

International Travel Tips

FINAL ITINERARY

The listed departure time is accurate; the arrival time is subject to possible transportation delays, etc. The activities listed on the itinerary are those which have been arranged for your group. It is possible that the timing of some activities could be rearranged. You should have two copies of your final itinerary so you can take one with you and leave one at home.

DON'T OVERPACK

We ask passengers to limit luggage to one checked suitcase per person and one carry-on bag. As a good rule-of-thumb, pack a suitcase with only what one expects to wear or need. The keynote when packing is comfort. However, non-essential garments should be kept to a minimum, thereby lightening the load and enhancing personal comfort while in transit. The same rule applies to carry-on bags, as the passenger must keep this in their own possession. In addition, airlines have become very strict about the size of carry-on luggage. It MUST fit under the plane seat or the over-head compartment.

Keep in mind that the airport security regulations require each person to check-in their own luggage and respond to security questions about their bags. Also, passengers are required to claim their luggage at their destination and continue with it through Customs. Therefore, passengers will be required at certain times to lift and/or carry their own luggage. For those times, lighter is better.

CURRENCY

United States Dollar travelers' checks are the best protection for carrying money while abroad. We suggest that travelers do not carry large amounts of cash. Be advised that personal checks are almost impossible to cash abroad. Many establishments accept credit cards such as American Express, MasterCard and Visa. The rate of exchange will be the date the transaction is posted or billed to the credit card as opposed to the actual purchase or transaction date. Overseas, the best exchange rate for the U.S. Dollar is usually found at a bank. For a small fee, a United States bank with an International Department can exchange money for a traveler prior to a traveler's departure, and foreign currency bills (not coins) upon the traveler's return. Travelers may wish to buy some foreign currency before departing and exchange money as required once they are at their destination (please keep in mind that most banks are closed on weekends, on Good Friday and on Easter Monday). As ATMs vary widely overseas and a U.S. ATM card may not always be accepted, we recommend that travelers do not rely solely upon an ATM for travel funds.

GUIDE / TOUR ESCORT / TRAVEL MANAGER

Many programs have a local guide and/or escort assigned to your tour. A guide is with you to provide specific information about your destination, while an escort (who may also be your guide) is there to assist you with the logistics of your program. A gratuity is appropriate if you feel that he/she has done a good job and made an honest effort for your tour.

TIPPING

We cannot always reward special people who service your group in advance because we can't identify them ahead of time! Tips to hotels, restaurants, etc., are always handled in advance, but if you feel your local guide, for instance, has done a good job, than a gratuity would be appreciated.

CUSTOMS

As a United States citizen returning from an international destination, each person is allowed \$800 worth of retail purchases duty (tax) free, including one liter of liquor for each person over 21 years of age. For foreign made articles over the \$800 exemption, a traveler will pay a duty according to the U.S. Customs classification of the merchandise. A booklet on U.S. Customs hints entitled 'Know Before You Go' is available from a local U.S. Customs office.

DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

If a traveler has not already done so, we encourage a traveler to secure their United States Passport immediately to avoid any last minute delay. Also, a traveler's passport, as suggested by the U.S. government, should be valid for six months after a traveler's return to the U.S. Infants traveling require U.S. passports as well. In addition, any minors traveling without one or both parents are required to present notarized permission for travel from the absent parent(s). Non-U.S. citizens should check with their consulate for documentation requirements.

Expired Passports are NOT accepted. A traveler's tickets and other travel documents must match the name as it is listed on the passport: first, last and middle initial. For more information on passports, Visit the U.S. Department of State Passports and Services Information.

ELECTRICAL CURRENT

Electrical current used overseas is 220 volts, whereas the U.S. operates on 110 volts. If a traveler chooses to use American appliances such as electric shavers, irons, hairdryers, etc., he/she will also need an adapter plug to connect the appliance to the socket, as well as a converter to convert the voltage. Most major U.S. electronic and department stores sell converter and/or adapter sets.

ETC.

If you wear glasses, be sure to pack an extra pair if you have them...it's a good idea to pack necessities of life in your carry-on bag in case your luggage doesn't arrive when you do...make sure you do not pack your ID in your checked suitcase...if you must take any medication with you, be sure it's in the original container, and take a copy of the prescription with you.

RECOMMENDED TRAVEL ITEMS

You may find it useful to bring along some items:

- A washcloth (most European hotels do not supply them in the bathroom).
- A small calculator for converting currency.
- A calling card for phone calls home – it will be less expensive than calling direct.
- If you must take any medication with you, be sure it's in the original container, and take a copy of the prescription.
- A lightweight jacket or sweater for cooler evenings.
- Travel-size appliances with dual voltage such as a shaver or hair dryer (an adapter plug will still be needed).
- A voltage converter and plug adapter for U.S. voltage appliances.
- Plastic zip-lock bags. Make sure all liquid items, lotions, etc. are encased in waterproof bags (i.e., zip-lock bags); double-bagging is ideal. Lids can pop open during your trip and spill liquids into your luggage.

find more to discover...