

# Responsible Travel

Modified from "The Responsible Traveller" which is available from the International Society for Travel Medicine at <http://istm.org/>

## Its a small world

The world is shrinking to the extent that we can now very easily move from one region to another within a matter of hours. We recognise the change in climate and other issues relating to what is happening around us, but often we don't recognise that customs and actions which are regarded as perfectly acceptable at home are socially wrong or just plain rude in the country or among the people group we are now visiting.

Doing some research and learning about the country's culture and beliefs will go a long way towards ensuring that your visit is not only worthwhile but also a pleasant experience.

## Be Informed!

Did you know that there are countries where tipping is frowned upon, where sitting with your legs crossed is considered rude, or where you should ask permission before you can take a photo? The more you know about host countries the better!

- ❑ Why not utilize the Internet and the vast array of guidebooks to educate yourself about the cultural and ethical codes of the countries you are visiting as well as the potential health risks? By being respectful of the host country's lifestyle and culture, you can remain a "good neighbour" while keeping travel safe and having fun.
- ❑ In the West we are used to a rapid pace of life and therefore some adjustment may have to be made to acclimatize yourself to a slower and more relaxed lifestyle. Realizing that you will probably need to exercise patience during your journey may eliminate much frustration!
- ❑ Be open-minded. Many aspects of life will be different when you leave home. One of the main reasons for travel is to learn about and experience these differences.

## Know the Dos and Don'ts!

In many countries, the dress code is much more conservative than in Western cultures. Some countries frown upon women exposing their shoulders or baring their legs. Therefore, when visiting these countries, be respectful of the culture and adhere to dress codes. Public displays of affection can often cause embarrassment for local residents and signs of anger may also be perceived as offensive.

- ❑ Listen to the way the local people address each other, their elders, and people with religious affiliations. By being respectful of titles and using appropriate language, you can avoid creating ill will unintentionally.
- ❑ Gestures can be misinterpreted or may carry a different meaning in other countries. For example, in some countries pointing your finger at an object or when you are asking directions is considered to be rude. Using one's flat hand may be more acceptable.
- ❑ Be aware of religious holidays and observances and the customs that accompany those events.
- ❑ Don't take souvenirs from historical, cultural, natural or archaeological sites.



## Respect Your Host Country

More people are visiting developing countries for romantic getaways or adventure trips, but such countries can present special challenges. You need to be mindful of the health and medical hazards when visiting countries with less advanced medical care. The fact that you are able to visit exotic places means that you have the income to afford such luxuries, which may not be the case with many of the residents of the host country. Try to be understanding and respectful of the socio-economic differences between your own country and the one you are visiting.

- ❑ Avoid obvious displays of wealth. Such activities create immediate barriers and build resentment between you and local people.
- ❑ Bargain for purchases only if it is an acceptable custom, but don't be too aggressive. For many local people, these sales are their livelihood.
- ❑ Never exploit residents of your host country. If a service is provided, make sure that person has been financially cared for - either by the hotel or by tipping in a manner that is appropriate to the local custom. Many employees receive very low pay for long hours. Make sure that you reciprocate when they provide assistance that helps make your trip go smoothly.
- ❑ Sex travel and child prostitution are unacceptable practices. Moreover, they are extremely risky for the traveller.
- ❑ Support local communities, hotels, restaurants and churches whenever possible. This helps the host country economically and allows you to fully embrace the feel of the local culture.
- ❑ Minimize the use of resources. Don't insist on a daily bath if water is scarce!

## Staying Healthy

Staying healthy and well is an essential element of any trip. You can do a lot to ensure that you remain healthy but also you can help safeguard the health of the host country.

- ❑ One particular hazard is associated with sexually transmitted infections so ensure that you avoid all unsafe sex.
- ❑ Respiratory diseases move very easily from person to person so don't be irresponsible. Get recommended vaccinations such as against Influenza and increase your personal hygiene - especially if you have any 'cold' symptoms.
- ❑ Be aware of the health risks for anyone helping you such as porters, rickshaw carriers, sherpas on treks etc. Be aware of the potential problems and don't give unreasonable requests which could increase their risks.

Remember you are visiting someone else's home. Give them the respect and consideration which is due and you will all have a better time.

**Bottom line ... be aware that not all people are the same as you. How fortunate!**

National Travel Vaccine Appointment Tel 1-850-48 76 74

Web Address: [www.tmb.ie](http://www.tmb.ie)

This leaflet has been prepared using information supplied from WHO, the Center for Disease Control (US) and other international sources.

- ✓ Travel Accessories *responsibletravel/TMB/14May09*
- ✓ Tropical Diagnostic Laboratory
- ✓ Tropical Disease Screening Centre
- ✓ W.H.O. registered Yellow Fever Vaccination Centre
- ✓ International Vaccination and Malaria Advice Centres

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