

# MUSC Center for Global Health

## Travel Checklist

What happens if you get sick or hurt while abroad? What if you lose your passport? What if there's an earthquake or political problem in the country where you're traveling? Knowing you have resources to deal with emergencies as they arise takes a lot of the uncertainty out of embarking on a trip overseas.

### Staying Healthy

- Visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) for a list of recommended vaccinations (sometimes mandatory in order to enter the country) and health information for your travel destination.
- Review immunization needs well in advance, allowing enough time for certain vaccines to take effect. Please discuss your travel plans with your primary care physician or the MUSC travel clinic at least three months before your departure to get necessary vaccinations and medications.
- When you return, if you experience any health problems see your personal physician or contact the MUSC Travel clinic noting the destinations you have visited.
- Review MUSC's global assistance insurance package and determine if you need any additional insurance coverage.
- Download the free [International SOS Assistance app](#) to help you find health resources in your destination country.
- Call International SOS to make sure that any prescription medications you take are available & legal in your destination country. Make sure they are in the original container when you travel.

### Passport & Visa

- Obtain any necessary [visas or permits](#) for your destination.
- Ensure your passport is valid for the length of time required for a visa (often six months after your planned departure from your destination). If not, renew it now. Allow at least six weeks to obtain or [renew your passport](#).
- When traveling, carry two extra passport photos separately from your passport and a copy of your passport. Leave a copy with family and friends back in the States.
- If the passport is lost, report the loss to the local police, get written confirmation of the police report and take the above documents to the nearest U.S. consulate (if you are a U.S. citizen) and apply for a new passport. Note that passports cannot be issued immediately abroad and you can expect a delay of anywhere from a few days to weeks.

### Staying Safe

- Think about what dangers and cultural differences you will face abroad, and consider anything you will need to be more careful about.
- Review U.S. Department of State Information specific to your host country. Americans abroad are subject to that country's laws and regulations.
- Consult the [U.S. State Department's website](#) for travel advisories and warnings.
- Smartphone users can download the free [International SOS Assistance app](#) to use before you leave and while abroad.

- [OSAC](#): The Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) provides country specific crime and safety reports, daily news, and U.S. consulate alerts and warnings.
- [Road Safety](#): Information and tips about road safety overseas
- Make photocopies of the credit, debit, and/or ATM cards you take. Leave one copy at home. Seal another copy in an envelope and place it in a secure location in your luggage.
- Inform your bank and credit card companies where and how long you will be abroad to ensure you have adequate access to cash and that your accounts are not suspended due to "suspicious activity."
- If you become the victim of a crime: Seek safety, assess and report the crime, cancel and replace credit/debit cards, and replace a lost passport by contacting the nearest embassy or consulate.
- Make a communication plan. Agree on communication protocols with your program director AND your family and/or emergency contacts. (text, email, Facebook, etc.).

**To avoid attracting unwanted or minimize security risk:**

- Familiarize yourself with local laws and customs.
- Dress appropriately, respecting local laws and customs.
- Learn from locals about unsafe areas.
- Do not carry large sums of money or unnecessary credit cards.
- Do not travel alone at night.
- Avoid dark streets or suspicious persons.
- Report any theft, accident or assault to the authorities.
- Pay close attention when attending large public events or visiting popular tourist sites.

## Culture and Customs

Whether you are planning for a short or long-term trip, it's important to understand the varying cultural, political, religious laws and regulations of the places you will be visiting. You can learn about countries through many resources including websites and other media. Even a basic guidebook can provide information on customs and history. [Culture Crossing](#) is a great resource to learn more about the culture, religion, customs and tradition of people around the globe.

- Prior to your departure, speak with others who have visited the country where you will be going or talk to citizens of the country who are at MUSC.
- Be aware of the differences in etiquette, communication style and, social and business interactions.
- Take the initiative to find learning opportunities both at the hospital and community level.
- Keep a diary or logbook to recording interesting cases and events.
- If you take a camera, always ask permission first to photograph a colleague or patient.
- Learn basic phrases such as "hello" and "thank you" in the local language – it makes a big difference.
- Be aware that in many countries, prolonged greeting exchanges are customary before any business is conducted.
- Even the best laid plans will likely change. Prepare to be flexible with what comes your way. This usually leads to a better experience for you and more useful investment for the partner country.
- Remember that time and punctuality may be viewed differently in other countries, and learn to be patient and flexible.