

Your Travel Planner

THERE'S NOTHING BETTER THAN ANTICIPATING A HOLIDAY ABROAD. WHETHER YOU'RE PLANNING ON LAZING THE TIME AWAY ON A BEACH IN BALI OR LANDING IN A BIG EUROPEAN CITY FOR SIGHTSEEING AND SHOPPING, A LITTLE PRE-TRIP PREPARATION WILL ENSURE THINGS GO SMOOTHLY. THESE HANDY TIPS WILL GET YOU OFF TO A GOOD START. BE SURE TO CHECK THEM OFF YOUR LIST. THEN GO.



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Visas & Insurance

Do you need a visa? Rules are constantly changing so don't simply assume that you won't need a visa. A quick check with the embassy of the country you plan to visit will give you a definitive answer. You may also want to visit <http://visalink.com.au> for a quick requirements check if you plan to visit more than one country. Organise your visa several weeks – in some cases, months! – before your travel date. You can apply for some visas online, but for certain countries you may need to rely on snail mail. As a general rule of thumb, the more 'unusual' or remote your travel destination, the sooner you should think about applying for your visa.

Check specific entry requirements for your destination. Visas may not be your only consideration. Some countries may require you

to have at least 12 months remaining on your passport instead of the usual six months. You should always make sure you have at least six months remaining on your passport from your date of departure.

Make sure your travel insurance is valid for each day of travel (including your departure and arrival date), that it covers you for any extreme sports or activities that you might be undertaking; and you should take all relevant documentation away with you.

In case of theft, keep copies of your passport, visas, insurance policy and any other important information separate from your originals. Consider storing copies digitally – either by emailing them to yourself or by using a 'cloud' system such as Dropbox.

Health & Safety

Don't take your health for granted – book a check-up with your doctor and/or a travel doctor at least six to eight weeks before you travel. Also, if you've been putting off that trip to the dentist, now is a good time to go.

Do your own research to find out the potential health risks you could be exposed to at your destination and whether you require vaccinations or a vaccination certificate before you go.

Find out before leaving if you can drink the local water. If you have to drink bottled water and you'd rather not contribute to plastic bottle landfill, take your own water bottle and purifying tablets.

As well, try to be aware of mosquito-prone areas. Cover up, use repellent and a mosquito net when sleeping.

Even if rabies is not a concern in the country you are visiting, thoroughly clean any animal bites with soap and water, and seek immediate medical attention.

Be sun smart: you wouldn't leave home without a bottle of water, hat and sunscreen in Australia during the warmer months, would you? So why do it abroad?

Always visit your local doctor on your return if you feel unwell or notice any unusual symptoms. If you have a pre-existing injury or medical condition it might be worth finding out the address of the nearest hospital or specialist in the area you're travelling to. You may also consider joining IAMAT (www.iamat.org), the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers. For a small donation you can receive a list of English-speaking doctors in member countries.



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Handy Tips

Packing

- Pack any prescription medication in your hand luggage and keep it in its original packaging to avoid delays at the airport.
- Remember that less is more when packing. Try to take only items that have multiple uses and leave room in your suitcase for purchases (especially if you are heading to France, Italy or New York!).

Staying connected

- Set up global roaming on your phone before you leave or, better still, buy a local SIM card on arrival – it will save you a packet! If local SIM cards aren't compatible with your mobile you can buy prepaid phones fairly cheaply in most major destinations.
- Disable the (expensive) data-roaming feature on your mobile and get online at public wi-fi spots instead.
- Save money by using your laptop or tablet to call overseas via Skype, FaceTime or Google Chat.

Travelling with children

- When booking your flight, only choose bulkhead seats if your baby will need, and fit into, a bassinet. Armrests are immovable in the bulkhead and older children will not be able to lie down.
- If possible, plan your flight schedule, car or bus journey to fit in with your child's sleep pattern. If you are flying over multiple time zones, consider a stopover to minimise jet lag.
- Take plenty of snacks and drinks for the kids to avoid dehydration and low-blood-sugar meltdowns.

Countdown Calendar

Four weeks to go

- Check that you have all the essential documentation: up-to-date passport; visas; travel insurance; itinerary and plane tickets; and that you have stored copies.
- Reconfirm any house-sitter or pet-care arrangements.
- Inspect your luggage to make sure it doesn't need replacing.

Two weeks to go

- Do a trial pack. This will highlight anything that might be missing from your packing list.
- Call the bank or your credit card company to let them know you will be travelling overseas.

One week to go

- Repack and leave out non-essential items.
- Ensure your luggage meets airline size and weight requirements.
- Leave a copy of your itinerary with a family member or friend.
- Double-check your itinerary and reconfirm flights, accommodation and any transfers.

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Hints & Tips from

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- Buy travel insurance as soon as you've booked your flights – this will protect you if you have to cancel your flights unexpectedly.
- Check that the level of cover suits your needs; you might be surprised at how much it costs to increase your level of cover.
- Hiring a car? HBF Travel Insurance covers you for up to \$3000 hire-car excess waiver, so you may not need to buy the waiver through the car-hire company.
- Do you take regular medication? Make sure you have enough to last the whole holiday, and a little more – don't forget your disposable contact lenses too!
- Take a basic first-aid kit and then tailor it for your destination, for example by adding water purification tablets.
- Give yourself plenty of time to check with your doctor if they recommend any special vaccinations or other medical advice for where you're going and what you're planning to do, especially if you're doing something a bit out of the ordinary.
- It's a good idea to get into good shape before you go as you'll probably be doing more physical activity than normal. Also, see your physio or podiatrist if you tend to experience problems from too much walking.
- Most importantly, holidays are special, make sure you have a good time and come home happy and healthy.
- HBF's Pocket Health App lets you store important details like vaccinations you've had, your blood type, allergies and medication, so you have this important information at your fingertips. Download the app and update your health records before you leave – it's available FREE on the iTunes App Store today.

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