



MISSION TRIP CHECKLISTS

FOR HOUSE OF WORSHIP ACCOUNTS



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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MISSION TRIP PREPARATIONS

Mission trips with destinations outside the U.S. provide people the opportunity to learn about new cultures, build meaningful relationships, and offer needed services.

The key to safe, valuable, and fulfilling mission travel is preparation. When volunteers are prepared, they are more likely to have a good experience and to want to volunteer again. These checklists, though not all-inclusive, will assist individual travelers and house of worship leaders as they prepare congregation members for a successful mission trip.

FOR INDIVIDUAL TRAVELERS

PASSPORTS

- Getting a passport generally takes four to six weeks, but can sometimes take longer, so plan ahead. If you have a passport, confirm that is current and will not expire for at least three months after the trip is scheduled to conclude.
- Research entry/exit visa requirements for the destination country, and have the necessary documents in hand in advance if possible. This will reduce the chance of long delays at entry points.
- Some countries are very strict on visa categories, specifically prohibiting volunteer activity on a tourist visa, so U.S. citizens should review their status with the sponsoring organization prior to entering the destination country.
- Find information on passports and visas, including entry and exit requirements in the country-specific sections of the U.S. State Department's website at www.state.gov/

VACCINATIONS AND IMMUNIZATIONS

- At least four to eight weeks prior to departure, confirm that all required immunizations have been completed. Your physician should complete a vaccine administration record (available on the Centers for Disease Control website).

PACK FOR SAFETY

- To help avoid becoming a target, do not dress in a way that could mark you as an affluent tourist; modest apparel is the goal.
- Avoid clothing with the names of American institutions or sports teams. Clothing displaying information indicating you are American could bring unwanted attention because criminals might assume four things about visiting Americans:
 - You have money.
 - You likely don't speak the language or know how to summon help.
 - You probably won't be present to testify against them in court if they're caught.
 - Your organization will be willing to pay a ransom for your return.

LIMIT VALUABLES AND SECURE THEM

- Carry the minimum number of valuables that you feel are essential. Establish a plan to conceal valuables while traveling.
- While the State Department suggests your passports, credit cards, and cash are most secure when locked in a safe, many security experts suggest they are safer:
 - On your person, in a pouch worn under your clothing
 - In a sturdy shoulder bag with the strap worn across your chest

SPARE GLASSES AND PRESCRIPTIONS

- If you wear glasses, bring an extra pair and your eyeglass prescription.
- To avoid problems when passing through customs, keep any medications in their original, labeled containers.
- If you have a chronic medical condition, carry extra prescription medication in case of a delay in returning home.
- Have copies of your prescriptions along with the generic names for the drugs.

COPIES OF IMPORTANT PAPERS

- Make two photocopies of your passport identification page, airline tickets, driver's license, and any credit cards you plan to take with you.
- Leave one copy of this information with family or an emergency contact at home. Keep the second set of copies somewhere not on your person.
- Pack an extra set of passport photos to make replacement easier if it gets lost or stolen.

LUGGAGE LABELING PROTOCOL

- Put name, address, and telephone number both inside and outside each piece of luggage.
- Keep information to a minimum and use your first initial and your surname.
- Use your house of worship's address and phone number, but do not identify your organization.
- Use covered luggage tags on the outside to avoid casual observation of your identity or nationality.
- Use nylon cable or zip ties to secure your checked luggage; they're hard to tamper with and any tampering will be obvious.

GROUP SECURITY PLAN PROTOCOL

- Upon arrival in the destination country, follow all policies and procedures in the group security plan.
- Always travel in groups and avoid studying maps and displaying money in public.
- Visitors should ask the host missionary group about

places to avoid and cultural norms to observe.

- Always practice "situational awareness." Be alert to your surroundings and have a plan of action if something goes wrong.

PERSONAL FIRST AID KIT

- Prepare and carry your own first-aid kit. The CDC recommends including:
 - Antiseptic.
 - Bandages
 - Elastic-wrap bandages
 - Tweezers
 - Scissors
 - Digital thermometer
 - Anti-bacterial and anti-fungal ointments
 - Hydrocortisone cream
 - First-aid quick-reference card

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

- Provide your group leadership with, and keep on your person, a list of emergency contacts.

DRIVING IN DESTINATION LOCATION

- If you expect to rent or drive an automobile in the destination country, get an international driver's license.
- Investigate local driving laws and requirements.

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FOR LEADERS

CREATE MISSION TRIP PLANNING COMMITTEE

- People leading mission trips should be experienced in international mission work and familiar with the location to which group will travel.

ESTABLISH HIGH-LEVEL GOAL OF TRIP

- There are many reasons that houses of worship plan mission trips. They may include:
 - Assisting victims of natural disasters.
 - Providing medical care to areas where treatment is sub-standard or non-existent.
 - Assisting individuals suffering from religious persecution.
 - Other goals that reflect the mission of the congregation.

SELECT DESTINATION THAT ALIGNS WITH MISSION GOAL

- Research destination security risks.
 - The State Department maintains current information on many countries, including terror alert and warning levels, specific entry requirements, and general information on variety of country-specific topics at travel.state.gov. The website also includes information about passports, visas, required immunizations, and entry fees.
 - All participants should register their trip in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), so an embassy can contact them in the event of a family emergency, changing conditions in the travel area, or if group members are victims of crime or have other legal issues.
 - All participants should be provided contact information for the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate, along with information about what services officials they can provide

- Research destination health risks. Centers for Disease Control maintains a website with information about:

- Potential health risks and precautions for over 200 countries at <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>.
- Which vaccinations are routine, recommended, and required for a specific destination.
- How to eat and drink safely.
- How to reduce the chances of getting insect-borne diseases,
- How to keep your group safe during mission travel.

PROVIDE HIGH-LEVEL COMMUNICATION OF MISSION TRIP TO CONGREGATION

- Brochures and fliers.
- Bulletin boards
- E-mails or group texts.
- Website

SCHEDULE DETAILED INFORMATION MEETING FOR THOSE INTERESTED

DISTRIBUTE APPLICATIONS/SET DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF APPLICATIONS

- Evaluate team member qualifications
 - Each member of the mission group must authorize a criminal background and reference check, as well as agree to complete cultural sensitivity training.

SELECT MISSION TRIP MEMBERS

- Each mission trip participant should be pre-qualified with these eligibility requirements:
 - Physical examination by a licensed physician to verify health status commensurate with demands of mission work.

- Vaccination requirements.
- Proof of international travel or health insurance.

DISTRIBUTE MISSION TRIP INDIVIDUAL CHECKLIST, CONSENT FORMS, ETC., TO TEAM

- Get signed parental approval forms for any minors and liability releases for each adult.
- Assumption of risk form
 - The house of worship's attorney should draft an assumption of risk form, in which risks are clearly described and assumed by adult participants.
 - Parents cannot assume risks on behalf of their children, but can sign a form allowing their child's participation and authorizing a designated person to make emergency medical decisions.

ESTABLISH MISSION TRIP BUDGET

ESTABLISH COST PER TEAM MEMBER AND COLLECT NON-REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT

CONFIRM THAT ALL TEAM MEMBERS HAVE, OR APPLIED FOR, A PASSPORT

PLAN FUNDRAISING EVENTS

COMMUNICATE WITH CONTACTS AT DESTINATION

- Group leaders should communicate with missionaries and house of worship leaders in the destination area, who are valuable resources for cultural information, local laws, the availability of safe drinking water, etc.

CREATE CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN

- Travelers should be adequately informed of potential risks and should be trained in crisis management. Mission Policies should include information and plans of action for medical contingencies, security, group

communication, evacuation, terrorism/political unrest, behavior and dress guidelines, misconduct, stress management, and conflict resolution.

MEDICAL TREATMENT CONTINGENCIES

- Having member of the group with medical training should be a high priority for mission organizers; quality medical care is not available at all destinations.
- Trip participants should be provided with location of nearest hospital or medical facility and preset plans for transporting injured or ill group members and communicating with non-English speaking medical providers.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION PLAN

- Group leaders should create an emergency communication plan and designate a person in the U.S. to relay accurate information to families and/or the media.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

- The group (or each group member) should purchase a travel insurance policy. Many domestic insurance policies do not extend internationally or do so on a limited basis.
- Medical coverage on policies should include:
 - Hospitalization
 - Medical care in case of illness or accident
 - Emergency air evacuation for medical reasons
 - Repatriation of body in case of death
- Proof of health insurance is required in many countries
 - A copy of each team member's health insurance should be included with other important travel documents

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GENERAL INSURANCE

- Consider other insurance coverages.
 - Auto insurance in area of travel
 - Trip cancellation coverage
 - Foreign ability coverage to protect the house of worship from liability-related claims involving emotional damage caused by your mission team

CREATE PARTICIPANT FOLDER

- Senior trip leaders should maintain a master folder of important paperwork for all trip participants:
 - Photocopies of passports and visas
 - Emergency contact information
 - Medical release forms
 - Insurance company contact information
 - Information on special medical needs

ARRANGE CULTURAL TRAINING/ DEVELOPMENT MEETINGS

- Miscommunications offending the local residents are not only embarrassing to your organization — they could hold long-term implications for the career missionaries in the country:
 - Hold mandatory orientation sessions on traditions, history, and cultural norms of the host country.
 - Invite a native of, or missionary to, that country, if available, to discuss these topics.

COLLECT PASSPORTS AND REVIEW EXPIRATION DATES FOR EACH TEAM MEMBER AND APPLY FOR VISAS

COLLECT FINAL TRIP PAYMENTS FROM EACH TEAM MEMBER

PURCHASE AIR AND/OR GROUND TRANSPORTATION

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