



International travel is back, but extra steps needed

By Steve Heiden and Peter Dion



Stay informed on current travel conditions.

International travel is once again a possibility for many people.

While it is always exciting to visit new countries, you must heed some key tips before visiting, and the global pandemic has added to the list.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Before your departure – a few months if possible – research the countries on the U.S. State Department website for current information on travel clearance, safety, areas to avoid, passport information and visa requirements to enter and exit the country. Continue to check the site for additional information and travel advisories as your travel dates approach. Contact the embassy of the country you will be visiting for updated visa information.
- Make sure your passport is current for at least six months. Check passport expiration dates and renew early. Remember that children’s passports are valid for five years and adult passports are valid for 10 years.

HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

- Being vaccinated against COVID-19 in the United States is likely not enough. You may be required to have a COVID test within three days of departure as proof. The state department website has additional vaccine and testing requirements.
- Some countries or certain resorts may require a travel health visa.
- Most U.S.-based health insurance policies are not valid overseas. Call your health care provider at least a month prior to departure to verify the extent of coverage and purchase supplemental health insurance or travel medical insurance if necessary. Some levels of travel medical insurance also include medical evacuation coverage. Cincinnati Insurance policyholders have access to coverages and services

provided by Medjet – which provides additional information about its services as they relate to COVID-19 .

MONEY MATTERS

- To ensure your credit/debit cards operate properly, contact your bank and credit card companies and inform them what countries you will be traveling through or visiting. Consider getting an additional credit card for travel emergencies.
- Consider whether travel insurance might be appropriate, depending on your plans.

SAFETY CONCERNS

- Do not pack or wear clothing or carry luggage or bags that identify you as a U.S. citizen, such as shirts with logos or backpacks with flags.
- Avoid carrying large sums of cash on any one person in your travel group. Use security wallets such as those worn underneath clothing.
- You want to blend in with the local population as much as possible. Do not wear or pack expensive jewelry and avoid wearing expensive clothing. Use in-room safes or front desk vaults to store valuables.
- Ask the staff at your hotel about locations to avoid.

GETTING AROUND

- Remember that many countries don't recognize the validity of a U.S. driver's license. If you plan to drive in another country, you will need a valid driver's license. Contact the car rental provider for specific country requirements.
- Be cautious about other forms of non-public transportation: don't get into unmarked taxis.

DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION

- Make extra copies of your passport and passport-size photos. Hide the copies in multiple places to minimize the risk of theft. Carry your actual passport with you only as needed.
- Know the locations of the U.S. embassies or consulates in the countries you visit. Pack copies of the embassy addresses and most importantly their telephone numbers. If you encounter an emergency, contact the U.S. embassy.
- Check with your mobile phone provider before you leave to assure that your device will work in the country you plan to visit. You may be able to rent a satellite phone that will work anywhere. Remember to take the appropriate electrical adapters to allow you to charge your phone in the countries you are visiting.
- The implementation date for the Department of Homeland Security's Real ID travel requirement has been extended to May 3, 2023.

Consider enrolling in the State Department’s free Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive updated information from the state department. STEP allows you to receive important information from the Embassy about safety conditions in your destination country, helping you make informed decisions about your travel plans. STEP can also help the U.S. Embassy contact you in an emergency, whether natural disaster, civil unrest or family emergency.

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