

Travel Tips for Consultants

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Travel Planning

- Do some research on where you are going to reduce the surprise factor e.g. weather conditions, culture.
- Ask where you will be accommodated. An obvious question if you need to find your own way, but even if you are being met, arrivals forms typically require a statement of where you will be staying.
- Allow time to acclimatise to sudden changes in temperature.
- Is your mobile phone on international roaming or are you going to use a local sim card? Turn off the mobile if not set to global roaming, as your battery will deplete looking for a signal. Turn off location and email functions that might cost big dollars (\$1,000 per week is possible).
- Find out who will be meeting you at the airport/point of entry and what that person's mobile or other contact number is (in case they are not there on arrival).
- If not being met, what safe forms of transport are available to hotel/office? If a taxi, what form of payment and an estimate of likely cost?
- In addition to the obvious passport and visa, carry an appropriate inoculation certificate (e.g. yellow fever).
- Make sure you have adequate insurances in place.
- Make sure you have local emergency contact details and local emergency procedure. Always take emergency contact numbers provided by insurance companies or other such support services.
- Double check all your bookings in particular accommodation and hire car arrangements (do they all tie into the overall itinerary?).
- Back up your relevant folders on your laptop before travelling in case it is stolen.
- Don't forget to arrange regular communication with those left behind at home who may be worrying a lot more about your security than you are!
- Watch the movie *Up in the Air* for travel and packing tips and how not to be a complete dork at security.
- A few hours of language practise may get you a long way.

Visas and Passport Control

- Always have hard copies of your itinerary.
- Always ask if you need a visa or not. Do not assume that you do not need a visa to enter a country.
- Carry a few passport sized colour photos in case you need a *special* visa application or border crossing application or local police clearance certificate.
- Keep a copy of all travel documentation (passport, travel documents) in a safe place and leave a copy with someone back home so they can readily send it through to you if required.

- Keep passport on your person at ALL times. Some countries require a police form to be filled in on arrival and presented on departure. This should be kept with passport and treated as having the same value, as it can be demanded to be shown at any time (e.g. policy roadblocks and outposts) and failure to present may be viewed as indicating illegal entry.
- Always be nice to border control officials
- If you can, get a visa before you go – it reduces the facilitation payments and speeds up transit through immigration, which for some reason always seems to be at midnight local time. Also it saves the problems that arise when the person meeting you with the original of the documentation has not arrived at the airport with the appropriate papers.
- If someone at customs gets acquisitive about an item in your luggage, tell them it's a gift from your grandfather or some such.
- Find out whether hotels are required to mark your stay and ensure that they do, or departure may be difficult.
- Be sure that passport control doesn't *modify* the date on your visa entry stamp. Otherwise they will have little choice but to extract an *overstay tax*, which curiously doesn't come with a receipt...
- Depending on circumstances, consider contacting your embassy in country to let them know what you are doing.

Finances

- Arrive with local or international currency (US Dollars, Euros), including small denominations (taxi drivers never have change). Stash in three separate places.
- Small US\$ notes (preferably \$5 but no more than \$10) are handy for compensation for local assistance or expediting transport or other arrangements
- Currency should be clean and crisp as possible, unclean and folded notes can be rejected by currency exchanges.
- Keep a backup at the hotel, e.g. If you have more than one credit card, take only one card and a small amount of cash when you go out, leaving the rest in the hotel safe.
- In some countries, credit cards are restricted to large hotels and even these may fail if connections with the outside world are dodgy.
- In some countries you will be required to make a list of currency on entry and have to account for expenditure when you leave.
- Carry enough cash for unforeseen emergencies. Debit cards if you don't want to carry cash. Often cannot buy basic medical aid (ie blood or antibiotics) without cash.

Staying Healthy

- If you are prescribed Malarone and are using it as an anti-malarial prophylactic – take it with food as instructed, otherwise it will make you feel sick.
- Carry some first aid supplies, at least some pain killers and immodium or gastrostop . Kits are available from a travel doctor.
- Take adequate supply of any prescription medication in original packaging.
- Never eat seafood when you cannot physically see the sea.

- One doctor advised that “drinking a can of coca-cola every day will kill off any stomach bugs before they become a problem”. This approach will NOT provide sufficient immunisation against a bad oyster.
- Avoid travelling in Eastern direction – jet lag is a killer
- If traveling to Chile, Tibet or any high-altitude destination, learn about altitude sickness.
- Be careful of sunburn, especially at altitude.

What to Take

- Pack lightly, you can always buy an extra if required. The smaller the bag, the less stuff to carry. There will always be a laundry somewhere. You can also take a small container of laundry powder and do your own washing if need be.
- Make sure you take the necessary power plug adapters for the respective countries you are visiting. Also take 2 way adaptors so you can run two appliances off one international adaptor. Do not forget your mobile phone charger!!
- Take a toothbrush and any significant medication in hand luggage. A shirt with a breast pocket will hold passports, boarding pass and any immigration forms.
- Take a light weight waterproof spray jacket. Takes up very little room and is light as a feather. Ideal for heavy rain or bitterly cold weather, and can double as a pillow (you do not need heavy coats unless you expect to spend long hours out in adverse conditions, which are a rarity these days).
- If possible only have hand luggage. If you do put luggage in the hold of the aircraft then make sure you have at least one change of clothes, and your toiletries (remember to have the 100ml fluids in a small plastic bag for international flights) in your hand luggage in case your other luggage gets lost. Note I can take two bags, both just under 7 kg each, into the aircraft for a long overseas trip.
- Try to have all of your reading material on your lap top or a Kindle and do not have masses of hard copies.
- A small light weight weatherproof camera with a spare battery is always handy.
- LED head lamp and spare batteries (for when the government sells your power to a higher paying customer)
- A torch is handy but now I use my mobile phone if I need to find my way in the dark.
- Hat (or beanie), sun glasses are always useful.
- Half roll of toilet paper squashed flat and stored in sealable plastic bag (airport toilets even in business lounges sometimes lack this essential item.) In Africa and Central Asia you may need multiple rolls depending on the length of your trip.
- Strong water container 700ml to 1000ml (dehydration will increase the effects of Jet lag)
- Eye shades and ear plugs (to shut the world out)
- Small good quality collapsible umbrella
- Take a software license token if you will need it.
- If in tropical areas, make sure your luggage is water proof

Air Travel

- Highly recommend noise reduction headphones for long flights...make the world of difference!
- 1 spare socks, jocks and bonds T shirt. (allows you to change and wash the other set when your check in bags are lost)
- Never put the laptop in the hold luggage, & carry your own Ethernet cable.
- Don't lose the stub of your baggage label – most countries employ several people to check tags and bags, and they can be quite persistent if you can't match the two.
- If customs officials try to detain you by getting you to pay an extra fee to exit where ever you are, refuse to pay and then just before the plane leaves remind them that your baggage is on the plane and that you will have to report them to their superiors to explain why they broke international law to allow your baggage to fly unaccompanied. The chap who tried this said it worked a treat.
- If you are in a domestic terminal (concrete hut, two walls and ceiling fan) in a third world country (extremely jet lagged after 30 hours travel) and there is one vacant seat out of 50 and 20 locals standing, don't sit in the vacant seat. There is a good reason even if you can't see it until it poo's on you!

Getting About

- The rule of three. Always ask at least three different people for directions. If two of the three agree then you are probably ok. If not, keep asking!
- In countries where English is not widely spoken never ask yes or no questions....always be specific. For example in India I found that if you asked a person on a train "Is the next station Agra?" invariably there answer would be and enthusiastic "Yes, Yes, Agra" However experience taught me that if you asked the same person "what is the next station?" The answer might also be "Yes, yes" coupled with a lot of nodding. Most probably the only English response that they knew was "Yes" and so you were going to get it no matter what you asked!
- Always allow the driver to smoke when on long trips in these countries. Otherwise they tend to get stressed from nicotine withdrawal and try to overtake a bus that is overtaking a truck, up a hill, on a corner, in the rain doing around 120km/hour on a very narrow two-way road.
- Investigate SPOT (<http://international.findmespot.com/>) style comms devices. GPS based personal trackers with comms capability (generally text). There are a number of variations.
- Vehicle travel is most dangerous. Rapid response First Aid is generally not available.
 - Ensure client company understand your standards
 - Carry personal First Aid packs
 - All staff should have First Aid training sufficient to provide first response

Hotels

It is surprising how frequently fires, earthquakes and tsunamis occur.

- Keep your boots next to the bed so you can find them quickly: it is surprising how much broken glass you come across leaving a burning building.
- Keep a small torch handy by the bed: the power will go out.
- Keep your wallet and passport next to the torch next to the bed: if you lose everything else, you can get by.
- Don't sleep naked!

Security

- Enquire about safety from the hotel staff before going out, they know the area and could provide advice on what to avoid.
- Do not invite problems; leave expensive jewellery and watches at home.
- Avoid getting caught up in strange company or in situations where you may not be in control.
- Carry a set of the important electronic files on a memory stick/portable hard drive in case laptop stolen
- However interesting they are – DON'T take photos of police check points or military installations whilst travelling in-country. This generally makes you very unpopular with your hosts and with the police / military if they see you doing this.
- Keep a list of the electrical equipment (including serial numbers) that you are carrying with you. Some countries get you to make a list and check it as you go in and out. Eritrea requires the serial numbers as well as the equipment.
- When sitting in a public area, place your leg through the straps of your day pack to hinder a snatch and grab.
- Obtain professional security advice if required. Consultants' employers have an obligation to take all reasonable steps as regards health and safety, and should have written policies.
- Daily communications – set up a simple check in procedure "I'm OK" texts. Establish response hierarchy in event of no response. Client, embassy etc.

Tips for women

- Most of these countries don't have readily available supplies of sanitary products and haven't developed sanitary bins (God knows what the local ladies do – the men haven't got a clue) so be prepared!
- I was in Karaganda (Kazakhstan) wearing hiking boots in -40C temperature, with ice on the ground and kept falling over. All of the ladies wore high heels where the narrow heel penetrated the ice and kept them standing.

Attitude

- Last of all take an adventurous spirit with you and enjoy the journey as travel can be a lot of fun no matter how many frustrations and surprises you may experience.

- Enjoy your trip - Other countries and cultures are what make business travel more interesting

Acknowledgements

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