



## PREPARING FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

### PLANNING FOR TRAVEL FROM THE US TO ANOTHER COUNTRY

Careful planning for the logistics of your trip abroad – both project planning as well as personal planning – will help ensure the success of your international trip. It's important to plan the details of your trip early – this includes travel arrangements, housing, finances, communication and language, health and safety, and even packing. Logistical considerations vary according to location, so please use these recommendations with your specific situation in mind.

The [US Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs](#) offers a '[Traveler's Checklist](#)' that provides guidance to get you started on travel planning. This has key informational resources, guidance on required documents, staying informed and safe while in country, and supplemental insurance you may need to purchase. Some information in this document may be in the above checklist, but we have included some additional guidance on key aspect of travel planning and safety we hope you consider.

#### Passports and Visas

If you do not already have a passport, apply for one as early as possible. The US State Department has information on costs, processing timelines, filing requirements, and FAQs for US passports ([http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport\\_1738.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html)).

Country-specific information on all countries is available from the US State Department (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages.html>). These pages include information about visa requirements, locations of the US embassy or consulate in the subject country, unusual immigration practices, health conditions, minor political disturbances, unusual currency and entry regulations, crime and security information, and drug penalties.

Citizens of nations other than the US should contact the embassy of the host country (<http://www.embassy.org/embassies/>) to learn the proper protocol for obtaining a visa.

#### Purchasing Your Plane Ticket

It is important to discuss and confirm dates and travel plans with your partner as soon as possible. Be sure to ask them for advice on travel details such as what airport to fly into, when to (try) to arrive/depart, or any other travel considerations they may suggest.

Travel companies may provide additional services that are helpful with international travel including assistance in rebooking flights if a connection is missed or a flight is cancelled. You may want to go through a travel agency to book your ticket. Book an international ticket at least one month in advance of travel but preferably 2+ months before travel. Ticket prices tend to go up the closer you get to the travel date!



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### HEALTH INFORMATION

Travelers should schedule a travel consult (preferably with a travel medicine clinic or doctor) to determine the immunizations you will need for your destination country and to ensure you are prepared for your travel. You should schedule this appointment as early as possible in case you need several months to complete the necessary immunizations. The travel consult should be able to provide you with several health resources to prepare you for your international travel.

In addition, please visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) travel website for health information on the country you are visiting: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>. CDC Travelers' Health offers information to assist travelers and their health care providers in deciding the immunizations, medications, and other measures necessary to prevent illness and injury during international travel. This is a great resource!

You should check with your health insurance provider to see if it will cover you overseas. You may need to obtain supplemental travel health and evacuation insurance. Your regular insurance provider may offer appropriate coverage, or you can look for a short-term insurance carrier. The Department of State offers some suggestions (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/your-health-abroad/insurance-providers-overseas.html>).

### TRAVEL SAFETY INFORMATION

In addition to the traveler's checklist mentioned above, the US Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>) contains a great deal of information that is helpful in preparing for safe travel. Other resources include: tips while abroad and handling emergencies, as well as country specific information and advice. The US Department of State also (<https://www.state.gov/misic/list/index.htm>) provides background notes on bilateral relations with the US for all countries.

Travel Advisories (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html>) are now issued for every country by the US Department of State. These advisories are categorized into four levels that give descriptions of risks and provide guidance for US citizens on actions to take to help ensure their safety. Each country page will give details of the travel advisory for that country.

All travelers should register with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) through the US Department of State: <https://step.state.gov/step/>. This service will provide you with important information issued by the Embassy in your destination country and also allows that Embassy to contact and help you during an emergency.

Always use your best judgment regarding safety. Be sure to discuss safety with your partners and hosts before and during travel so that you may be aware of any general safety concerns.



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### Communications

It is important to maintain communication with your partners as well as stay connected back at home. Many phone companies have an option of adding an international plan on your phone during travel. You will need to explore if this is possible or you may wish to purchase a phone locally. You will likely have at least some access to internet and this may be your best way to stay connected. Make sure you have a plan to connect with your partner upon arrival in country in case you don't have access to a phone or internet right away.

### Accommodation

Your partner is best positioned to help identify and secure your accommodation while in country. Once you have dates finalized, begin working with your partner to make plans for accommodation. If you have any particular concerns or needs, be sure to share these with your partner early in the planning process.

### General Safety Tips

Dangers exist anywhere. Problems can occur if and when you fail to take the same precautions abroad as you would at home. The best way to maximize your personal safety while traveling abroad is to be aware of conditions that affect safety in the country you are visiting and then adjust your behavior so that you take the necessary and normal safety measures.

Your behavior is important to your safety. Don't underestimate how important it is to pay attention to this. Here are some tips that may seem like no-brainers, but that you should deliberately pay attention to:

- Be aware of your surroundings at all times. Don't wander through unfamiliar areas alone, and always remain alert.
- Do not go out alone at night. Even when you're with friends, stick to well-lit streets where there are a lot of people.
- Don't take expensive items with you. Don't flash jewelry or electronic equipment.
- Use caution when walking or jogging. Drivers may drive on the opposite side of the road and may not expect anyone to be running along the road. Seek advice as to when and where you should exercise.
- Remain alert when walking. Before crossing streets, remember to look both ways; traffic might be coming from the opposite direction from what you would expect. Also keep in mind that pedestrians may not be given the right of way.



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- Be careful with alcohol. If you drink, make sure it is only with people you know and trust, and designate one person to remain sober. As in the United States, never drink and drive.
- Don't attract attention to yourself with provocative or expensive clothing or boisterous conversation. Observe behavior of your local colleagues and try not to deviate from that.
- Read the local papers to have a general sense of what is going on in the country (many are accessible online). It might give you an idea of where high crime areas are and whether civil unrest is brewing. It also will help raise your socio-political awareness of your host country.
- Stay away from demonstrations or any kind of civil disturbances. Even innocent bystanders can be hurt or arrested.
- Protect your passport. Keep it with you, in a front pocket or your purse. Be careful when displaying it.
- In general, avoid crowded places and being engulfed in a crowd. These are popular target areas for pickpockets.
- Seek advice and defer to your partners when confronted with a situation in which your help is requested.
- **Always talk to your local colleagues about any safety concerns you have. These are your best resources for knowing how to effectively deal with any issues that you may encounter.**

### Technology Security Recommendations for International Travel<sup>1</sup>

#### **General Recommendations**

1. Configure a password to login to any devices you are taking. A password prevents others from accessing your data if your device is lost or stolen.
2. Practice safe data handling:
  - a. DO NOT store sensitive data, e.g., social security numbers, credit card numbers, bank log-in information on any devices you are taking with you.
  - b. DO NOT copy sensitive data to memory sticks or other easily lost media.
3. Encrypt your devices to protect your data. Many laptops issued by employers are already configured with device-level encryption. However, check that the countries you are traveling to allow device encryption, e.g., China generally does not allow encrypted devices for travelers.

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the University of Notre Dame Office of Information Technology (2016)



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4. Discuss your needs with your IT department/support person.
5. Upon your return, immediately change passwords of any accounts used while abroad.

### **Security Checks**

Sometimes airport or other security officers will ask you to start your device to prove that it works. Comply by starting your system and entering the password yourself. If they require that you provide the password to them, give them the password, and change immediately or as soon as possible.

### ***Travel to China, Russia, and Other High-Risk Countries***

Traveling with IT devices to some countries, most notably China and Russia, is considered high risk. The US government issued several advisories that travelers be aware that they could be targets of espionage activities when visiting these countries. Travelers are strongly encouraged to follow these recommendations:

1. Take a loaner laptop and phone. DO NOT travel with your own mobile devices as there is a high probability that they will be subject to compromise and tampering.
2. Traveling with encrypted devices:
  - a. DO NOT travel with encrypted devices to China unless you have advance approval. China restricts the import of unapproved encryption. If you attempt to cross the border with an encrypted device, you may be asked for the decryption key or your device may be confiscated.
  - b. The US government prohibits traveling with encrypted devices to countries that are considered to support terrorism, namely Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, and Syria. DO NOT bring encrypted devices to these countries.

### ***Additional Recommendations***

1. Set WiFi to "do not automatically connect to WiFi" on all devices capable of wireless connections.
2. DO NOT update your computer while connected to a public or hotel wireless network.
3. Disable Bluetooth on your laptop, mobile phone, and other devices.
4. Set your mobile device to be wiped after 10 login attempts. Backup your device before traveling in case your device is wiped.



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### EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Emergency situations may include but are not limited to:

- Serious physical injury or illness (Including drug overdose and mental illness)
- Detainment, kidnapping, or missing person
- Robbery, mugging, or sexual assault
- Arrest of a traveler
- Large-scale natural or human-made disaster
- Decision to evacuate participants (terrorism, civil/political unrest, or disaster)
- Pandemic outbreak/contagious illness
- Fatality

### Preparing for an Emergency

Make sure your trip organizers as well as family/friends back home have the proper contact information – emergency contacts and your partner contacts. Please utilize the emergency contact card (at the end of this document) to keep with you in the field at all times. Keep yourself aware of possible crises in your country by registering with the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) through the US Department of State, previously referenced on page 1.

### Responding to an Emergency

In addition to following advice given by the Department of State (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/emergencies.html>), keep the following advice in mind:

Always ensure your immediate safety and health where possible. This may mean seeking medical attention or help from the US embassy or consulate in the country. **Your partner / hosts are a good first point of contact for any emergency situation.**

### Think Local

- On-the-ground connections are the quickest and most effective. Make sure you know how to reach local contacts easily.
- **Local Emergency Contacts by Country:** This chart links to 911 equivalents for most countries (<http://chartsbin.com/view/1983>).
- Contact the [U.S. Department of State](#) or your home country's embassy/consulate. They are essential contacts in lost passport, detention, or volatile political situations.
- Pay particular attention to your [STEP notifications](#) and remain attentive to news sources.

Depending on your health and evacuation insurance, you may need to contact them for resources or support in emergency situations as well.



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### CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Enhancing your cultural preparation and awareness before travel to a new location is very important to not only maximizing your experience but respecting the culture you will encounter. Learn some of the socio-cultural, political, and historical aspects of the host community you will visit and learn at least some of the local language if possible (greetings and courtesies are a great place to start). Ask your partners if they recommend any resources (books, movies, etc.). GPIC can serve as a general resource and can help you identify other resources to help you prepare.

In the early stages of planning, communicate with your partner regarding goals and expectations for the visit. Don't hesitate to ask them questions that will help you demonstrate cultural awareness (e.g., personal dress, patient privacy, culturally appropriate and inappropriate gestures, gender issues, traditional beliefs about health, truth telling, social media, etc.) both before and during your visit.

### Tips for Packing<sup>2</sup>

#### *Clothing*

What clothing to pack will depend upon the climate and season of the location, as well as the setting in which you will be working. You should learn this information before attempting to pack. Consider that you will need some professional clothes as well as casual clothing. Be aware of any cultural expectations of your clothing as well (i.e., in some settings it is not appropriate for men to wear shorts).

#### *First Aid Kit*

You may wish to take a basic first aid kit, and of course, any regular medications you need. Bring proper documentation of medications you take regularly to avoid any issues while traveling. Take your medications in your carry-on in case your checked luggage is lost.

#### *Food*

Most places will have wonderful food to try, however you may wish to take a few food items as you adjust to the local cuisine. Snacks such as granola bars may be convenient to pack. If you have any food allergies, you may need to pack additional foods to meet your needs.

#### *Project Supplies*

Depending on the scope of your time in country, you may need to pack some project supplies. You may want to bring a laptop or other items to facilitate activities you will engage in while working with your partner. Discuss items with your team leader and partners early so that you can ensure you have what you need.

<sup>2</sup> This basic list is adapted from the University of Notre Dame MS in Global Health program – Advice for students traveling for research (2016).



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### **Miscellaneous**

The following is a list of items that may come in handy throughout the duration of the trip: Batteries, flashlight (headlamp), umbrella (travel size), hat, earplugs, local guidebook, and a book for any down time you may have. Don't forget your insect repellent, sunscreen and other safety items!

*Further advice on packing should be discussed with your partner.*

### **Important websites for travel:**

- The US Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs:  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>
- The US Department of State: <https://www.state.gov/misic/list/index.htm>
- The CDC Traveler's Health: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list>
- The CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

### **Emergency Contact card: fill this out and keep with you!**

<b>Health insurance / evacuation insurance:</b>	<b>Host organization contacts (include phone and address):</b>
<b>Program contact(s) at home institution:</b>	<b>Embassy/Consulate contact:</b>
<b>Your emergency contact at home:</b>	<b>In-country emvergency contact (911 equivalent):</b>
<b>Other important numbers:</b>	