



Travel Tips for Older Americans

An increasing number of older U.S. citizens are traveling abroad. The U.S. Department of State wants you to be prepared so that you can relax and enjoy your trip. Please consider the following tips as you plan your travel. Additionally, if you plan on residing overseas, please review our information sheet on retiring abroad.

Know Before You Go

Travel Documents: Apply for a passport at least three months before you travel. If you have one, be sure to check the passport's expiration date and entry requirements for the countries you will be visiting. Some countries require that passports be valid for six months after your trip ends and some foreign countries require that U.S. travelers obtain a visa. Entry information for foreign countries is available at [Country Specific Information](#).

Local Conditions: Extremes in climate can adversely affect the health of some travelers. So, too, can travel to high altitude locations. As you travel, ask your tour operator or hotel about local conditions, including recommendations about taxis and other transportation options, restaurants, and the safety of local drinking water. Information on safe food and water precautions may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the [CDC website](#). You can find more information about particular food safety concerns in the [Country Specific Information](#) and [U.S. Embassy or Consulate webpages](#).

Travel Smart: Pack lightly and learn what clothing would be appropriate for your destination. . Be aware that physical activity undertaken during travel can be strenuous, and sudden changes in diet and climate can have serious health consequences for the unprepared traveler, no matter your age. Build ample personal time into your itinerary—whether to catch up to a current time zone or to enjoy an extra travel site.

Financial Information: Understand the financial system and know the currency rates at your travel destination. Tell your bank or credit card company of your travel plans so that its security measures do not freeze your account. Often they will block a card if they see unfamiliar patterns of use, and they don't know you are on a foreign trip. Ask if your bank has any branches at your travel destination or international banking partners where you could safely deposit or withdraw funds as needed. Review the Crime section of the [Country Specific Information](#) for the countries you will visit to review the financial and ATM scams and other financial scams that may be targeting foreign visitors. If ATM service is not widely available or is not secure, bring travelers checks and one or two major credit cards instead of planning to use cash. Many banks in most countries will issue cash advances from major credit cards.

Stay Connected: A secure way to maintain your emergency contact information is to enroll with [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#). Your information is stored securely and enables the Department of State, U.S. embassy, or consulate to contact you, your family, or your friends in an emergency according to your wishes.

Health Information: Healthcare tops the list of concerns for many older U.S. citizens who are thinking about traveling abroad. Consult with your physician prior to your travel overseas to identify your healthcare needs at your destination. Research the environmental conditions at your overseas destination that may contribute to your specific health concerns, particularly if you are sensitive to altitude, air pollution, humidity, or other conditions, including availability and standards of care. For more tips related to health issues visit our [website](#). You may also find health information at the Travelers' Health page of the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) website](#).

Medical Insurance Beyond Medicare: Medicare, the U.S. government health plan for people aged 65 years and older, does not cover healthcare overseas. We highly recommend that you obtain health insurance to cover emergency medical and dental treatment and for medical evacuation to the United States. [Many companies offer short-term health and emergency assistance policies](#) to cover health care expenses incurred overseas, including emergency services such as medical evacuations.

Pharmacies and Medications: If you routinely take prescription medication, be sure to include an ample supply for your trip, adjust your medication schedule as you cross time zones. Carry a letter from your doctor describing your conditions and the medication you require. To avoid problems at customs or immigration, keep medications in their original, labeled containers. Please be sure to ask your physician and pharmacist for the generic or chemical name of your medication. Drug names differ in many countries, and pharmacists and physicians abroad are more likely to be familiar with this name. Check with the Embassy or Consulate of the country you plan to visit to ensure that your medications are not considered illegal substances under local laws.

Research Accessibility and Accommodations: If you have mobility difficulties or use a wheelchair, determine what the access is to areas such as swimming pools, public facilities, restaurants, bars, toilets, etc. Determine if shopping and entertainment are accessible. For more information, check our section on [Traveling with Disabilities](#).

Beware of Scams: Scammers intend to get money from their victims by making the victims believe they will gain something of great personal value (financial gain, a romantic relationship, helping someone in trouble, the safe return of a friend, etc.). Scammers operate primarily via the Internet, email, and phone. For more information, please review our information on [International Financial Scams](#). Information on scams common in your destination country can also be found in each country's [Country Specific Information](#).

Prepare for Emergencies: Leave emergency contact information and a copy of your passport biographic data page with family and trusted friends. Carry emergency contact information for your family in the United States with you when you travel (be sure to also pencil it in the emergency contact information section of your passport). Know the contact information for the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate, and provide that information to your family and friends. If there is an emergency situation where you are staying, such as civil unrest, disrupted transportation, or a natural disaster, prevent undue worry or concern by contacting your family and friends as soon as possible. One sure way to ruin your travel is to lose money because an emergency has forced you to postpone or cancel your trip. Take careful note of the cancellation policies for your travel and consider purchasing travel and luggage insurance. Many credit card, travel and tourism companies offer protection packages for an additional fee.