and a strong strap.

Log on to online female travel forums to see what others are saying. In any country a good source of information will be local women. Often, the best people to ask for directions are families or women with children. Check out the Foreign Office travel advice for any specific information for women travellers.

GAY AND LESBIAN TRIPPERS

Unfortunately, the rainbow flag is not flown everywhere. Research the laws and customs of the destination you plan to visit, including the age of consent and attitudes towards same-sex relationships.

Excessive physical displays of affection, by both same-sex and heterosexual couples are often best avoided in public. Rural areas are often less tolerant than urban ones so check before you go. Here are a few points worth following:

- Avoid potentially risky situations - don't do anything that you wouldn't do at home. Then think again.
- Be wary of new-found supposed "friends" - criminals sometimes exploit the generally open and relaxed nature of the gay scene.
- Some resort areas can be

quite segregated - when you are outside the "gay neighbourhood" expressions of sexuality may be frowned upon.

- Some hotels won't accept bookings from same - sex couples - check before you go.
- Invest in a good guide book - many specialise in advice for gay and lesbian travellers.
- Your travel agent or tour operator may have ideas about the local scene, particularly in the more popular holiday destinations.
- Local gay groups are often best placed to advise you of local laws and attitudes.
- The map on the International Lesbian and Gay Association website highlights potentially dangerous regions and countries www.ilga.org.





ALCOHOL, SEX AND DRUGS

Waking upside down, naked inside a bin; being arrested overseas for wearing a mankini and being chained to a police car - yes, British travellers do like to have fun and for many a diet of alcohol, sex and drugs is inseparable from an enjoyable holiday. Here is some food for thought:

A DRINK OR TWO

No one wants to curb your enthusiasm. However, it's worth knowing that drinking at altitude on that skiing holiday or on a flight gets you more drunk. Keep an eye on your pint at that bar - it could be spiked and not with an extra shot of vodka.

If you have an accident when you're drunk you probably won't be covered by your insurance, and after that big night out make sure you or your friends don't walk home alone - it's when you are most vulnerable.

Check the local laws. Some countries ban alcohol completely or curb what you can bring in and where you can buy it i.e. specific

hotels or areas. Acting drunk in public, even having a pint in a public place is frowned upon in some countries and is a jailable offence in others.

Drinking and driving is never a good idea. Combine this with being abroad, you'll be driving on unfamiliar roads and potentially on the opposite side - it's more to think about. In some places you go straight to prison if you're found drunk-driving.

Many countries' drink-driving limits are lower than in the UK, while in other destinations you can be charged just for having bottles or cans in the front of the car.

"I had just arrived in Prague on a stag do with my mates. The party went straight out drinking but I quickly became separated from my friends. My phone had no battery life left, and when I found a taxi I couldn't recall where my hotel was or what it was called - other than that it was near a fountain, of which there are over 300 in Prague! I had no passport, no luggage, and no return ticket home."

David, British national

SUN, SEA AND UNSAFE SEX

If there's a chance you'll have sex with someone new on holiday, pack plenty of condoms. The fact is holidays can make you less cautious about casual, unprotected sex. The best action plan is: If it's not on, it's not on.

Some doctors argue that holiday sexual liaisons between new partners are now so common that travellers should be routinely tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) on their return.

Exposure to new sexual networks, the rate at which partners are changed while away, lack of condom use and consumption of alcohol all increase the risk of STIs; there are also higher incidents of chlamydia, syphilis and HIV contracted through sex while overseas.



SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs)

According to 2005 World Health Organisation estimates, 448 million new cases of curable STIs (syphilis, gonorrhoea, chlamydia and trichomoniasis) occur annually throughout the world in adults aged 15-49 years. This does not include HIV and other long term STIs. There are more than 30 different sexually transmissible bacteria, viruses and parasites.

www.who.int

VIROLOGY

testing:
HIV serology
HIV viral load
PCR: HIV
serology:

ALCOHOL, SEX AND DRUGS

CONTINUED

A WORD ON DRUGS

Many authorities across the globe take an extremely dim view of drug possession, even though the society they represent maybe a lot more tolerant – that's when you get caught out.

Note that if you are injured or become ill as a result of using illegal drugs, your travel insurance probably won't be valid and medical bills can be extremely expensive.

Being British won't help you get out of jail or reduce your lengthy jail term.

Many countries refuse to grant bail before trial, have harsh prison conditions, even if you only have a small amount on you and keep drugs-related offenders in solitary confinement. In some countries offences, including possession, result in the death penalty.

If drugs are in your suitcase, it's your crime, whether you knew they were there or not. So it's not worth carrying parcels or luggage through customs for other people,

even if they say their baggage is overweight and need help.

Don't go across borders with people you don't know or even new friends you've made - you could be detained as an accomplice to their smuggling. Mistakes can result in lifetime barring or you may not be going home at all.

Drugs have been used in incidents of rape and sexual assault, so keep your wits about you.



STAYING IN TOUCH

With email, the Internet, Skype and cheaper mobile phone calls across the globe it's never been easier to stay in touch with friends and family back home. Long gone are the days of the stamp and postcard.

HAVE A PLAN, STICK TO IT

How often you stay in touch is as important as how you do it. If you call too often it can interfere with your trip away, especially if you're travelling with others. As a rough guide once a week is a good gauge - you can always fill in the gaps with emails, texts, Facebook, Twitter, blog and web page updates.

Let loved ones know how you'll be staying in touch and stick to a regular plan. If you don't, people back home can get nervous. If you're heading out to remote areas with no mobile coverage or Internet access, let people know you won't be in touch for a while.

It is important to have a back-up way of getting in touch, so friends and families will know where to check if they haven't heard from you. If you know where you're staying overseas, leave the hotel's contact number with people back home.



Internet cafés can now be found in the most unexpected of places, so you can almost always find a spot to send an email. Charges vary and in many places now you can use Skype or other voice-over-Internet services.

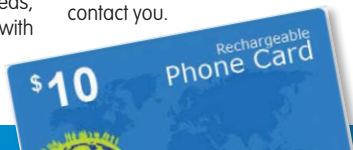
USE A PHONE CARD

Pre-paid calling cards can provide you with hefty discounts for overseas calls. You buy the card with a set amount of credit, which you can use with a land line or mobile.

Calls can be routed in various, if not curious ways, so the quality is sometimes less than perfect. As with any investment, the greater the risk i.e. an unknown card company, the higher the reward - low-cost calls.

REGISTER YOUR TRIP

Going off the beaten track? Check whether you can register your trip with the Foreign Office. This allows the local British Embassy to find you, but only in an emergency. So if the worst happens such as a terrorist attack or natural disaster they know where you are and how to contact you.



A FINAL WORD

WISDOM FROM

SEASONED TRAVELLERS

Here are a few final words of advice from seasoned travellers giving you a last word or two:

- Trust your instincts. If someone is being over friendly, there's a good chance they want something; if the minicab driver appears drunk, he probably is.
- Don't look like a tourist. Take cues from the local environment and try to blend in.
- If you cannot afford insurance, you cannot afford to travel. That's the bottom line.
- In poorer countries there's a tourist price - and a local price. Accept that you'll pay a little more than locals do.
- Stick to the beaten track initially. Get used to the environment first, and only head off into the great unknown when you know more about it.
- Make sure you know the emergency '999' number for the country that you are in. In a snap second you may need to make that call, so take a mental note. If you're in the EU it's simple - dialling 112 will put you through to the local emergency services.





Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office



NaTHNac
National Travel Health Network and Centre



USEFUL WEBSITES

UK Government

Foreign & Commonwealth Office -
The FCO website includes the latest travel advice, news and country profiles
www.fco.gov.uk/travel or call 0845 8502829

Identity and Passport Service -
The Identity and Passport Service issues British passports.
www.passports.gov.uk or call 0300 222 0000

Travel Organisations

ABTA - The Association of British Travel Agents
Regulated and registered UK travel agents and tour operators, with information on the destinations they feature and their special skills.
www.abta.com

AITO - The Association of Independent Tour Operators
Made up of independent holiday companies and specialist operators. www.aito.co.uk

Health & Society

The National Health Service -
The NHS offers an advice website for people travelling abroad: www.nhs.uk/TravelHealth

Fit For Travel -
This site provides country-specific health advice and information on vaccinations and immunisations. www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk

Nathnac -
The National Travel Health Network and Centre promotes standards in travel medicine and travel health information www.nathnac.org

8 Weeks To Go - Is an educational initiative organised and funded by GlaxoSmithKline Travel Health. www.8weekstogo.co.uk





WHAT THE FOREIGN OFFICE

CAN AND CANNOT DO

You're mistaken if you think the Foreign Office can get you out of jail. But they do try hard to ensure you stay safe and offer appropriate help if something goes wrong. However, there is a limit to what can be done.

THE FOREIGN OFFICE CAN

- Issue you an emergency travel document
- Give you a list of local English-speaking lawyers, interpreters, doctors or funeral directors
- Contact friends and family back home for you
- Provide information about transferring funds
- Visit you in hospital or if you have been arrested
- Make special arrangements in cases of terrorism, civil unrest or natural disasters

THE FOREIGN OFFICE CANNOT

- Help you enter a country, for example, if you don't have a valid passport or necessary visas
- Give you legal advice or translate documents
- Get you better treatment in hospital or prison than is given to local people
- Pay any bills or give you money
- Make travel arrangements for you
- Investigate crimes, get you out of prison or interfere in criminal or civil court proceedings

HELPING THE GREAT BRITISH PUBLIC

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office works 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to provide high-quality help to the Great British travelling public around the world.

British Consulates, Embassies and the Foreign Office deal with over 19,000 serious cases each year, including arrests, deaths, hospitalisations, supporting victims of forced marriage and assisting in incidents of parental child abduction. They also have the experience of dealing with more common problems such as nearly 30,000 lost or stolen passports each year.

Seven million emails have passed through the Foreign Office computer system in a two week period, when they're at their busiest. And it is the only British Government department that's truly global, with people in over 180 countries to assist you.

WEBSITE

Go to the Foreign Office website now for more details, and regular updates. The site is one of the most comprehensive as you will find anywhere on the Internet when it comes to sound advice on travel, www.fco.gov.uk/travel

EMAIL UPDATES

Sign up for country updates and travel alerts in order to receive an email when the situation changes in the destination you plan to visit. Go to www.fco.gov.uk/subscribe

SOCIAL MEDIA

Sign up to Facebook www.facebook.com/fcotravel or Twitter [@fcotravel](https://twitter.com/fcotravel) to get up-to-the minute travel advice on the go.

FEEDBACK

The Foreign Office likes to know what you think about any support you have received while abroad, or information you've accessed in the UK, whether you found it good, bad or indifferent. Your thoughts are relevant whether you've read travel advice or used the Foreign Office's services abroad. Please complete their customer satisfaction survey online at www.fco.gov.uk/consularfeedback

Or please write to:
Customer Services Policy
Consular Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
King Charles Street, London
SW1A 2AH

020 7008 1500

feedback.consularservices@fco.gov.uk

SPREAD THE WORD!

If you're reading this booklet, you're already thinking about your safety. We're concerned about the thousands of people who aren't. Pass on the top tips you've learnt yourself when on holiday.

And order a copy online for your friends, family and fellow travellers from www.fco.gov.uk/publications.

ABOUT PLAN. PACK. EXPLORE.

The views and advice expressed in this guide are based on the collective knowledge of individual travel experts, the UK tourism industry and the Know Before You Go Team.

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office is not responsible for how the British public act on the views and advice given in this booklet.

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PLAN.PACK.EXPLORE.

The Foreign Office teamed up with travel experts to produce a unique guide to help you plan, pack and explore whilst travelling overseas. Packed with handy tips and ideas for you to make the most of your time abroad.



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