

+ Health & Safety

HATCH

Safety Share

Travel Safety – Proper Planning

Proper planning, awareness, and preventative measure are all important aspect of traveling that need to be considered prior to any trip. Don't get caught unexpectedly by something that could have easily been taken care of with a little planning. Consider these tips when planning your next trip:

Medically fit for travel

- Seek the advice of a medical professional or a travel clinic at least 4 to 6 weeks prior to any travel. Ensure you have up-to-date vaccinations.
- Annual physical examination should be completed for those traveling to high altitudes.
- Consider downloading the ICE (In Case of Emergency) App on your mobile phone as it allows first responders and emergency response personnel to be able to identify medical history, treat the injured and contact your next of kin even when your phone is locked. Faster and effective treatments can also be provided sooner than waiting to get in contact with your doctor.

Travel Documentations

- Check the expiry date on your passport. Make sure your passport does not expire until after you return home (about 6 months upon return).
- Obtain required visas and international driving permit, where required.
- Carry an emergency contact card with you at all times. Important numbers should include: local contact, contact for your family from your resident country, healthcare provider, accommodation at your destination, hospitals/clinics at your destination, embassy in the destination country, and emergency contact for International SOS.
- Make copies of important documents such as passports, credit cards, itineraries, and driver's licenses and leave a copy at home for reference.

Travel Arrangements

- Read through International SOS website and check if there are any travel advisories in the area of your destination.
- Make travel arrangements through the Hatch-designated travel agency in your region to ensure all restrictions and specifications have been addressed (i.e. country specific Visas, travel security and medical risks).
- If possible, plan to stay in larger hotels that have more elaborate security. In some cases, your client may have established safe houses/hotels that should be used.
- Book a room from the first to sixth floors above ground level to deter easy entrance from outside, but low enough to reach fire equipment.

What to Bring

- Safety begins when you pack. To avoid being a target, dress conservatively. Don't wear expensive looking jewellery. A flashy wardrobe or one that is too casual can mark you as a tourist. As much as possible, avoid the appearance of affluence.

- Purge your wallet or purse of unnecessary credit cards or other identification/commercial cards before leaving.
- Carry the minimum amount of valuables necessary for your trip and plan a place or places to conceal them. Your passport, cash and credit cards are most secure when locked in a hotel safe.
- Carry your valuables so that they are close to your body and preferably concealed under layers of clothing. Inside pockets and a sturdy shoulder bag with the strap worn across your chest are safer. One of the safest places to carry valuables is in a pouch or thin money belt worn under your clothing.
- If you wear glasses, pack an extra pair. Bring them and any medicines you need in your carry-on luggage.
- Bring enough prescription and over-the-counter medications to last the trip. Take extra medication with you in case your return flight is delayed.
- To avoid problems when passing through customs, keep medicines in their original, labelled containers. Bring copies of your prescriptions and the generic names for the drugs. If a medication is unusual or contains narcotics, carry a letter from your doctor attesting to your need to take the drug. If you have any doubt about the legality of carrying a certain drug into a country, consult the embassy or consulate of that country first.
- Put your name, address and telephone numbers inside and outside of each piece of luggage. Use covered luggage tags to avoid casual observation of your identity or nationality. If possible, lock your luggage.
- Find out international dialling codes before you go.

Local Laws and Customs

Employees are reminded that when overseas, you are subject to local laws. A violation of local laws in a foreign country may result in severe penalties e.g. a jail sentence served in a local prison. Employees are advised to dress and conduct themselves in a manner consistent with local customs and sensitivities. In most countries, taking photographs of military installations and other sites deemed to be sensitive to domestic security, such as police stations, is prohibited. Further information regarding laws and customs can be obtained from the travel section of insideHATCH.

Culture Awareness

When located in an unfamiliar place with unfamiliar people, you may be most likely to commit a social blunder that could offend your client or host. Therefore it is important to be well presented at any destination you go to.

- Research appropriate professional conduct, geography, food, and politics in the host country before departure.
- Ask someone who has already been to that country to understand their culture.
- Try to learn their language such as “hello”, “thank-you” and “It was nice meeting you” and use smartphone apps like Google Translate for immediate translation during your trip.
- Learn how to greet people in the country you are visiting. Some countries may have a specific way to address someone.
- Punctuality is different in many countries so do not take offense if not everyone is present at the agreed upon time.
- Some countries ban social media sites. Wait until you get home to post about your host, experience or destination.
- Small talks should be kept to a minimum as some things may be off limits in certain countries. Topics such as weather, food and current events are good conversation starters.