

International Travel Tips

Ohio University College of Osteopathic Medicine

Preparations

- Spend time researching your options, contact organizations and request published information or websites to assist you in your research.
- When you contact prospective organizations, provide them with an easy means of contacting or communicating with you and determine what information they would like to see from you.
- Be specific about what sort of experience and duties or projects you have in mind and what skills or knowledge you have that might be beneficial to the organization or program.
- Research the most common health problems in the region that you will be visiting.
- Review recommended readings and research diseases and treatments that you will most likely encounter at the site. For those going to tropical locations and developing nations, general recommendations are: Where there is No Doctor, by David Werner and The Travel and Tropical Medicine Manual, by Jong & McMullen.
- If you do not speak the language in the region, learn basic phrases.
- Read about the culture(s) that you will be immersed in.
- Obtain a valid passport and visa.
- Make sure that you have all immunizations recommended by the CDC at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>.
- Review Bobcat Abroad materials.

Before you depart

- Clarify who you will be reporting to and/or who will be your supervisor, what your work schedule will be, and any extra allowances you will need (time for travel, etc) before you arrive.
- Review recommendations of U.S. State Department at http://travel.state.gov/travel/student_tips_brochure.html.
- Register with the U.S. Embassy prior to departure.
- Leave a copy of your travel itinerary, passport and visa with Cheri Sheets and a family member.
- Leave credit card, ATM card and traveler's check information with a family member.
- Make living and transportation arrangements.
- Contact your airline to reconfirm whether or not your flight is a) still departing; or b) departing on time. If you cannot reach the airline through its toll free number, check its website. Reconfirmation is required 72 hours in advance for most airlines.

What to pack (this is likely to vary by site so contact your program director for recommendations)

- Basic medical/first aid kit including: thermometer, gauze and tape, tweezers, antibiotics (e.g. cipro), muscle relaxant or sedative, sleeping pills (over the counter or prescription), anti-diarrheal/nausea meds, a fiber laxative, hemorrhoid wipes, anti-gas medicine, antacid, antihistamine (topical and oral), motion sickness pills, cold medicine, topical antifungal, something to treat yeast infections for women, antibiotic cream, eye drops, variety of band-aids, ace wraps or braces for existing joint problems, sunscreen, burn ointment, NSAIDS, adequate supply of prescriptions and any other items that you use on a regular basis (including feminine hygiene products). For areas with endemic malaria, malaria prophylaxis. (If you have any history of depression, Larium is not recommended; check the region for medication resistance).
- Written prescription (with the full, brand name) for any medications or medical supplies (i.e. syringes) you currently use as well as the dosing instructions in the event of any GI problems.
- Please be aware that some medications are temperature-sensitive; also be aware of sun vulnerability while taking certain medications.
- In tropical areas: Insect repellents with DEET (as high a % as you can tolerate), permethrin (to treat clothing and mosquito nets). You may want a general insecticide (like Raid).
- Powder Gatorade.
- Money belt and/or passport holder.
- Backpack with a lock.
- Contact lenses can be problematic in areas without access to clean water. If you wear glasses, bring a back up pair.
- Clothing: COTTON is key in tropical areas!!! Travel Smith has good travel clothes (www.travelsmith.com). **Don't bring anything that you can't part with.** Laundry facilities may not be convenient, so make sure you have enough clothing for a week but be conscious of not packing too much. For clinical rotations, bring your white coat. Inquire with your site/program about scrubs, as they are not worn frequently in many countries. Bring conservative clothing and make sure that you do not bring clothing that would be considered culturally inappropriate.
- Stethoscope, diagnostic kit, penlight, OU-COM name tag, percussion hammer.
- Reference materials.
- Water bottle.
- Travel alarm.
- Towel, hand towel and wash cloth.
- Laundry bag and/or clothesline.
- Sunscreen (the highest SPF you can find).
- Sunglasses.
- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- High protein snacks or comfort food (such as protein bars or trail mix).
- Journal, address book.
- Basic toiletries (soap, shampoo, toothpaste etc.).

- Plastic baggies of different sizes.
- Baby wipes, hand sanitizer, rubbing alcohol.
- Small packets of tissue.
- Camera and batteries, film or if digital computer, connector (and software), CDs or something for backup.
- Voltage converter and/or adapter.
- Watch.
- Comfort items/entertainment (e.g. CD or MP3 player, books, DVDs, games, cards).
- Spending money.
- Make-up may be inappropriate in many settings, be sure to follow customs regarding cosmetics.

DO NOT BRING EXPENSIVE JEWELRY OR ANYTHING THAT YOU CAN'T PART WITH.

How to pack

- Items that you have packed in the past may no longer pass through security. Knives of any sort are unacceptable. Remove items that may appear to be threatening (e.g., scissors). You can find a complete list of restricted items at www.tsa.gov.
- Make sure all suitcases and carry-on bags have completed name tags.
- You MUST bring a government-issued photo identification card or passport. You will not be allowed to check-in without this. Also, make sure that the name on your ticket is the same as the one on your passport. (For married female students, it will be easier for you to have all of your documentation under the same name, either your maiden name or your married name, just be consistent).
- Make sure you have all necessary VISAs.
- If you have an E-ticket, bring your E-ticket and a printout of your E-ticket receipt or confirmation with you. If you can't produce printed evidence that you have a ticket, you may not be allowed through the security checkpoint. A confirmation number may not be sufficient; you will likely need a printed receipt or official confirmation notice.
- You should pack a First Aid kit with the items recommended in the previous section.

Checking-in for your flight

- Allow PLENTY of time to check in. The recommended minimum is now two hours prior to departure for domestic flights, and three to four hours prior to departure for international flights.
- Expect restricted airport parking. Some airports may require that you park off-site and take a shuttle to your terminal.
- Curbside check-in and off-site location check-in may no longer be available.
- Do not leave baggage or vehicles unattended; airport security will be completing thorough sweeps of airport properties. Anything left unattended will be immediately removed.

- Expect to see an increased presence of law enforcement personnel outside the terminal and inside the building.
- All passengers will need to check-in at the airport ticket counter.
- Unticketed passengers, without boarding passes, will not be allowed past the security checkpoint.
- Be prepared to empty all your clothing pockets and remove your shoes. Be prepared to demonstrate operation of electronic equipment such as cell phones, laptop computers, etc.
- Expect increased passenger and baggage searches. Wand checks and/or full body searches can be expected.

If your flight is cancelled or delayed

- Airlines are not responsible for providing alternate transportation or accommodations when flight cancellations or delays are caused by circumstances beyond their control, including government orders or acts of war or terrorism. Airlines may, as a customer service gesture, help you locate accommodations or alternate transportation, but they have no legal obligation to provide any assistance or pay for alternate transportation or other costs occasioned by delays or cancellations. Airlines must either refund the amount you actually paid for your tickets, or allow you to use them on alternate flights once service resumes. This is their only legal obligation.
- Travel insurance policies vary in whether they cover expenses from flight cancellations or delays caused by government orders or acts of war or terrorism. Contact the claims department of your travel insurance company for advice on coverage and claims procedures. (Note: Medical evacuation and repatriation insurance, which students are required to have, is not to be confused with travel insurance.)

At the departure gate

- Do not leave bags unattended.
- Expect to see law enforcement personnel and dogs.
- You will need your ticket, boarding pass and photo identification (again) to board the aircraft.
- Expect to see teams of individuals board the aircraft before general boarding in order to sweep the aircraft as an added security precaution.

Once on board

- Expect to see random searches of service personnel, flight crew, equipment, and passengers.
- Be patient if the flight is delayed. Passengers boarding and baggage loading are being carefully coordinated by ground handling crews.
- Be sure to drink plenty of water and periodically get up and walk around.
- The flights are extremely long, so bring books, cards and other entertainment.
- You may want to bring a change of underwear, a shirt, baby wipes, a toothbrush and toothpaste to freshen up during a layover.

Upon arrival

- Proceed through the terminal, beyond security. Meeting parties will be restricted to areas outside the security checkpoint.
- Have your luggage receipts available when retrieving luggage for verification.
- Finally, be aware that different airports and different airlines have their own security measures that may differ slightly from those mentioned above.

Once you arrive, you should consider

- Setting goals for the experience with your preceptor, including what you hope to learn, what work functions you would like to learn more about, and what career related skill you hope to acquire.
- Keep a log or journal of your activities and reflections, particularly in regard to any professional or cultural insights you gain.
- Make an effort to learn about the culture and get to know people.
- Keep your preceptor apprised of your activities, even if this does not seem to be required.
- Be open-minded and willing to revise your goals if necessary; your experiences could lead you in a new direction you did not plan, but will provide new opportunities.
- Ask questions, do not make assumptions.

As you prepare to return to the United States

- Request a meeting with your supervisor, discuss your initial goals, accomplishments and experience as a whole.
- Ask for a letter of recommendation, as your supervisors may be difficult for future employers to contact.
- Formally thank people for your experience.
- If appropriate, provide feedback that might be helpful in the preparation and supervision of future interns.
- Revise your résumé or document your experience immediately, while your experience is fresh in your mind.
- Be prepared for reverse culture shock. You may want to visit [What's Up with Culture?](#)
- Share your experiences with friends, family and classmates.