

Travel Tips by Outlander

First Time Travel Abroad



New to international travel? Here are some tips!

MONEY

- Let your bank know where and when you are traveling so your credit card is not flagged or declined.
- Many financial institutions (credit unions and banks) can get you foreign currency for no fee in advance of your trip. It is nice to have some local currency when you arrive jetlagged.
- Don't forget to keep track of your receipts and ask for tax rebate forms.

LANGUAGE

- Not everybody speaks English. Learning some key phrases will be very helpful and appreciated.
- Invest in a small phrase guide for the language or download a translator app on your phone.
- Carry the name of your hotel with you everywhere written in the local language. This is especially important when traveling in a country with a different alphabet/character set than English. Then, if your taxi driver doesn't speak English, you can always produce the name of your destination to read in his or her own language.

PRACTICALITIES

- Bring extra copies of your passport in your luggage and carry on just in case you lose your passport. The State Department will be easier to work with. We also recommend you leave a copy with a family member back home and/or your travel agent.
- If you have TSA PreCheck, keep in mind that it doesn't work out of the country. You may be required to remove liquids, etc. from your luggage for screening.
- Check to see if the airport you're re-entering the United States through has the Mobile Entry app to help you clear customs faster.
- Some countries require you to acquire a travel visa before travel, which can take several weeks to be approved. We recommend you consult with Travia services via our link: <http://www.travia.com/W0B2Q5T1G8>
- If you are renting a car, some countries require an international driver's license, which can be obtained from AAA.
- Get to the airport 3 hours early. The check in process is different for international flights and you do not want a security hold-up to prevent you from boarding on time.

MEDICAL/SAFETY

- Check with the local health department to find out if you need any extra immunizations. They know what you need. You can also consult travel.state.gov for this information.
- Leave a copy of your itinerary with a loved one.
- Look up the phone number of the U.S. embassy in the country to which you are traveling, and save it in your phone.
- You can register your travels outside of the USA with the U.S. State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program at <https://step.state.gov>. This is not required.



NECESSITIES

- Prepare a small bag you can keep at your seat back for a long flight. An eye mask, ear buds/plugs, lip balm, e-reader/book, medication, hand wipes -- any thing you think you might need during a long flight.
- Make friends with the hotel concierge/desk clerk - they are a valuable resource.
- Invest in a good travel purse/wallet with RFID protection. Consider a cut-proof fabric or locking purse. Avoid open-top tote-bag type purses.
- Don't forget an adaptor or two for charging electronics, as well as for things you need to plug in. Consider bringing a "spider" charging station so you have lots of charging ports but only need one adapter to plug into the wall. Outlets can be sparse in some older hotels.



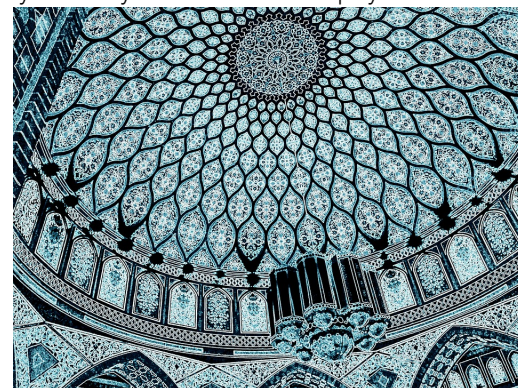
MOVING AROUND

- Learn the transportation system- familiarize yourself with the hours of operation.
- There are stairs everywhere- especially in and out of the metro stations. Many will not have escalators or elevators.
- Everything worth seeing is at the top of a hill. Trust us, it's worth it!
- You will get lost. Embrace it. A compass and map can come in handy.
- Your travel agent can arrange some private transfers for you from the train or airport to your hotel to take a bit of the stress out of finding a taxi in a new country. We highly recommend this for arrival in any foreign country at the very least.



OBSERVATIONS

- Public bathrooms can be hard to find, they can be dirty and in many cases you will need to pay for them. Sometimes they are very clean, but you will still probably have to pay to use one. Or, sit down and have a refreshment at an establishment, and use its facilities.
- Check into dress norms. In some places, camouflage is illegal. Many churches and temples require various body parts to be covered (head, shoulders, knees) while others require you to remove your shoes.
- If breakfast is included with your accommodations it will most likely be different than an American breakfast. You will see more fruit, yogurt and grains than eggs and bacon.
- For women, carrying a wrap or long scarf can be a lifesaver and also a possible shawl or head cover for churches, temples, etc.
- If you are above average size, it may be harder for you to find clothing in certain countries- plan accordingly. This applies to height AND width. Not just plus sizes.
- Many countries in Europe don't serve ice with their drinks and don't serve drinks cold.
- Many things that are free here cost money in other countries: ketchup at McDonald's, drinking water, rest rooms, etc. Don't expect free drink refills. Portions will be smaller. You'll have to pay for a bag at a grocery store if you shop.
- Many things that cost money in the USA may be free in Europe (Museums in Scotland, London)
- The pharmacy may be the only place to buy aspirin or similar medicine. You may want to Google the translated equivalent for anything you might need to ask for.
- In many countries, if you order water, you will be asked "sparkling, still, or tap?" This is carbonated water, bottled spring water, or tap water. Tap water is completely safe in many countries, but is rarely offered. Usually it is just "sparkling or still" and both are bottled.



Sources

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