



INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL TIPS

WHERE TO START

When conducting business overseas, there are visa and health requirements to consider, national holidays to avoid, trade events to try to coincide with your visit, certain areas of the world to avoid altogether, and certain areas of the world where some fees can be reimbursed. When planning a trip abroad, the best place to start (after the travel agent) is with the local embassy or consulate of the country you wish to visit. They can provide you with essential requirements for entry, and provide information regarding the local economy, holidays and more.

Any company involved in international business will eventually need to send staff abroad. This document will address essential health and safety guidelines, as well as cultural complexities to consider when international travel is undertaken.

See VEDP Fast Facts “Intercultural Communications”

There are also considerations for inviting foreign nationals to the U.S. that this document will not address. For more information on that subject, please visit http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html, the U.S. consular section in your destination country, or email usvisa@state.gov.

DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

Passport Basics

U.S. citizens need a passport for international travel. Since September 11, 2001, there have been numerous initiatives that have made international travel in and out of the U.S. more strict, especially air travel.

Passports can be obtained from various U.S. government centers, typically post offices. In general, passports must be requested initially in person (except for minors under age 14). Application, proof of U.S. citizenship, present proof of identity, fees, and 2 identical and current 2” x 2” photos are required. Renewals can be processed via mail. It takes, on average, six weeks to process a passport application by mail; however expedited applications are possible for an additional fee.

Fees are \$85 for children under 16, \$100 for adults, \$75 for renewals, and an extra \$60 for expedited service (mailed back five days from receipt). Click here to find the passport office nearest you: http://travel.state.gov/passport/about/agencies/agencies_913.html, or call: 1-877-487-2778.

Passport Protection

Your passport is proof of U.S. citizenship, which makes it a hot commodity overseas. In order to protect your passport, follow these general rules (see following page):

Embassy Contact Information

U.S. Embassies Worldwide
<http://usembassy.state.gov/>

Foreign Embassies in the U.S.
<http://www.state.gov/s/cpr/rsi/dpl/32122.htm>



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DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS (CONT.)

- Leave it in a safe when possible. If you must carry it with you keep it separate from cash.
- Never pack it in luggage.
- Complete and sign the information page in ink on the inside of your passport
- If your passport is lost or stolen, report it to the nearest U.S. embassy and local police.
- Keep two extra passport photos and two copies of the data page of your passport. Take the photos and one copy of the data page with you overseas and keep them separate from your passport. Leave one copy of the data page at home.
- Know the contact details of a local U.S. embassy before you travel.

Visas

Traveling on business is treated differently than traveling for pleasure, and may require a visa in addition to a U.S. passport, depending on the country you are visiting. Often your U.S. passport must be valid for six months beyond the dates of your trip. You will need to check with the consulate of the country you wish to visit regarding their visa and health regulations for U.S. visitors. Most consulates have offices in major U.S. cities and regions. You should check with the consulate as far in advance as possible. Also, be prepared to mail your passport, with fees, to the consulate for visa stamping if you cannot go to the consulate in person. For entry requirements for a specific country, go to the Entry/Exit Requirements section in the Country Specific Information for the country you are interested in at: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html

Value Added Tax (VAT)

Many countries have a sales tax that can be refunded to visitors. Most countries do not refund VAT after you leave, so follow their procedures promptly for a refund. These include:

- Save all applicable VAT receipts.
- Have foreign customs stamp or authorize refund form at departure from an airport or customs agency.
- Some countries will help you obtain a refund after leaving.
- Check with the foreign embassy for more information.

HEALTH ISSUES

Insurance

Before going abroad, find out what medical services your health insurance covers overseas. If you have coverage overseas, be sure to carry your policy identity card as proof of coverage. Even with coverage, it will generally be limited to hospital and emergency treatment and not medical evacuation, which costs anywhere from \$10,000 to \$100,000. Social Security/Medicare does not cover hospital or medical treatment outside the United States. There are also companies that offer supplemental travel insurance and medical evacuation insurance. A full list is available online at http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/brochures/brochures_1215.html.

AIDS/HIV Testing

An increasing number of countries have regulations regarding AIDS testing, particularly for long-term visitors. For specifics, check with the consulate/embassy of your destination country.



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HEALTH ISSUES (cont.)

Malaria

Anti-malarial drugs do not prevent you from being infected, but do significantly reduce the risk of becoming very ill. Expert advice on medication should be sought, as there are many factors to consider, including the area to be visited, the risk of exposure to malaria-carrying mosquitoes, the side effects of medication, your medical history, and whether you are a child, adult, or pregnant. Full details are available from the Center for Disease Control hotline at 1-877-FYI-TRIP, or online at: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel>. The World Health Organization also provides health updates for travelers at <http://www.who.int/ith>. You should allow plenty of time to get your vaccinations before you travel since some require an initial shot

followed by a booster, and some vaccinations should not be given together. It is recommended that you seek medical advice at least six weeks prior to travel. Record all vaccinations on an International Health Certificate. Vaccinations which may be required include: Cholera, Hepatitis A and B, Japanese B Encephalitis, Typhoid, Tuberculosis, Tetanus and Diphtheria, Rabies, Polio, Meningococcal Meningitis, and Yellow Fever.

Medication Tips before Traveling

- Check with your destination country embassy to make sure the medication you are bringing is not illegal.
- Leave medication in its original container, clearly labeled.
- Carry back up supplies and/or emergency medications.
- Consider wearing a medical alert bracelet if you have allergies or other medical problems.
- Bring preferred brand medication with you since brands will differ abroad.

Travel Health Clinics

Confused about what immunizations you need and what risks you face? Consider visiting a travel health clinic, or a doctor specializing in travel medicine. They can give you a realistic picture of preparedness, and take care of vaccinations. Ask your health insurance provider for a referral, or find one at www.istm.org, or www.mdtravelhealth.com.

Yellow Fever

Yellow fever is the only vaccine legally required to enter many countries, and is usually only enforced when coming from an infected area. Protection lasts 10 years, and is needed in endemic areas like Africa and South America. Typically, you go to a special yellow fever vaccination center. Vaccination poses some risk during pregnancy, but if you must travel to a high-risk area, it is advisable. Note that people allergic to eggs may not be able to have this vaccine.

SAFETY

Theft and Terrorism

- Consult the Department of State's consular sheets and travel reports/terror threats using their hotline at 888-407-4747, or online at: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis_pa_tw_1168.html.
- Make copies of travel documents like your passport, airline ticket, license, and traveler check serial numbers to take with you.
- Check your credit card limits and do not exceed them since in some countries this is fraud.



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SAFETY (cont.)

- Find out exactly what is covered by your auto, health, property, and travel accident insurance.
- Try to arrange direct flights and avoid lingering in public areas of airports and train stations.
- You are subject to the laws of your destination country: avoid illegal drugs, firearms, photography of government installations, border areas, and civil demonstrations.
- Register with the U.S. embassy upon arrival in high-risk countries.
- Carry personal and business papers with you, or leave them in a safe place.

Food

- Drink plenty of water, avoiding contaminated ice and water; drink bottled water if possible.
- Avoid contaminated water when brushing teeth, bathing, or swimming.
- Depending on the country and using your judgment, be careful when accepting food that has not been washed, peeled, or is reheated.

CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION

Goods Entering a Foreign Country

Many countries prohibit or restrict the quantity of certain items entering. This may apply to large amounts of cash, with taxes payable on larger quantities of any goods. It is important to note that almost all countries have strict regulations on food. U.S. rules can be viewed online at:

<http://www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/travel/>

Entry Fees

When entering the U.S., fees are included in the price of your plane tickets, but foreign entry/ departure fees may be included in tickets or may be due upon exiting the country. These fees are usually nominal, and you will be notified of them upon boarding your airplane destined for the foreign country.

ATA Carnet: Temporary Admission of Goods

This merchandise passport is an international customs document that simplifies customs for the temporary import of commercial samples, professional equipment, and goods for exhibitions and trade shows. It also covers goods such as cameras, cars, and yachts. It does not cover consumable goods, disposable and hazardous items, or postal traffic. An ATA Carnet allows a temporary exporter to use a single document for all customs transactions, and to make arrangements in advance at a pre-determined cost. It also helps eliminate payment of duties and value-added taxes, or the purchase of temporary import bonds. The ATA Carnet serves as a guarantee against the payment of duties that may be due if the merchandise is not re-exported.

A Note on Electrical Items

Since most U.S. electrical items such as hairdryers, shavers, and laptops run at 110V, you will need a converter to operate them on 220V, the voltage used in many foreign countries.

An ATA Carnet can be obtained from the U.S. Council for International Business or a freight forwarder. Processing time is generally one day if received before 4PM EST. A security deposit is required, usually 40% of the shipment value; certified checks and surety bonds are accepted. The fees range from \$210 - \$350.

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VEDP SERVICES

The VEDP offers a number of export-related services to Virginia businesses, including group market visits and market research by our Global Network of in-country consultants. These services are available to all Virginia exporters. For more information, please visit our website: www.exportvirginia.org.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- 1000 Tips for Trips: <http://www.1000tips4trips.com>
- iJet Travel Risk Management: <http://www.ijet.com/index.asp>
- U.S. Department of Commerce. Office of Travel and Tourism Industries: <http://www.tinet.ita.doc.gov>

WORKS CITED

- United States Bureau of Customs and Border Protection. Planning to Travel Abroad.
<<http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/faqs.xml>>
- United States Council for International Business. ATA Carnet Export.
< <http://www.merchandisepassport.org> >
- United States Department of State. Bureau of Consular Affairs. A Safe Trip Abroad.
<http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/safety/safety_1747.html>
- United States Department of State. Bureau of Consular Affairs. Tips for Travelling Abroad.
<http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/tips_1232.html>

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