International Division
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

UW-Madison International Traveler Checklist

Safety and Security

- Visit the State Department's Country Information page and search for your destination(s). Learn about safety and security concerns, local laws and customs, currency information, entry/exit requirements, required vaccinations, etc.
- Check the State Department's Travel Advisories page, search your destination(s), and read through the current travel advisories.
- Determine the location and contact information of the nearest U.S. Embassy and/or Consulate in case you need assistance.
- Read the latest Embassy and Consulate alerts on the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC)'s website.
- Read the latest OSAC Security Report for your destination(s).
- Print and fill out the State Department's Traveler's Checklist which includes emergency contact information for U.S. citizens.
- Enroll in the State Department's Safe Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP). STEP ensures your trip is registered with your destination's embassy or consulate. Travelers can also receive safety and security updates about their destination(s) sent directly to their phone or e-mail account.
- Follow the State Department's TravelGov accounts on Twitter and Facebook.

Transportation

- Maintain physical copies of your itinerary and any pre-planned flight, train, or bus information.
- Research local transportation options, including public transportation. Read the "Travel and Transportation" section on the State Department's Country Information page for your destination(s). It will offer an overview of transportation options and potential security concerns.
- If you're planning on using a rideshare app while traveling, ensure that the service is operational and safe in your destination country. Talk to your hotel concierge or local host about this.
- Countries may not accept a U.S. driver's license. If planning to drive, travelers may need to consider International Driving Permit (IDP) and supplemental auto insurance. Visit the State Department's Road Safety page to learn more. *Note: Driving in a foreign country can introduce significant liability and judicial risks for even minor traffic accidents – that can prevent your departure for weeks and even months at great expense! Carefully consider other options.*

Passport/Identification/Documentation

- Apply early for a passport if you don't already have one.
- Ensure your passport is valid for **at least six months** beyond when you plan to return home and has at least two blank pages (different countries have different page requirements, which can be found on your destination's State Department Country Information page).
- Ensure your passport photo is current and that your passport is in good condition – if not, get a new one right away, do not travel with a passport that is not in good shape.

- Have multiple forms of ID available while traveling. Avoid storing all forms of ID in one place (i.e. purse, backpack, wallet, etc.).
- Make copies of your passport and important travel documents and upload copies into an accessible password-protected file that you can access while traveling if needed.

Financial

- Ensure you have multiple locally accepted payment methods. Avoid storing all payment methods in one location (i.e. purse, backpack, wallet, etc).
- If you're planning on using a credit or debit card, check to see if cards are widely accepted. Some rural or underdeveloped locations may only be able to process cash.
- Pre-identify local banks, ATMs, or currency exchanges where you can access hard currency.
- Notify your banks and/or payment services that you will be traveling – often this can be done online and will ensure your card is not frozen due to charges made in a foreign country.
- Get insured for medical, evacuation, and other unexpected expenses. *Note: All UW-Madison students, staff, and faculty travelling abroad under a UW-Madison sponsored program are required to enroll in Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI) insurance coverage.*
- Check your account balances often while traveling if able, and change your passwords before traveling and immediately upon your return home.

Medical

- Visit the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s Traveler's Health site. Search for your destination(s). Look for things like current CDC alerts, recommended vaccines, common health concerns, food and water safety, etc.
- Ensure you have enough prescription medication for the duration of your trip. Bring legible copies of your prescriptions that reflect a current date.
- Local laws and regulations regarding medications and prescriptions may be different than the U.S., so check with the local embassy or consulate for more information. Once enrolled in CISI, their medical support resources will help you identify your medication's status in your destination country and research any alternatives that may be required by local laws.
- Research local hospitals, clinics, and emergency services. Look at payment requirements at these facilities as well as what your travel insurance policy will cover and/or reimburse.
- If available, the local emergency service number typically can be found on your destination(s) State Department Country Information page under the "Health" section. *Note: Not all countries maintain emergency services numbers, and even if they do have an emergency service number, response to calls can vary depending on the country or location.*

General

- Research what type of power converters and adapters are required in your destination country. You may need to purchase a converter or outlet adapters ahead of your trip.

- Activate an international calling plan with your cell phone company or purchase a valid SIM card for your destination. Consider purchasing a local burner phone for use on arrival and securing your actual cell phone while there or don't take it with you at all – but plan ahead so you have cell phone connectivity at your destination.
- Update your phone's password and purge any saved information or photos that you would not want to lose or for others to hack into and potentially exploit.
- Remember that a foreign customs officer or other authorities often can take your phone indefinitely under local laws and demand that you provide them with access.
- Consider adding a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to your phone, tablet, and computer to better protect your network connections. VPNs will encrypt your internet traffic and disguise your online identity. However, research your destination to be sure that use of a VPN is lawful in your destination country. In some countries it is not.