

## **Being a savvy traveler:**

Notes from the presentation given by Dr. Renberg

IVSA meeting, November 2009

### Logistics:

-Important documentation to have: visa, passport, invitation (occasionally formal invitations are needed)

-It is helpful to have a travel agent who knows the destination area well to give you some advice or to have someone to meet you once you arrive so you don't become lost and vulnerable in an unfamiliar country. (If someone is meeting you, make sure you discuss how you'll be able to identify them, where and when you're going to meet, and always have a backup plan in case you can't find each other or your travel plans suddenly change. Always exchange phone numbers!)

-Housing: try to set this up before you travel. Make sure you research all your options.

-Figure out costs! Don't forget about ground transportation once you arrive at your destination—it can be a large added expense to your trip. Also, take a little extra money for souvenirs.

-Stay healthy while you travel. Do you have an international health plan? Some insurance companies offer these if your current one does not. Make sure you ask about policies before you travel. Take your prescription papers with you! Also, prevent illness/accidents by watching what you eat and drink, avoiding large crowds and dark areas—ask your host places to avoid, and making smart, safe choices throughout your travels.

-Be realistic with your time abroad: plan what you want to see, talk to your travel partner(s) about what they want to see/do, and understand that sometimes you won't be able to do it all.

### **Positive Impression**

-Don't do the wrong thing! That's much easier said than done. Watch out for the country's differences in: culture, dress, and mannerisms. Please respect these differences!!! In order to fit in better and in an effort not to offend any locals, be observant and follow the example that they set. Good examples: Pictures and bribes. In some cultures it is rude and inappropriate to take photos of certain things. Make sure you ask a local or your tour guide before you snap a picture. Be especially careful when taking pictures of people. The public may be sensitive to having their picture taken. Also, in some countries bribes are an acceptable way to make a deal. Often times even government workers will take bribes if you find yourself in an unfortunate situation.

-Do the right thing! Gifts that represent your homeland will be much appreciated by the locals. Bring a few small trinkets to pass out to people that help you out along the way. Language can often be a

barrier between you and the natives. Since usually it's almost impossible to learn the entire language before you travel just focus on a few important words that you will need while traveling. A few important words to learn: thank you, hello, goodbye, airport, hotel, telephone, etc. A phrase book is especially helpful, so you can point to what you're trying to say. Food is a wonderful difference between nations—try it if it looks safe enough to eat. Don't make unhealthy choices, but don't just eat at McDonald's :) Finally, make sure you participate in the new culture! It's a great way to make memories.

### **Don't stand out**

-Respect the local language. Try to learn words and phrases.

-Watch what you wear and respect cultural dress. What are the locals wearing? For example, if you're a woman and all the local women are dressed very modestly, don't walk around in shorts and a tank top. Also, avoid the "all American tourist" look—Hawaiian shirt, shorts, socks with sandals, etc. You get the idea!

-Be careful with the attitude you portray. Never make people of another nation feel inferior and never brag about what all you have at home. Just be respectful.

-Don't be loud and obnoxious! It is a well-known fact that Americans are the loudest people in the world. Try to keep your voice down when you're in public.

### **Preparation**

-CDC website tells you what vaccines you need for traveling to a certain country. Especially look out for malaria when you travel to certain parts of the world. \*The best vaccines to get when you travel anywhere: Hepatitis A&B, Typhoid, and tetanus. You may need a sequence of vaccines that could take up to a year to cover, so give yourself a lot of time and plan ahead.

-[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) –state department website

-CIA website: [www.cia.gov/library](http://www.cia.gov/library)

-Travel insurance: does your insurance cover you overseas? ALWAYS get evacuation insurance to get you out of that country and back home, and always ask for the proper procedure you need to follow if this were to happen. Will you drive while you are overseas? Do you need to look into car insurance?

-Money: cash conversion and credit cards. Most cash exchange stations at the airport tend to rip you off. See if your local bank has an exchange program. Call your credit card and let them know where you're going and the dates you'll be there.

-Pack enough but not too much. Will you be able to wash your clothes while you're overseas? If you take electronics you probably need converters and adapters. Try to keep your luggage small and compact.

-Travel modes in-country. Know what "official" taxis look like so you don't get yourself into a danger!!!

-Photocopy EVERYTHING that is in your wallet!!!! Credit cards, passport, ID, etc. and leave one set in safe hands at home and hide another set somewhere on you.

-Know what kind of communication there is over there—is there email available? Do you need to purchase a phone card?

-Set up an itinerary—know your layovers and how much time you need between flights. Let your family or a friend know your itinerary and when you will contact them to make sure that you made it.

### **In country**

-Rest when you can. Things can get very hectic and exhausting when you travel.

-Don't overpromise—don't tell people you'll communicate or visit when you can't.

-If you're overseas for professional reasons: take a copy of your vet license, know what procedures are allowed in the country you're going to, know what drugs you'll have available to you. Also make sure that you know that countries (foreign) animal diseases!!! Ex. If you're in a FMD country, buy cheap shoes and leave them there, etc.

\*evaluate yourself: be aware of your biases, know how flexible you'll be

\*think about the presentations you can create afterwards, to share with your classmates.