

General Travel Preparation

If you are traveling in your home country, you are at an advantage as you are much more aware of everyday needs in terms of identification (ID) documents and travel arrangements, although in many countries there are significant differences state to state. All in all, it is much easier to prepare for travel within your home country than when traveling outside your own country boundaries.

Here is a list to check off in order to prepare for your trip:

- When planning your travel, if you are traveling overseas it is best to ensure that your passports always have a minimum of six months validity. Some countries will not allow you entry unless you have a minimum of six months validity on your current passport.
- Check each country you will enter for the need for visas, and ensure you check countries where you will be in transit, too, as that can cause problems sometimes. Most visas can be purchased online these days.
- I highly recommend that you visit your doctor 8 weeks in advance of your departure if you are traveling overseas. Have any inoculations you require and I always ask for a couple of extra things: a prescription for antibiotics in case I require them while overseas and a prescription for a mild sleeping sedative to assist me overcome jet lag. In some destinations, it can be difficult and very expensive to have antibiotics prescribed, as you have to pay doctors' fees then pharmacy fees. It can also be difficult to find a doctor within the timeframe you require. Following sound medical advice, I do not use the sleeping pills on the long international flights. I occasionally use them for the first night or two when I arrive in a new destination if the time zones have significantly changed. Jet lag can be tricky to predict. Sometimes I can be awake for hours in the middle of the night, my body tired, but my body clock and mind fully active. At other times I experience no jet lag at all. Having prescription sedatives on hand is useful in case I need them when I significantly change time zones, and also when I finally return home having changed time zones.
- If you are going away for an extended period, ensure that you have enough of any medications you take regularly, in addition to the sedatives and antibiotics. Ensure that your doctor gives you a letter stating that all of these medications have been prescribed to you by the doctor, and carry that letter with you; I carry mine in with my medications. It is best to buy the prescribed pills from your local pharmacist in your home town before you leave. I tend to empty pill bottles into individual zip lock bags. If there is a little gadget in the bottle to stop water absorption, I also include that. I cut off the label which the pharmacy has stuck on the packet or bottle, and I include it in the zip lock bag. I do this because I find it easier to carry zip lock bags than to carry boxes and bottles. It is both lighter in weight and less in volume. I end up putting all of my medications in small zip lock bags into one large zip lock bag together with the letter from my doctor.
- Other medications I always take include a small tube of antiseptic cream, five or six band aids, a few aspirin or ibuprofen tablets and some antihistamine tablets. Depending upon the type of vacation I intend to have, I will include other medications. For example, when I walked the Camino across Spain I included special band aids for blisters and special anti-blisters walking tape. You will know what you need to take. The main thing is not to overdo it and end up with a bulky and heavy bag full of medications which you may not need. Most places you visit will have pharmacies and general stores, and although they may not have the brand names you are used to, you will be able to purchase most of your medical requirements anywhere in the world. In the event of special needs, most places have a hospital which can prescribe in case of an emergency.
- Do not take extra packs of nonprescription pills (take one pack only) such as vitamins, as they are not essential for your health and you can almost always purchase them wherever you are. Sunscreen and insect repellent can also be purchased everywhere.
- Phone your banks and your credit card providers to let them know that you are going overseas and how long you are going for and which countries you will be visiting. The banks will be very happy if you do this. If you do not take this precaution, you may find your credit card being declined when overseas, as your bank is guarding you against credit card fraud! Ensure you take with you the emergency overseas numbers to call should you be unfortunate enough to have your credit card lost or stolen. The number is no good printed on the card if the card is no longer in your possession. Also ensure you take the overseas version of the numbers rather than the local numbers you use at home. They are often different. If you wish, you can scan photos of both sides of your cards and keep them in a secure application on your phone.