



## Tips for Traveling Abroad

Provided by Home Perks

Many Americans spend a lot of time preparing and planning trips to other countries, be it a winter vacation in the Caribbean or a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Europe. Here are a few important travel tips to make sure your trip is as smooth as possible, and suggestions for what to do if the unexpected happens.

### *Is my Destination a Safe Place?*

As we all know by watching the news, there are a number of places in the world that are not safe for travel. The Department of State (DoS) issues *travel warnings* that recommend Americans avoid traveling in certain countries. In addition, the DoS also offers fact sheets, called *Consular Information Sheets*, on every country in the world. These sheets describe general health, safety, and travel tips, as well as contact information for the local US Embassy, which is a critical piece of information when traveling abroad.

### *Passports - Are they Needed Everywhere?*

A passport is now required when traveling anywhere outside of the USA. Due to this recent change in policy, the time required to receive a passport has dramatically increased to approximately two to three months. You can pay an additional fee to request expedited service, but even then you'll wait nearly a month to receive it.

**Helpful Tip:** Even if you don't currently have plans to travel out of country, it's a good idea to apply for your passport today and keep it in a safe location until it is needed.

### *Where Do I apply for a Passport?*

Many county or municipal offices handle passport applications and photos. A complete list can be accessed at: <http://iafdb.travel.state.gov/> If you are traveling within two weeks and need a passport or foreign visa for travel, you can contact one of the *thirteen Passport Agencies* who will be able to assist you.

### *What if my Passport is Lost or Stolen?*

If you lose your passport while you're in the US, you must report the loss or theft immediately to the State Department and you should also file a local police report. If you lose your picture ID while traveling domestically by air, contact your airlines immediately as there are other ways to document your identity for the airline and TSA that can be used on a case-by-case basis.

Losing your passport while traveling overseas is a dramatically different problem. The first step is to contact the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. The *State Department's website* has a complete listing sorted by region and country. Alternatively, you can contact the *Department of State Overseas Citizens Service at 1-317-472-2328*.

Generally, you will need to travel to the embassy, prove your identity, and reapply. Expect to pay more for this passport than the one obtained in the standard fashion.

***Helpful Tip:*** Keep a photocopy of your passport with you while you're traveling, but in a separate place than your other travel documents. You may even consider storing digital copies on your PDA, iPod, or laptop to keep this info with you. You can also ask a trusted friend or family member to keep a copy of passport, birth certificate and driver's license with them at home. That way you have a backup copy in case you need it.

***What is the Best Way to Pay for Purchases While Traveling Abroad?***

While many of us may remember the Karl Maiden voiced American Express Traveler Checks commercials that were popular over the past several decades. Traveler Checks are not the best or most cost effective way to pay for purchases overseas. Many retailers either no longer accept them, or they charge a very substantial markup to the exchange rate.

***Helpful Tip:*** the best way to pay for items while traveling overseas is with your credit card, where with several card issuers you pay only the wholesale exchange rates without additional markup.

***We hope this article will be helpful to you and your family in the coming year!***