General Travel Advice

Use the same common sense traveling overseas that you would at home, and always stay alert and aware of your surroundings.

Keep family and friends informed of your itinerary, and communicate regularly throughout the trip.

Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) at http://travel.state.gov/

Become a member of International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers (IAMAT) at http://www.iamat.org

Register your trip with the International Studies Office, if it is for credit or funded by UVA.

Motor vehicle crashes are the number one killer of healthy US citizens in foreign countries.

Food and Water Illnesses

Eat
Food that is cooked and served hot.
Hard-cooked eggs.
Fruits and vegetables you have washed in clean water or peeled yourself.
Pasteurized dairy products.

Don’t Eat
Food served at room temperature.
Food from street vendors.
Raw or soft-cooked (runny) eggs.
Raw or undercooked (rare) meat or fish.
Unwashed or unpeeled raw fruit and vegetables, including salsas and chutneys.
Unpasteurized dairy products.
“Bushmeat” (monkeys, bats, or other wild game).

Drink
Bottled water that is sealed
Water that has been disinfected.
Ice made with bottled or disinfected water.
Carbonated drinks in cans and bottles (no fountain drinks)
Hot coffee or tea.
Pasteurized milk.

Don’t Drink
Tap or well water.
Ice made with tap or well water.
Drinks made with tap or well water (such as reconstituted juice or fountain sodas).
Unpasteurized milk and cheeses.
Insect Borne Diseases

Bugs (including mosquitoes, ticks, and some flies) can spread diseases such as malaria, yellow fever, dengue fever, and Japanese encephalitis, to name only a few. Many of these insect borne diseases cannot be prevented with a vaccine or medicine. You can reduce your risk by taking steps to prevent bug bites.

Malaria Prevention

If the CDC considers malaria a risk at your destination, it is always important to take malaria prophylaxis and avoid bug bites. Locals or other travelers may minimize the risk of malaria based on anecdotal information and not recommend medication. However, the risk varies from region to region and from traveler to traveler, within the same country. Malaria is always a serious disease and may be a deadly illness.

Avoid Bug Bites

An insect repellent with at least 20% DEET and Picaridin can protect against mosquitoes and ticks. Insect repellents with the following active ingredients protect against mosquitoes only (but not ticks): Oil of lemon eucalyptus or PMD, IR3525.

- Make sure to read directions and reapply as directed to maintain effectiveness. Repellents containing a higher percentage of the active ingredient typically provide longer-lasting protection. Regardless of what product you use, if you start to get insect bites, reapply the repellent according to the label instructions.
- When using sunscreen, apply sunscreen first and insect repellent second.
- Consider using permethrin-treated clothing and gear (such as boots, pants, socks, and tents); you can buy items already treated or can treat them yourself. Do not use permethrin directly on skin.
- Cover exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats.
- Stay and sleep in screened or air-conditioned rooms.
- Use a bed net if the area where you are sleeping is exposed to the outdoors.
- To prevent tick bites, tuck in shirts, tuck pants into socks, and wear closed shoes instead of sandals.

Keep away from animals

Most animals avoid people, but they may attack if they feel threatened, are protecting their young or territory, or if they are injured or ill. Animal bites and scratches can lead to serious diseases such as rabies.

- Do not touch or feed any animals you do not know. Do not allow animals to lick open wounds, and do not get animal saliva in your eyes or mouth.
- If you wake in a room with a bat, seek medical care immediately.
- Avoid live bird and poultry markets.
- Rabies vaccine may still be required.
WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE BITTEN

To reduce risk of rabies, if you get bitten or scratched by an animal while traveling abroad:

Wash wound copiously with soap and water for a minimum of 15 minutes.
Apply Betadine® or other antiseptic.
If pre-immunized, find modern rabies vaccine.
If not pre-immunized, try to find out if HRIG is available.
If HRIG not available, travel to nearest place where it is available; begin vaccine series as soon as possible; RIG can be given up to seven days after the start of the rabies vaccine series.

Travelers’ Diarrhea

Prevention:
Pepto-Bismol®: 2 chewable tablets 4 times per day. Side effects: blackening of tongue and stool; may cause nausea, constipation, and rarely tinnitus (ringing in the ears). Contraindicated with aspirin allergy and in some medical conditions.

Treatment:
Early self-treatment with antibiotics can limit the duration of illness to 6–24 hours in most cases.
Ciprofloxacin: One 500 mg tablet twice daily for 1-3 days.
Azithromycin: Two 250mg tabs once a day for 1-3 days.
Imodium® can be used with antibiotic therapy to shorten illness duration, but should not be used on its own, as it may prolong symptoms.
Rehydrate with bottled water and electrolytes (such as a pinch of salt).

Environmental Related Illnesses

Wear protective clothing, high factor sunscreen (reapplied regularly), and insect repellent (also reapplied as directed). Always apply sunscreen before repellent.
• Carry a first aid kit and know how to use it.
• Carry an adequate supply of water and high energy snacks.
• Carry a flashlight for walking at night
• Check shoes and clothes carefully for spiders, scorpions, and so on.
• Wear a stinger suit when swimming in areas with jellyfish.
• Altitude illness usually occurs at about >9000 feet (2700 meters). Symptoms can include headache, lightheadedness, nausea, vomiting, fatigue, loss of appetite; more serious symptoms include breathlessness and confusion. See our separate altitude illness handout.
  *Consider acetazolamide (125 mg twice daily): start 24 hours before ascent and continue daily for two or more days.
  May cause increased urination and numbness in extremities. Caution with sulfa allergy.
• Avoid swallowing water when swimming. Untreated water can carry germs that make you sick.
• To prevent parasitic infections, wear shoes on beaches where there may be animal waste.

Violence and Theft

Avoid travel to areas of conflict or political unrest; avoid participating in local demonstrations
• Travel with a companion or group.
• Stay in secure accommodation and use a safety deposit box.
• Carry minimal amounts of money; a hidden money belt may be useful for holding passports and larger amounts of money.
• Do not wear expensive watches or jewelry.
• Dress appropriately with respect to local culture.
• Never accept food or drink from strangers, and do not leave drinks unattended because of the risk of “spiking”.
• Ensure that hired cars are roadworthy and can be locked securely.

Do not swim in freshwater in developing areas or where sanitation is poor.