



University
of Windsor

Safety When Traveling Abroad Guide
Go Global



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Introduction

Whenever we try something new there are inherent risks, this is no different than when we travel, especially if the location is new or unfamiliar to us. The point of this document is not to scare you out of travel or to warn you of every possible danger you could face when abroad, but rather to help you be in the right mindset and prepared for whatever hurdles travel may throw your way.

Yes, your faculty leads, tour guides, host institutions, and/or administrators will have your safety in mind, but ultimately it is your responsibility to keep yourself healthy and safe. This document will be a helpful resource regarding general traveling abroad safety information.

Common Sense

Some of this information you may already know or feel like it is common knowledge and that's great! Or maybe you have never travelled before and this will all be new, that's great too. The common sense safety precautions you adhere to at home will carry over with you on your trip, however things that are safe at home are not always safe when traveling.

While you are on your trip you may want to try new things and have new experiences! However, it is important you tread more carefully and really think about the repercussions before you act.

For example, you may be interested in bungee jumping or other extreme sport activities, but here are some things you need to consider beforehand:

- If you get hurt is your insurance going to cover you? Many policies do not include coverage for extreme sporting activities.
- Is the operator licensed and insured?
- What is their safety record?
- How long have they been in business?

These types of questions are very important to apply to any new or different activities to make sure you are as safe as possible.

Doing Your Research

As stated before, it would be impossible to tell you of every possible danger you might encounter when traveling abroad, that is why is imperative that on top of what you learn from this resource and from your faculty leaders/administrators that you do your own research about your travel destination. Talking to peers that have been before and reading various reviews online can be a great starting point. However, you'll want to make sure to use reputable sources as your primary source of information.

Here an important website you can use to start your research process:

<http://travel.gc.ca>

- This is a Government of Canada website that has information regarding air travel rules and regulations, travel reports for your destination country, information about passports and other

travel documents, how to register that you'll be abroad, and the type of services are available to you when you are out of the country.

Registration of Canadians Abroad

As part of Go Global funding you are required to register with the Government of Canada that you are travelling abroad. Registration of Canadians Abroad is a free service that allows the Government of Canada to notify you in case of an emergency abroad or a personal emergency at home. This service also enables you to receive important information before or during a natural disaster or civil unrest. Once you know the address of where you are staying for your time abroad you can fill out the online registration at the following website:

<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration>

Risks

Within this section we will discuss the different types of risks and how you should prepare to mitigate these risks while travelling, along with what questions you should research prior to your trip.

Personal Safety Risks

Personal safety risks may include crime, traffic accidents, workplace hazards, etc. Prior to travelling it is important you know what the local emergency procedures and emergency numbers are (i.e., their version of 911). It is also important to understand traffic in your destination country. Although you may not be driving yourself, it is important to be aware of the rules of the road, so that you keep yourself safe as a passenger and as a pedestrian. Knowing whether they drive on the left or the right side of the road and therefore knowing whether oncoming traffic is coming from your left or your right when you go to cross the street could very well save your life.

Other questions to ask yourself about your destination:

- Are there any special safety/security concerns with crime, weather, etc.?
- Will you be involved in any high-risk activities such as scuba diving, bungee jumping, skiing, etc.?
- What kind of public transit options are available (i.e., bus, train, taxi, ride share apps)? Which are safe and which are to be avoided?

Political Risks

Political risks may include demonstrations, economic instability, intolerance of certain groups, etc. When travelling abroad it is imperative that regardless of your political stance that you avoid all protests. These events have the potential to turn dangerous. It would pose a risk to your personal safety if you were injured in one of these events or if you were arrested or detained you could face serious consequences.

It is also important to be aware of how people of certain groups are treated in your destination country. Whether you are a part of that group or you are researching to support your classmates it is important to know how LGBTQ+ individuals, women, people with disabilities, Black people, Indigenous people, or people of colour are treated in the areas you will be travelling.

Other questions to ask about your destination:

- What is the political system? Is the political environment stable?
- Will there be an election, other political events, or important holidays while you are there?
- What is the current situation of Canadian relations with your destination country? What is the history?

Health Risks

To enjoy your trip to the fullest you must stay healthy. Health risks are wide ranging in that they can include illnesses like COVID-19, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), water and air contaminants, sunburns, food poisoning, mental health issues, and much more.

First, it is important to consider your current state of health before travelling. You may wish to have a check-up or physical examination with your family doctor or at a walk-in clinic prior to your trip. If you have a health condition that may affect your ability to travel, you should check with your doctor as well and then discuss any needed accommodations with your instructor to insure you are supported throughout the trip.

If you take any medications, it is necessary that you have enough to cover you through your travel, with extras in case of extenuating circumstances. You should travel with your medications in the original containers with your prescription on them as well to avoid problems when going through customs. Aside from prescription medications, what is considered an easily accessible over-the-counter medication may not be in your destination country. It is important to research what you can and cannot buy if needed while abroad, but it is also recommended to pack a travel health kit for yourself.

See the following link for what you need to prepare a travel health kit: [Travel health kit - Travel.gc.ca](https://travel.gc.ca/travel-health)

Other questions to ask yourself about your destination:

- Are any immunizations required to enter the country? Which are suggested?
- Are your basic immunizations up to date?
- Where will the nearest hospitals or health care facilities be throughout your trip?
- Are there any medications that are illegal to bring into your destination country?
- Is the water safe to drink where you are staying?

Environmental Risks

Environmental risks include volcanoes, water and air quality, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, etc. The type of environmental risks you need to be aware of will be very destination specific, and therefore is another reason why you need to thoroughly research where you are going. An important first step is understanding the general type of climate for your destination. Knowing what kind of seasons they have

(For example: Southern hemisphere seasons are opposite of Northern hemisphere seasons, and some areas have rainy seasons compared to dry seasons) and which one you'll be travelling in is crucial. This will help you pack properly for the type of clothing you need in this country, as well as any additional items, like umbrellas, that you may need.

In terms of more severe environmental risks, here are some questions you should ask yourself about your destination:

- Have there been any recent or recurring natural disasters?
- What is the procedure in case of a natural disaster?
- What are the environmental issues for this destination?
 - o For example: pollution, flooding, extreme hot or cold, volcanoes, earthquakes, tornadoes
 - o What are the appropriate steps to take in these situations?

Cyber/Digital Risks

To avoid cyber/digital risks involves keeping your devices safe, secure, and free from malicious software. There are some pretty simple ways to start this process, starting with password protection for your devices. It is also smart to make sure your devices auto lock after a short period of inactivity. You will want to make sure that the latest operating system updates have been applied to your devices as well. If your operating system is out of date this makes it easier for hackers to get access.

With regards to your important digital accounts, you'll want to make sure you have Multi-Factor Authentication in place. However, you may need to update your MFA to work while you are abroad. For example, everyone should already have an MFA in place for their University of Windsor accounts. If you get a text to verify your identity, this is not going to work when you are travelling abroad and don't have cell service to your Canadian number. You'll want to make use of the Microsoft Authenticator App and switch over to this method for your UWindsor accounts and something similar that can be accessed using Wi-Fi (i.e., email verification codes) if you have other accounts like banking, that you may need to use when abroad.

Other questions you may want to answer before your trip are:

- What are the warnings on the travel report about credit card and ATM fraud, cyber crime, and other digital threats?
- Do you have virus protection on your devices? Are you using a VPN?
- Are there certain apps you use to communicate with that don't work in your destination country?

Safety Precautions Checklist

The following section is broken down into the categories before you leave, when you arrive, in your accommodation, in the street, and in the car. Each section is made up of ways you can be prepared as possible as you move through getting ready for and taking part in your travel abroad.

Before You Leave

- If possible, have a small amount of local currency with you when you travel, or at least US currency as generally Canadian currency will not be accepted outside of Canada.
 - o You can also exchange money at the airport when you arrive.
- Try to plan your arrival for a weekday, during business or daylight hours. Avoid arriving late at night, on holidays, or weekends when businesses and support services might be closed.
- Leave copies of important information, such as travel arrangements and a copy of your passport, with someone you trust.
 - o Ideally this should be left with a parent or guardian, not a friend or significant other. The information you leave with them will be helpful if your passport is lost or stolen, but it is also all the information someone needs to steal your identity and therefore shouldn't be left in the wrong hands.
- Create digital copies for yourself of all your important information and put them in a non-descript digital location (e.g., a folder labeled photos of the dog).
- Make sure to periodically check travel reports for your destination country and anywhere else you may be travelling to for any relevant advisories.
- When travelling to a destination where the language is not English it can be helpful to carry a small language phrase book or travel guide (e.g., Lonely Planet travel guides) with a language phrases section.

When You Arrive

- If you weren't able to do it before arriving, once you know the address where you are staying make sure to complete the Registration of Canadians abroad.
 - o <http://travel.gc.ca/travelling/registration>
- Make sure your personal documents are kept in a safe place, but do not keep everything together in the same spot.
- Conceal or secure all keys, wallets, and baggage. Consider using a money belt, neck pouch, or hidden pocket clothing (e.g., Tilley Travel Clothing).
- Never leave your drinks unattended and never accept food or drink from strangers. They could be spiked with drugs that could put you at risk of sexual assault and robbery.
- Watch your luggage and handbags. Make sure the zippers are closed and keep them locked if possible.
- Respect local dress codes. In many countries, suitable clothing may be gender-specific and may even be legislated. Penalties for disobeying local laws can be severe.

In Your Accommodation

- Exercise discretion in displaying things of value.
 - o Close blinds, secure windows, and keep personal belongings out of sight
 - o If it is valuable or sentimental it is best to leave it safe at home
- Keep a physical copy of emergency numbers, along with a digital copy on your phone.
- If you feel where you are staying is not secure, do what you can as soon as possible to improve things. You'll want to speak with the facility manager whether you are staying in a residence or hotel, and let your faculty leader or administrator know as soon as possible, as well as your program contacts at the University of Windsor.

In The Street

- Be discreet in your public behaviour, don't bring unnecessary attention to yourself.
- Try to look like you know where you are going.
- Do not show signs of affluence (i.e., wearing expensive jewelry or flashing about large sums of money).
- Try not to walk the streets at night and never walk alone. If you have to walk at night, choose well-lit, busy streets.
- Avoid protests, uncontrolled crowds, and do not get involved in local disturbances.
- If a mugger demands your wallet or bag, give it to them, your life is worth more than material possessions.
- Carry money and identification in several locations on your person, in case your wallet or purse is lost or stolen.
- Never keep your phone in your back pocket or any pocket easily accessible for pickpockets.
- Never take photographs of military facilities, a harbour where naval vessels are docked, or industries such as oil refineries. Your camera could be confiscated, and you could even be accused of spying.

In The Car

- It is highly recommended that you do not drive a car or any type of motorized vehicle (e.g., motorcycle, electric scooter).
 - o You should also be careful if choosing to ride a bicycle, given that road conditions will be different than you are used to.
- Even as a passenger, pedestrian, or cyclist you should learn the rules of the road and be prepared for local driving conditions.
 - o It is incredibly important to know which side of the road they drive on and where to look first when you cross the road.
- When utilizing taxis or rideshare apps, it is important to know which are legitimate services and which could be dangerous

Embassies and Consulates

When you are abroad embassies can provide certain services or support if you need it. They are able to contact family or friends in Canada to ask them to send you money, they can provide help during natural disasters or civil or military uprisings, they can assist in a medical emergency, they can ensure you receive equitable treatment under local law if arrested, and they can replace lost, stolen, or damaged passports. It is important to be aware of where the embassy and/or consulates are located in the country you'll be travelling to. If there is not a Canadian consulate or embassy in your destination country, you can often go to the Australian embassy or consulate as our two governments have a consular service sharing agreement. In some cases, you can also contact the British representatives.

Contrary to popular belief the embassy or consulate is not a one-stop shop to solve any and all travel problems, they are not responsible for and cannot do the following: provide the services of a travel agency, lend money or cash personal cheques, arrange free medical service or legal advice, provide bail

or get you out of jail, act as couriers or interpreters, search for missing luggage, or settle disputes with local authorities.

In the event of a crisis that requires evacuation, the Government of Canada's policy is to provide safe transportation to the closest safe location, this does not necessarily mean returning you to Canada. They will assist you in leaving as a last resort when all commercial and personal transportation options have been exhausted. This service is not free and provided on a cost-recovery basis, and onward travel is at your personal expense.

In Trouble With The Law

When travelling abroad, the laws of your destination country apply to you. Being Canadian does not grant you any kind of immunity. Ignorance of the law is also not an excuse, you are responsible for knowing what these laws are.

You want to avoid spending any time in a foreign jail. While innocent until proven guilty applies in Canada, this is not applied worldwide. You could be potentially detained for an extended period of time without charges being placed. Embassy officials can check on you to make sure you are receiving equitable treatment in jail, but this is equitable in terms of the country's standards, not Canadian standards or what your standards for fair are.

You may be expelled from the destination country with little delay or process, and asking to see a lawyer may not be a right you are entitled to.

Despite the legalization of cannabis in Canada, this is by no means the case worldwide. It is still illegal to take cannabis or any product containing cannabis across Canada's international borders. Doing so can result in serious criminal penalties both at home and abroad.

Victim of a Crime

If you are the victim of a serious crime, you should report it to the local authorities as soon as possible. If necessary, you can contact the nearest Canadian embassy/consulate for assistance. You should also let your faculty leader, administrator, or host university/company know, as well as your contact at the University of Windsor.

Regarding theft, you may feel that the theft was inconsequential and choose to ignore it, however if you are planning on submitting an insurance claim for lost goods, your insurance company will more than likely require a copy of the police report before reimbursing losses.

Regarding assault, sexual assault, or other violent crimes. Please seek medical attention if you need it as soon as possible. This includes assistance for your mental health, and you should talk to someone whether it be family, friends, a teacher, staff member, or professional as soon as possible as well. Do not go through this experience alone.

Passports

When travelling, your passport is your most valuable item, and you should treat and care for it as such. As mentioned previously, you will want to make good colour digital and physical copies of your passport, both to leave with a trusted person at home, as well as to have a backup copy with you while you travel. Do not keep your copy in the same place as the original. Also, when you enter your new destination country make sure to take a picture of the entry stamp you receive to add to your digital copy. You'll want to keep track of your passport number and expiry date as well, a helpful way to do this can be to make yourself a contact on your phone and keep track of it in the notes. You should also make sure that your passport is signed and that the contact information can be returned if lost. If your passport is lost or stolen, you must report it to the local police and then contact the nearest Canadian consulate or embassy for replacement.

Health Issues

To be proactive regarding your health when travelling, there are some things you can accomplish ahead of time. About 6-8 weeks prior to departure, you should see your family doctor or visit a walk-in clinic for a full check-up. You can also take this time to check if all your basic immunizations are up to date and receive any booster shots or seasonal shots (e.g., COVID, flu shots) if necessary. If certain vaccinations are required for your destination country, you'll want to check when you can get those and if additional boosters are required for them as well.

It is also a good idea to see your dentist and get a cleaning done, especially if you are going to be travelling abroad for an extended period. If you use glasses or contacts, you may want to see your eye doctor, and if you use any other medical devices (i.e., hearing aid, glucose monitor, etc.) you will want to do the necessary checks with your doctors to make sure they are all set for your trip as well.

For those who take prescription medications, you should consult with your doctor and pharmacist about taking enough to see you through your time away. However, travelling with large quantities of medications can cause problems when passing through customs. You'll need to make sure the medications are in their original containers and that you have the necessary paperwork to prove these medications are for your personal use. This is mainly an issue for extended international travel. For any pre-existing conditions, along with information about your prescriptions such as the commercial and generic names from your pharmacist, you'll want to ask your doctor for a write-up regarding your medical condition and what medications and other treatments are involved in case you need to see another doctor in your host country.

When starting your journey and any other time during your trip that involves extensive time spent on a plane, train, or bus you'll want to make sure your health is a priority as well. You may consider wearing a face mask, especially when in close proximity with other passengers. Bringing disinfectant wipes and cleaning the surrounding surfaces of your seat will reduce germs. You should wear loose comfortable clothing and take opportunities to stretch or walk around when possible. Lastly, keeping properly hydrated and avoiding alcohol, especially while flying, can help ensure you arrive at your destination as healthy as possible.

Medical Emergency

In the case of a medical emergency, it is understandable that you would be stressed and possibly overwhelmed and not know what to do in the moment. That is why it can be important to go over what steps to follow before any emergency occurs to better prepare yourself.

If you are heading to a destination where you are not fluent in the language it would be in your best interest to seek out an English-speaking doctor to avoid any miscommunication. Taking some time before you travel to see what is available may be helpful. It is important to remember though that outside of a country's capital or other large metropolitan cities these services could be harder to come by. It is also helpful to consult the resources your travel health insurance provides and what processes they have in place regarding services. Regardless, if you are injured while abroad and require medical attention, do not hesitate to get yourself to a local hospital or clinic. Please report all injuries to both your faculty leaders and/or supervisors for your trip as well as the administrators back at the University of Windsor.

In case of a medical emergency, it is important to carry the following with you at all times:

- Proper identification
- Health insurance details
- A list of allergies and current medications
- A medical alert bracelet (if applicable)
- An emergency contact card

Insurance

There are many different types of insurance and unique ways in which people can bundle or purchase their insurance. It is important to keep this in mind, as different situations will call for different types of insurance. For this section's purposes, we will discuss travel insurance, health insurance, and some general information you should know so you can properly research and acquire the insurance that is different types of insurance. For this section's purposes, we will discuss travel insurance, health insurance, and some general information you should know so you can properly research and acquire the insurance best for you.

Essentially the type of insurance you purchase will depend on your present coverage, type of travel, and length of stay. If you are going on a short-term international experience, you may only need travel insurance as you will only be a traveler or tourist in the country. For students who have coverage under their student association (i.e., UWSA, OPUS, GSS) there is some travel insurance included that in most cases is ideal for short-term travel, but you'll need to research if this fits your trip needs. Students who have opted out because they have parental coverage will need to research if their current coverage has any travel insurance or if supplementary insurance will need to be purchased.

If you are going for a longer duration, you will need health insurance as you are no longer deemed a traveler or tourist but a temporary resident. If you have coverage under one of the student associations, you may have the opportunity for your health insurance to be extended to cover you while you are abroad, but you will need to check with your student association and the associated insurance provider. If you are under your parent's coverage you will also want to look into having the benefits extended to

cover you time abroad or purchase supplemental insurance as standard issue travel insurance will not be sufficient when you are considered a temporary resident. Depending on your destination and the purpose of your trip you may need a specific amount of insurance coverage or to purchase insurance specifically from your destination country. It is also important to note for longer duration travel if you are going to be away for more than seven months you must notify your provincial health plan that you will be out of the province. If you fail to do so it may result in you not being covered under the provincial plan for up to three months when you return.

When shopping for insurance here are some basic questions you should ask:

- What does the insurance cover and not cover?
- What is the deductible (the amount you must pay)?
- What is the maximum amount of coverage?
- Does the plan have a 24-hour toll-free contact number with service in English?
- Do you have to pay first and get reimbursed later?
- What are the procedures for filing a claim? How long does it take to get reimbursed?
- What documentation of expenses is required?
- Are you covered if you have been drinking?
- Does the plan cover sports injuries?
- Does the plan enable you to have continuous coverage (during & after your trip)?
- In the event of death, what is the coverage for repatriation of remains?

Other types of insurance that you may want to look into getting or may be required to get are cancellation insurance, credit card insurance, property insurance, and liability insurance.

Cancellation insurance can allow you the flexibility needed when faced with unforeseen changes in plans. Usually when purchasing plane tickets, you will be given the opportunity to purchase cancellation insurance for your flight. In this instance it will be offered at the point of purchase and not be available after. You may also wish to insure the financial amount of your trip through an external insurance provider. This way if you need to cancel your trip and have already paid for things like your flight and accommodation the insurance company will issue a refund.

Many credit card premiums allow for some property or travel insurance, but it is important that you understand the details of the coverage provided. You may wish to have additional insurance coverage on your credit card in case your card is lost or used fraudulently. Regarding property insurance, some homeowner insurance policies extend coverage worldwide. You'll want to check with your parents' plan to see if additional coverage is needed. You may want to investigate before travelling if this type of insurance will cover compensation for lost or damaged luggage or if financial aid will be provided so you can purchase replacements while waiting for lost luggage. Ultimately, the best practice is to leave anything you can't bear to lose at home.

If you cause injury to another person or damage to property you could be expected to pay for medical expenses or repairs. Liability insurance helps you pay in these types of situations. Students may have coverage covered under the University's liability insurance if they cause property damage or bodily injury to a third party while participating in a University sanctioned activity. However, coverage, if applicable, would only be available for that period of time in which students are "in class." Students are not covered during off-time activities. More frequently, you also need proof that you have liability

insurance before you can rent an apartment room, which may come into play if you are finding your own accommodation for a longer-term international experience. This type of coverage might be included within a property insurance policy or other coverage that you or your parents might already have, you'll need to research what is available for your situation.

Additional Sources

Please see the following links for additional resources:

[Request emergency assistance - Travel.gc.ca](#)

[Embassies and consulates by destination - Travel.gc.ca](#)

[Cyber security while travelling - Travel.gc.ca](#)

[Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and two-spirit Canadians abroad - Travel.gc.ca](#)

[Travelling with disabilities - Travel.gc.ca](#)

[Foreign Representatives in Canada \(international.gc.ca\)](#)

[Publications - Travel.gc.ca](#)

[Traveler Resources - International Society of Travel Medicine \(istm.org\)](#)

If you have any additional comments, questions, or concerns regarding safety and your upcoming international experience please reach out, we are happy to help.

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