



Ready, Set, Go!

8 Essential “To-Do’s” Before You Travel Abroad

GeoVisions

2017 Edition

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Introduction

Are you ready for that trip of a lifetime?

Whether it's working abroad, volunteering abroad, doing an internship overseas or designing your own GeoVisions "my way" program, the amount of preparation you do before getting on the plane will make a big difference in your experience. Take the extra time now to prepare and plan, so you can maximize your time abroad. Wandering through side streets and munching on local delicacies sounds like a lot more fun than worrying about why your phone won't connect to a foreign network.

To help you get prepared, our staff have put together a checklist of things to keep in mind before heading to the airport. We hope you enjoy this e-book and no matter who you decide to work with on your travel goals or when you decide to go abroad ... we hope this publication will be the perfect start for you

#SeekExperiences

Experiences are more important than landmarks.

Our reasons for traveling have changed over the years. We have learned that many travelers expect to volunteer in the country they visit. And, they want to work there, too.

Furthermore, when they return home, they expect — and are reaping — tangible personal and professional benefits from their time abroad.

You will find our community on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) and through the hashtag, [#SeekExperiences](#).

In this e-book, [content in this color](#) is a clickable link to a web page.

#SheSeeks

We celebrate solo women travelers through the hashtag [#SheSeeks](#). If you are a woman and traveling solo, we want to share your journey and adventures with everyone else that are part of the GeoVisions family and beyond!

Women who travel solo and seek out adventure on their own should not be scrutinized; they should feel empowered to make these decisions that lead to invaluable life experiences. The answer to encouraging more women to travel or hike alone safely is through education, preparation and making the destination an overall safer place.

Chapter 1

Get A Passport

If you already have one, you'll need a few blank pages before you depart

Before you can **start collecting colorful stamps from all over the world**, you need somewhere to put them. **Start your passport application several months before your flight date**, especially if you need visas from foreign embassies. While the passport process is usually pretty simple, sometimes bureaucratic matters get in the way and cause everything to take much longer than you thought.

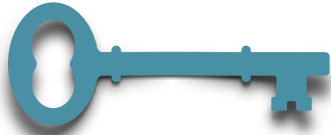


[Get a passport](#)

Most likely, you will need to apply in person at your local passport agency or local post office. Be prepared to provide

- proof of citizenship,
- an extra form of identity,
- and recent document photos.

Check your local office for specific requirements before you head in to fill out that application! If you're from the US, you can [check the requirements online](#) and also see the types of photos that will be allowed.



As soon as you receive your passport, make a couple of copies of the front page. Take one copy with you when you travel, and leave another copy with someone you trust back home. Worst case scenario, if your passport gets stolen, this will help you out a lot.

And if you do already have a passport, double-check the expiration date! Even with a valid passport, most countries deny entry if it is due to expire within three to six months of travel. Travel plans have a tendency to change, and who wants to get stuck in Uzbekistan or Belarus (or even France, for that matter) because they cannot board an airplane with an expired ID?

Chapter 2

Get Any Necessary Visas

It's tedious and can take a while



Give yourself plenty of time if you need a visa.

Visa specifics vary for every country.

Do some research and find out if your country of destination requires a visa. At GeoVisions, we will help you obtain certain documents that will be necessary for the type of visa required. But we can't take care of the actual visa for you. There are times you need to go in for an interview.

What kind of visa will you need? Sixty percent of the world's countries require visas for any length of stay, most of these as a regular visitor's visa. However, if you will be an au pair, an intern or do some teaching longer than 3 months, you might have to sign up for a **student visa or a non-immigrant visa**. If you are planning to work, you will need a **work visa** (though you may be able to **work abroad without a visa**, too).

In addition, some countries have different approaches to visas: in [the United Kingdom](#), there are several **Tiers** of visas that you will need to declare. In [Australia](#), you have the option of a **working holiday visa**. The types of this necessary evil are vast; GeoVisions will help with certain documents. But in the end, only you can actually apply for your visa.

Apply early for visas. If you get frustrated while waiting in line at the bank or super market, just think about how long it can take for government institutions in several countries to get something done. Embassy addresses and phone numbers can be found on [GoAbroad.com's Embassy and Consulate Directory](#). Give yourself plenty of time if you need a visa.

Chapter 3

Visit The Doctor

This step might not be fun, but just think about how much more tedious it can be to go get a check-up or tooth cleaning in a country where you don't speak the language and the "office" is an untidy corner in someone's living room. **Get a medical check-up and a tooth-cleaning**, so that you can run among the lions and lick those gelatos without any worries in the back of your head.



Get a medical check-up

Also, be sure to **check any necessary vaccinations** that you might need. This is more common with third-world countries, where there are pesky diseases such as bird flu, chikungunya, dengue, malaria, typhoid fever, or zika. Believe me, these aren't fun and *will* interrupt your planned trek to Machu Picchu or hike up Kilimanjaro. Get on top of your shots! Try not to leave this until the last minute either, as some vaccinations need a week or two to kick in fully (plus, who wants to board a plane when their arm feels like it's swarming with medical bees?).

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) has a great website that offers the most up-to-date information regarding vaccinations and shots that are needed or recommended.

Chapter 4

Find Out How To Communicate With Home

Your family will want to know you made it.

Even if you're going on a trip to get away from it all, it's always good to know your options (for when you do end up in that dentist chair or get that unwanted mosquito bite). Plus, it's nice to call and tell Mom and Pop that you made it to the other side of the ocean.



[Find out how to communicate with home.](#)

With modern technology, this is easier than ever. Try **free services** that you can use with an internet connection (such as Skype, WhatsApp or Viber) anywhere in the world. Check your cell phone plan; some can be activated abroad, but most will not function in other countries unless you buy a plan before departing. If you're not thrilled with the idea of buying and carrying around a phone card, check into the **SIM card** capabilities of your phone. GSM phones are SIM-card approved, which means that you can switch it out in every country (as long as the network is unlocked), which is great. With CDMA phones, it might be a bit more tricky.

Chapter 5

Get Insured

Whether it's health security, baggage protection, or travel insurance, **make sure that you are covered while abroad.** If you are traveling with an organized program, these usually offer you the option of buying an insurance package; if you do not have your own international coverage, these are great options.

You can find reliable, reputable travel insurance options on [GoAbroad.com's Travel Insurance page](#).



Chapter 6

Develop A Budget

This is particularly helpful if you will be spending extended time abroad with a work or volunteer program, like GeoVisions. **Research the cost of living** in that particular country, and see where your expenses will go every month: accommodation, food, transportation, entertainment. If you are merely taking a personal trip, make an educated guess about how much you will be spending on hotels, excursions, dinners out, etc.

Most GeoVisions programs include accommodation and some include your meals if you're living with a host family. If a GeoVisions program does not include accommodation and meals, you're earning money so you can easily afford to pay for your room and board.

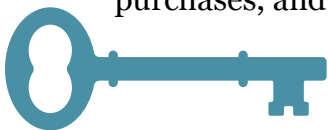
GeoVisions Programs With Free Room And Board

- Tutor English to a Host Family
- Volunteer Teach
- International Au Pair
- Walk and Talk Italy and Walk and Talk Spain

On **GeoVisions paid teach programs**, you are earning enough money to pay rent and buy food and have money left over. On the **Summer Camp Counselor programs**, some meals are included and all accommodation is included.

Regardless, **be realistic** about the expenses and take more money with you than you think you will use. Not only because sometimes two glasses of *vino verdhe* will turn into three, but emergencies and unexpected opportunities always arise. Be prepared.

One more money tip: usually, it will be cheaper to use your credit card abroad for more purchases, and just take one big stack of cash out for cash-only purposes (street carts, bus fare, indie shops, tips). ATM fees add up! We arrive and use our ATM once a month to pull cash from cash machines.



Chapter 7

Learn About Your Destination

No matter how cool and open-minded you are, **you're probably going to experience culture shock** (they eat *what?!*). No amount of research is going to change that.



Culture shock is a common phenomenon and, though it may take months to develop, it often affects travelers and people living far from home in unexpected ways. Culture shock is more than simply being unfamiliar with social norms or experiencing new foods and it tends to impact travelers even after they've become familiar with and comfortable in new cultures.

Culture shock generally moves through four different phases: **honeymoon, frustration, adjustment and acceptance**. While individuals experience these stages differently and the impact and order of each stage varies widely, they do provide a guideline of how we adapt and cope with new cultures.



[Read up and research the destination.](#)

However, it's always good to go prepared so that your time abroad can be spent exploring and enjoying instead of flipping through guide books. Research the places you want to visit, festivals that happen during the time you'll be there, and events that you can participate in.

In addition, **read up about the culture**. If the country is more traditional, maybe you will need to pack accordingly. If someone greets you with three kisses on each cheek, you will not take a big step back.

Furthermore, **do memorize a few basic phrases** in the language of your destination country. Hopefully, you will pick up many more words while there, but coming at least with a “*ciao!*” will make a good first impression (and will make asking for the loo a lot less awkward than pantomiming it).

Chapter 8

Pack

You won't need make-up in Nepal, your blow dryer won't work in Madrid, you'll probably never use your baseball glove in Botswana, and you can buy cheap sweaters in Ecuador.

Pack light!

Research your destination in advance, find out what kind of items you must bring (for example, mosquito netting or tampons) and find out what items you can purchase cheaply there. Leave extra space in your luggage for souvenirs!



Pack adequately

Invest in practical luggage; unless you're going to spend your entire time in a resort, you'll probably be doing quite a bit of walking on your travels (weekend trips, at least!). Get a sturdy backpack and something that you can carry around easily, whether that is through bustling crowds of London or through dense jungles of Brazil.

Friendly reminder: don't forget to **pack a dose of patience and flexibility** alongside the sunscreen and camera!

To conclude ...

Now that you have organized paperwork thoroughly, completed the bureaucratic procedures, dusted off that high school bilingual dictionary, and wrapped up everything you need, you're ready! **The adventure awaits, eager to excite and throw some challenges your way.** As a savvy traveller, you will embrace whatever comes, be open to growth, make the most of the experience, and conquer the world. Just don't forget your passport at home!

Always have a Plan B. If you're not thrilled with your housing, the food is way off the charts from what you're used to, or you feel frustrated because of a language barrier, go to Plan B. Remember, on a work or volunteer abroad program, you are there to leave a little of "you" behind and make the world a better place. If your motivation is all about you, then we encourage you to rethink what you're attempting to do.