

OVERVIEW

Any company involved in international business will eventually need to send staff abroad. This document will address basic documentation health and safety guidelines to consider when international travel is undertaken.

When conducting business overseas, there may be visa and health requirements to consider, national holidays to avoid, trade events to try to coincide with your visit, and certain areas of the world to avoid. 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.

Documentation requirements

PASSPORTS

U.S. citizens need a passport for international travel. Since Sept. 11, 2001, there have been numerous initiatives that have made international travel into and out of the U.S., especially air travel, stricter. 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 two 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.

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:

- 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. Also, be prepared to mail your passport, with fees, to the consulate for visa stamping if you cannot go to the consulate in person.

HEALTH ISSUES

Do you have questions regarding 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.

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 U.S. There are also companies that offer supplemental travel insurance and medical evacuation insurance.

SAFETY

When you travel abroad, the odds are you will have a safe and incident-free trip. Travelers can, however, become victims of crime and violence or experience unexpected difficulties. Here are some tips for having a safe trip abroad:

- Make copies of travel documents like your passport, airline ticket, license, and traveler check serial numbers to take with you.
- Contact your credit card company, check your credit card limits, and do not exceed them, since in some countries this is fraud.
- 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; and 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.

CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION

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.**

When entering the U.S., fees are included in the price of your plane tickets, but foreign entry/departure fees 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.

For entry requirements, travel alerts/warnings, health issues, and other country-specific information before your trip, please go the **U.S. State Department website.**

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