

# UW-Madison International Safety and Security

## *Considerations to Help You Plan International Travel*

<http://internationaltravel.wisc.edu>

When planning an international learning experience, UW-Madison recommends that safety and security be incorporated into the planning process from the very beginning—when initial steps are taken to identify a destination(s) for the educational experience. Risk is of course present in almost any location—both here at home and around the world—but an undue degree of risk should not be an inherent part of any learning experience undertaken by UW-Madison students, faculty or staff.

The term “undue degree” is vague, but for the university’s purpose, is taken to mean travel to a location that is under a DoS or CDC Travel Warning. For this reason, **the International Travel Policy and Guidelines preclude student travel to a location under a Travel Warning.** The Policy and Guidelines also highly discourage faculty and staff travel to those same locations. Individuals or groups seeking to travel to or through a location under a Travel Warning **may request a waiver to the policy via formal process. This waiver request will be reviewed and considered by the University International Travel Committee (UITC).** By seeking waiver to the policy, the requestor is proposing that the program of study or other educational purpose can be completed and learning achieved without encountering the hazards addressed by the Travel Warning. The waiver request procedure is described in a document entitled “Travel Warning Waiver Request Form”—available on the UW-Madison international travel site and also from campus study abroad program offices.

Whether the contemplated destination is under a Travel Warning or not, it is a proven best practice to plan for the inherent risks of international travel in a knowledgeable and deliberate manner. The “knowledge” part comes from a combination of information and experience in a particular region or location. Information can be accessed a number of ways, many of which are accessible online and linked on the UW-Madison international travel website. “Experience” on the other hand is readily available simply by reading materials or finding the right resources—but it doesn’t have to wait for your own trip to take place. The lessons that come from experiences can be shared by those who have already traveled in the region, country or locale to which you or your group plan to travel. Talk to these people and learn from their shared experiences, ask them several of the questions suggested in this guide. Remember that many of the linked resources available to you are similarly built on experiences—albeit information drawn from the combined experiences of great numbers of travelers.

This document is organized in two distinct parts: first, it presents several questions that hopefully will prompt consideration in the way that each trip is planned and executed. As you plan your travel and incorporate safety and security considerations into your itinerary, ask yourself these questions and let them guide your planning. The second part is an indexed risk management worksheet. This tool

provides a simple self-assessment that may indicate the need for your trip's more objective review by someone to help you plan a safe and secure program of study. It may also indicate that the planned trip that is taking shape may not be as safe and secure as you might hope—remember, the risks of international experiences must be managed to remain in balance with the great learning opportunities they offer. Apply the tool in a frank objective manner to help better understand where your planned trip might require more careful consideration to ensure its learning success—and avoid potential tragedy.

If you would like help finding someone who may have traveled previously to your destination, or have suggestions on how this resource document might be improved, please contact Ron Machoian, the UW-Madison International Safety and Security Director (ISSD), at [rmachoian@bussvc.wisc.edu](mailto:rmachoian@bussvc.wisc.edu).

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**Questions to Guide Planning:** The questions below are offered to help identify your trip's balance between educational opportunity and risk or the gaps that exist in attempts to reach that balance. **For the purposes of this document, risk is defined as an element of heightened threat to travelers due to the physical threat of petty or violent crimes; the presence and activity of terrorist groups; dangerous travel resources either to or within the destination; sanitation or health concerns; or the lack of medical resources.**

Notice that some of the questions below are specific to group travel while others may be more appropriate for individual travel. Translate the intention of the question to your own circumstance. Use these questions to thoughtfully review your program and work to build the trip so that the questions can be answered with confidence prior to traveling:

**1. Overall Itinerary and Planning.** The first overarching question to ask is whether the destination is a location in which specific or unique learning outcomes can be achieved with some elemental experience or resource that cannot be realized similarly at another location—perhaps one with lower risk? If so, at least consider re-planning the program to another destination—remember risk is present everywhere, but heightened or undue risk is NOT a necessary or enriching ingredient for experiential education.

- a. Are there changes to the itinerary that may mitigate risk without removing or diluting learning experiences in a manner that begins to erode the intended outcome?
- b. Are trips to public places and locations that might represent increased risk taken during non-peak times of public visit to the greatest extent practicable?
- c. Have you coordinated plans with recognized local providers or agencies of long standing success that specifically consider and accommodate safety and security practices in the expected environment? (Some countries tourist bureaus or similar agencies will keep a list of recognized and even registered providers who offer a standard of care and diligence – search online for information

on how to contact your destination's country's embassy in the United States or even a nearby consulate office for help finding such information.)

d. Is there an identified plan to accommodate the learning itinerary if any member of the group falls ill or is injured? (This should include an identified secondary leader(s) with knowledge of the program's communications, planning and execution and also an awareness of health and medical resources at each primary location in the itinerary.)

e. Have you developed an emergency plan at each overnight location on your itinerary in concert with in-country hosts or agencies/providers so that you and/or your group will know what to do and how to find help if needed? (e.g., the location of a local police department, a host-country national agency or U.S. or allied consulate, the offices of a recognized non-governmental organization or agency or a major local hospital or large medical clinic)

f. Have all travelers scanned their passports and visas and e-mailed these to a personal e-mail or cloud account that will allow them or a trusted family member easy access in case a passport is lost, destroyed or stolen while traveling? Having the passport information readily available will help you request a replacement through a consulate or embassy while in a foreign country. (To see if your destination country requires a visa for entry, go to the individual country page on the Dept of State's country information site, <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country.html>)

**2. Communications: Generally, have communications both within the travel group and with UW-Madison and other emergency contacts been considered and accommodated by planning?**

a. Is there a communications plan that accommodates necessary coordination during daily unexpected change to the itinerary as well as potential emergencies or crises? This should allow in-country communications between members and from the group to public agencies and the US embassy or consulate as well as communications internationally to UW-Madison and other points of emergency contact.

b. Are communications layered so that removal of one resource (e.g., a single cellular telephone contact) does not isolate the group or any of its members? (This may take the form of home-stays being within short walking distances of one another; internet accessibility in hostels or home-stay residences; third-party providers' company communications plans, etc.)

c. UW-Madison highly encourages all U.S. citizens to enroll in the Dept of State's STEP program for their destination. Non-U.S. citizens traveling abroad under UW-Madison auspices are similarly encouraged to contact their own country's embassy in the destination country to let them know they are there and how they might be contacted if circumstances dictate. (STEP is a resource that offers participants digital updates on changing circumstances at their location to include conditions impacted by violence, natural catastrophes and health concerns among other elements.) Enroll in STEP by visiting the Dept of State's program site: <https://step.state.gov/step/>

d. Have you identified a process by which timely contact will be maintained with UW-Madison throughout your itinerary? (This should include both someone in your organization—e.g., a program coordinator, dept chair or faculty advisor—and also others at UW-Madison who can offer you support in the case of an emergency—such as the coordinating study abroad office or the ISSD.) Try to identify a degree of planned redundancy in your communications if possible—e.g., cellular phone and internet, cellular phone numbers for both the trip leader and a land-line telephone number for a responsible third-party provider, etc.).

**3. Travel: Do travel plans to and from the destination as well as in-country during the learning itinerary consider and mitigate potential risk? Can revision to these plans further mitigate risk to a more acceptable degree?**

a. Do members of the group arrive at the destination together or separately? If separately, are there detailed plans to marshal the group in a safe manner that does not rely on ad hoc taxi services or extended waits in public places?

b. Have you considered alternate plans for local transportation if there are unforeseen delays in commercial air or rail travel that shift arrival times to the middle of the night?

c. Is travel undertaken with recognized agencies or providers that do not unnecessarily expose the group to risk or rely on unknown or shared public resources? For instance, if you intend to rent a taxi, have received a list of known safe taxi companies from the US embassy or a trusted host or third-party provider in-country?

d. Are in-country travel plans redundant to accommodate unexpected challenges such as mechanical breakdowns, flat tires, etc.? (A minimum of two vehicles per group is a standard best practice from a safety and security perspective—the ability to simply crowd into the remaining vehicle if one breaks-down in a rural area is well worth the added cost versus waiting for help for what might be hours—but more than two may attract undue attention and create an attractive target to organized criminal or even terrorist groups.)

**4. Public Resources and Infrastructure:**

a. Is commercial air travel to the destination on a recognized international carrier with a strong safety record? If not, can travel there be arranged on a recognized carrier at a reasonable greater per-ticket cost than perhaps available on a less recognizable or independent regional airline? (Airlines maintenance and training standards are not created equal—you get what you pay for when it comes to commercial travel.)

b. Are local roads and highways going to support the rate of travel at which you've planned your itinerary—or will it take you several hours to travel a distance that in a more developed country would only take an hour or two? This circumstance is common and would demand that you plan for

safe stopover lodging rather than travel at night or arrive at a destination much later in the night than might be safe or desired.

b. Is there a major medical hospital in the country within reasonable transportation distance if someone in your group falls extremely ill or is injured in a manner that requires immediate skilled and resourced attention? (If not accessible quickly--e.g., within one hour--by road at your location, is there timely emergency air service available to a capable hospital in case of an injury that threatens life or limb?)

c. Is the quality of medical care commensurate with your needs and expectations in the event that a member of your group is injured, falls extremely ill or requires unforeseen acute care? If not, remember that you may need to identify an alternate plan in the case you have need for timely quality medical care (e.g., a return to a neighboring country where there is quality care and/or a hospital or large clinic at which your international insurance policy is accepted as payment).

d. Have you worked with your in-country host (or other resources) to identify local medical clinics and ascertained available care (e.g., even for relatively minor required care—such as the closure of a cut or treatment for a badly sprained ankle or fractured bone)?

e. Is rail travel available on segments of your intended route or between destination stops that might be a more secure alternative to travel by bus or other motor vehicle?

# International Risk Management Score

Using the below worksheet, try to frankly assess your own planned trip by answering the questions and applying a numerical value to your answer using the point-range in the right-hand column. Some of the questions simply dictate a specific point entry (e.g., 3 pts) depending on the answer to the question; others ask you to evaluate within a range of points. When point-range is offered, try to make an evaluation of your planned trip given the question's purpose and assess a point value based on the degree to which your trip meets the condition. This is admittedly subjective, but doesn't dilute the value of the exercise: the Risk Management Score worksheet simply attempts to help you assess the risk associated with your planned trip through a quantified framework.

When you have answered all of the questions, total these numbers into a single composite score. This is your International Risk Management score—or IRM. The IRM score will place your planned trip into a range of potential risk illustrated on the spectrum found at the bottom of the matrix.

- If the total score characterizes your trip as **“significant risk,”** then review your planning and attempt to make meaningful changes that mitigate risk where the scores drive your total into that range. It may not be possible to avoid risk entirely but even the awareness that it exists will tend to heighten your attention to surroundings and environment with a positive influence on your safety and security.
- If the total score characterizes your trip as **“high risk,”** then it is strongly recommended that you make significant changes to your itinerary to mitigate risk – and even review the entire purpose for the trip and its balance with intended learning outcomes and experiences.
- It is suggested that the trip be reviewed by someone who is not involved with it otherwise and who also has significant experience in international education. An external observer may review the trip with greater objectivity and help highlight areas of concern or for improvement. The UW-Madison International Safety and Security Director (ISSD) may be asked to provide this sort of review and will offer advice on reducing the trip's risk.

## ASSUMPTIONS:

- Your group will have enrolled in UW-Madison's international health and travel insurance
- Your group will present a pre-departure orientation at which safety, security and health concerns are discussed in addition to cultural considerations and standards of conduct
- You have created a basic emergency plan that is shared with the entire group
- You have created a communications plan and contact information that is given to the group

## International Risk Management Worksheet

<p><b>Travel Itinerary</b></p>	<p>Does the travel itinerary take you into an area that is not only within a Travel Warning but for which there is an advisory entry within the Travel Warning narrative?          (*base the number of points on the Warning’s content and to what degree it impacts your destination and route of travel)</p> <p>US Dept of State:  <a href="http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html">http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html</a></p> <p>CDC:  <a href="http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices">http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices</a></p>	<p>(7 - 10 pts)</p>
	<p>Do all of the members arrive in the destination country and at each location together?</p> <p>If not ...</p>	<p>(3 pts)</p>
	<p>Does your itinerary include more than two modes of travel on the way to the destination (e.g., air, bus, taxi, train)?</p>	<p>(3 pts)</p>
	<p>Does your travel include one or more legs on a regional airline other than in the United States, Canada or Western Europe?</p>	<p>(2 pts)</p>
	<p>Once in-country, does your travel rely on publicly procured transportation such as a public taxi or bus service that is not prearranged?</p>	<p>(3 pts)</p>
	<p>Is a recognized or registered local provider or in-country host agency <u>heavily</u> involved in your planning and trip execution?</p> <p>If not ...</p>	<p>(4 pts)</p>
	<p>Is a significant proportion of your itinerary at public sites or institutions with public access?          (historic sites, museums, sporting events, university conference, etc.)</p>	<p>(5 pts)</p>

	<p>Is a portion of your travel through rural areas with known poor or unimproved roads?  (*base the number of points on the relative amount of time during your trip that you will travel on poor or unimproved roads)</p>	(2 - 4 pts)
	<p>Does your travel rely on a single vehicle for your entire group during any significant portion of the itinerary?</p>	(3 pts)
<b>Communication</b>	<p>Will all or most members of the group have immediate access to a cell phone with an active international calling plan? (At least enough so that each room or home-stay has a working cell phone?)</p> <p>If not ...</p>	(3 pts)
	<p>Will there be any part of the itinerary when the group is separated by design (not including different rooms at the same hotel, dormitory, or hostel)—this includes different work sites, different homestays (even within the same village or at the same general location), dorms in different buildings, etc.--?</p>	(3 pts)
	<p>Will you have internet access throughout the itinerary (this may include satellite access via a cell phone’s international activation?)</p> <p>If not ...</p>	(2 pts)

	<p>Will you have access to cellular phone signals throughout the itinerary? (Meaning that a signal is available during the majority of the time at any planned location—this is a question that can be asked of your in-country hosts or even the US embassy or consulate.)</p> <p>If not ...</p>	(4 pts)
<b>Medical and Health Resources</b>	<p>Are there capable hospitals within a reasonable distance of each location on your itinerary in case of trauma or illness? The term “reasonable” here will depend on your location and available</p>	



	<p>transportation—2-3 hours by vehicle is probably a good rule of thumb to help you define “reasonable” in a developing country for this purpose.</p> <p>(Gauge the points by the proportional number of locations on your itinerary that have hospitals nearby.)</p> <p>If not ...</p>	(3 - 5 pts)
	<p>Are local medical clinics available in the rural areas in which you intend to travel that have the capability to treat minor illness, fractures, sprains, etc.?</p> <p>(Gauge the points by the proportional number of locations on your trip that have or lack capable, modern clinical medical care.)</p> <p>If not ...</p>	(2 - 4 pts)
	<p>Is there a health-related alert or advisory for any location on your itinerary posted by DoD or CDC?</p>	(7 pts)
	<p>Is there an activity of any kind planned during your itinerary that even under conditions at home would be considered “risky” – (rock climbing, single-track mountain biking, hiking over rocky terrain on unimproved trails, etc.)</p>	(5 pts)
	<p>Is clean drinking water readily available (tap, bottled or otherwise—e.g., you must plan to take your own through large portions of your itinerary)?</p> <p>If not ...</p>	(2 pts)
<b>TOTAL</b>		(72 pts max)

<p>Low Risk (1 – 10 pts)</p>	<p>Acceptable Risk (11 – 20 pts)</p>	<p>Significant Risk (21 – 30 pts)</p>	<p>High Risk (31 + pts)</p>
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