

Travel

Planning Transportation

- **When reserving flights**, ask about: 1) visa or ID documents required for the destination country; 2) limits on checked and carry-on luggage for each leg of the trip; 3) seating (do you need a window or an aisle seat?); and 4) special needs (special diet, wheelchair, etc.).
- **At least 72 hours prior to departure**, call the airline(s) to reconfirm your flight(s) and the information in the four items above. Some airlines will cancel your space if you do not reconfirm. Ask if there have been any flight or schedule changes.
- **Know your flight options**. Assume changes will need to be made to your schedule so delays or cancellations won't be so stressful. Have an alternate plan ready in case your flight is delayed or canceled. Jot down some possible alternate airline phone numbers. Sometimes it's faster to make a reservation from an airport public phone or Internet kiosk than to stand in line at a ticket counter.
- **Plan your budget**, with some extra cash or credit line just in case the worst happens: needing an airline ticket, or a night or two in a hotel.
- **Bring something to do**: a favorite book, MP3 player with headphones and tapes, travel diary, guide books.
- **Check the weather** at your destination and connecting cities along the way. You can't do anything about the weather, but you can be prepared for it. Check the Internet for domestic and overseas conditions (www.weather.com and others).
- **Pack lightly and smartly**, with prescription medicines, a change of underwear, and toothbrush in your carry-on just in case your luggage doesn't arrive with you. If your luggage doesn't have wheels, bring along a folding luggage carrier on wheels.
- **Once you've landed**. . . The best-laid plans for ground transportation can get all fouled up when planes are late or diverted. Foreign bus and train travel can require a reservation. If you simply arrive at the station, you may not be able to leave until the next day.

On the travel day

- **Call the airlines**. Are the flights on schedule?
- **Check in at the airport** at least two hours early for international flights, at least one hour early for U.S. connections. You should receive a boarding pass and seat assignment for each flight. Verify information with airline personnel (not fellow travelers and computer displays).

- **If you have problems** with an airline, review your options calmly with airline personnel. If an acceptable solution cannot be reached, speak with a supervisor. Generally, airlines will not take responsibility for mechanical or weather-related delays, but they must provide alternate flights. If the delay is their fault (overbooking, etc.), they must provide lodging, a long-distance call if someone is waiting for you, and meal expenses or denied boarding compensation, plus an alternate flight. (Exceptions may apply on charters and bulk-purchase fares.)
- **If luggage is lost or damaged**, a claim must be filed at the airport. Keep your claim checks. Often, airlines will pay for immediately needed items (toothbrush, underwear, other things needed within 1-2 days) while your bags are being located. Be sure to ask before leaving the airport.
- **Carry your tickets (or receipts, if using e-tickets) and documents** with you at all times.
- **Thieves and pickpockets** frequent airports, bus stations, train stations, etc. Be on guard. Keep your luggage between your feet, and don't leave your bags unattended.
- Bring some **foreign currency** with you, especially if you might be arriving late or after banking hours.
- Some airports add “**transit costs**” of up to US \$30; keep reserve funds available.
- Pack your **sense of humor** and keep it with you. Don't expect any from security personnel, immigration, etc. Watch what you say. Do not joke around security personnel, and never mention bombs or weapons.
- **Be patient.** Relax and enjoy the trip. You're almost there!
- **On board**, talk to the flight crew and fellow travelers. Ask about relative costs, distances, money exchange, tipping, ground transportation, what to expect on arrival, etc.
- If you're facing an **unexpected delay**, try calling your family en route to advise them of the delay. If you arrive very late, consider spending the first night on arrival at a local hotel. If you're staying with a host family, call them, as well. If you're calling an “after hours” or “emergency” number at your destination, it's possible that you may have to call several times.

On arrival

- Proceed through **immigration and customs**. It's best to hand-carry your bags—don't accept help from fellow passengers.

- To get **from the airport**, it's best to rely on official airport transport (bus, van, cab) rather than private companies or for-hire drivers.
- If you're taking intercity ground **transportation**, make sure you go to the correct station to make your connection. Remember that you may have to wait for the next available bus or train due to the volume of travelers, advance reservations, etc.
- Try to **call home** or send e-mail right away, but realize that you may not be able to. It may take two or three days to learn the phone system, to find the office from which you can call long distance, etc. Notify your family of this before you go; if there's an emergency, they can contact you at your host school.

Returning home

- **Call** the airport and reconfirm your flights at least 72 hours prior to your return, or you may lose your reservation. Call again the day prior to check changes in departure times or schedules.