



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

TRAVELLING PARENTS



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A must see destination.

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Travelling with children can be rewarding and fun if you are properly prepared and do your research before you leave.

This brochure is designed to provide parents with information to help prepare for a hassle-free and safe journey. It should be read in conjunction with the *Travel Smart: Hints for Australian travellers* and *Travelling well* publications.

When you travel abroad, you leave behind Australia's support systems, emergency service capabilities and medical facilities. The Australian Government will do what it can to help Australians in difficulty overseas, but there are legal and practical limits to what can be done to assist travellers in other countries. You should have realistic expectations about this and read the Consular Services Charter, available on smartraveller.gov.au, before you go.

BEFORE YOU GO – BE PREPARED

The better prepared you are, the safer and more enjoyable your travel will be.

If you are travelling in an organised tour group find out what arrangements are made on your behalf and what you need to arrange for yourself.

Do some research on your destinations, make sure you have the necessary documentation, information and items you will need. Start with the latest **travel advice** for your destination at smartraveller.gov.au. This will give you information on the main risks you may face and some precautions you can take. Also check out the latest guidebooks, talk to other travellers and organise comprehensive **travel insurance**. Make sure you **register** your details at smartraveller.gov.au before you leave, so you can be easily contacted in an emergency.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

If you cannot afford travel insurance, you cannot afford to travel.

You are strongly advised to take out comprehensive travel insurance for you and your family. You should make sure it covers all medical expenses for injury or illness, as well as theft of valuables, damage to baggage, and cancellations or interruptions to flight plans. It will save you worry and a possible financial burden. Medical costs overseas can be in the tens of thousands of dollars and many families have been burdened financially in paying these costs.

Shop around when choosing an insurance policy and make sure the cover provided suits your family's needs and is valid for the whole time you and your family will be away. **Always read** the Product Disclosure Statement carefully and ensure that you understand exactly what your travel insurance covers.

You may be able to obtain travel insurance for yourself and your immediate family under the one policy. Cover, however, varies from policy to policy. Be sure to confirm all details with your insurance provider and receive written confirmation of your policy.

The Australian Government will not pay for your medical treatment overseas or medical evacuation to Australia or a third country. Travellers without travel insurance are personally liable for covering any medical and associated costs they or their families incur.

Case Study

Kate and Jim took their children for an overseas holiday. Everyone had a terrific time until toddler Susie developed stomach pain, fever and vomiting. Kate and Jim took Susie to the local hospital where she was diagnosed with a ruptured appendix. The doctor recommended that Susie be immediately evacuated by air ambulance to a major hospital. The flight cost \$30,000. Treatment at a private hospital with a specialist paediatric unit cost \$1000 a day. Susie survived but was very sick. The family missed their flight home and had to pay for new tickets and accommodation. As Kate and Jim had not covered their family with travel insurance, Susie's illness cost the family \$40,000.

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

Your passport is your most important travel document. All Australian citizens must have a valid passport before leaving Australia and maintain a valid passport while overseas. All children travelling overseas, including newborn infants, must have their **own passport**. More information on Australian passports can be found at www.passports.gov.au or by calling the Australian Passport Information Service on 131 232 in Australia.

Be aware that countries have different passport validity requirements. Make sure your passport has **at least six months validity** from your planned date of return to Australia. Carry extra passport photos just in case your passport is lost or stolen and you need to replace it while away.

Find out early what visas you and your family need by contacting the relevant foreign mission (embassy, high commission or consulate) of the countries you intend to visit. Remember also to check the visa requirements of countries you might be transiting. Contact details can be found in the White Pages or online at www.dfat.gov.au/embassies.html.

Remember

Australian missions overseas cannot help you arrange visas, work or residence permits for other countries.

- A visa does not guarantee entry to a foreign country.
- A tourist visa in most cases does not allow you to work in a foreign country.

MINORS TRAVELLING ALONE

Every country has specific entry and exit requirements for children travelling alone or without parents or legal guardians. Check these requirements with the relevant foreign mission before you travel. Contact details can be found at www.dfat.gov.au/embassies.html.

Airlines also have rules regarding unaccompanied minors. Children under the age of 15 travelling alone are generally regarded as unaccompanied minors. In most cases, parents or guardians will need to fill out a permission form for the child's travel. For further information contact the airline you are planning to use or visit their website.

RESEARCH AND PLAN AHEAD

Simple research and preparation before you leave can save you a lot of hassle.

- **Airlines** – if you are concerned the airline may question your fitness or a member of your family's fitness to fly we recommend you obtain a letter from your doctor stating that you are fit for air travel.

If you have or a member of your family has a disability, call your airline to find out about services provided including shuttle services, seating arrangements and special meals.

If you need to carry needles and syringes on to the plane, obtain a letter from your doctor explaining why you need them and seek early advice from your airline on how to comply with enhanced airport and air travel security regulations.

- **Medication** – if you are travelling with medication, make sure it is legal in the countries you are visiting by contacting the relevant foreign mission in Australia before leaving home. Contact details are available at www.dfat.gov.au/embassies.html.

If you need to travel with large quantities of medication, it is good practice to separate the quantity between your luggage, in case bags go missing. Keep all medication in the original, labelled container to avoid problems with Customs.

Make sure you carry a letter from your doctor explaining what the medication is and stating it is for your family's use only.

- **Baby products** – when travelling with babies or very young children, it is good idea to research the availability of baby products in the countries you will visit. You may wish to stock up on items that will be difficult to purchase at your destination.
- **Accommodation** – if you are due to arrive at your destination late at night, it is recommended that you book your accommodation prior to arrival. If you have young children, you may ask what furniture (such as cots and highchairs) and facilities (such as child-minding or play areas, and lifts) are available.
- **Childcare facilities** – overseas childcare facilities, nannies and babysitters, including those on cruise ships, are not bound by Australian regulations. Standards can differ greatly from those in Australia. For useful ideas on how to select reputable childcare providers visit the National Childcare Accreditation Council website www.ncac.gov.au or the Child Wise 'Choose with Care' program available at www.childwise.net. You can also contact Child Wise on 1800 991 099 (freecall within Australia).
- **Luggage** – protect yourself against loss and theft by carrying minimal pieces of luggage, especially when travelling with children. Overloaded, you make yourself more vulnerable to bag snatchers and pickpockets. Secure credit cards and passports under your clothes or in a money belt.

Information on luggage security and safety is available from the Australian Civil Aviation Safety Authority at www.casa.gov.au and the Australian Government's travel security website www.travelsecure.infrastructure.gov.au.

If you are travelling to the USA, make sure you familiarise yourself with their specific airline baggage lock requirements. Information is available from the United States Department of Homeland Security at www.tsa.gov.

STAYING SAFE

There are a number of practical steps you can take to avoid running into difficulties and dangerous situations overseas.

REGISTER BEFORE YOUR TRAVEL

Registering your personal and travel details on smartraveller.gov.au before your travel is highly recommended. If you do not have access to the Internet you can telephone **1300 555 135** to register. It will make it easier to contact you in an emergency, whether it is a natural disaster, civil disturbance or family issue. The registration information you provide is protected by Australia's strict privacy laws.

RESEARCH YOUR DESTINATION

Find out about the political, cultural and economic environment of your destination so you will know what to expect on arrival. Consult the travel advisory for your destination at smartraveller.gov.au and either purchase a guide book or search the internet for recent information.

MONEY AND VALUABLES

Always protect yourself against loss and theft of your money and valuables.

- Organise a variety of ways of accessing your money overseas, such as credit cards, travellers' cheques and cash.
- Check with your bank whether your ATM card will work overseas.
- Register with your bank the period you expect to be travelling.
- Never leave your credit card out of sight.
- Make two photocopies of valuable documents such as your passport, tickets, visas and credit and ATM cards. Keep one copy with you in a separate place to the original and leave another copy with someone at home.

LOCAL CUSTOMS AND LAWS

Familiarise yourself with and show sensitivity to local customs.

In some cultures people are deeply offended by revealing or inappropriate clothes. Breastfeeding in public may also be considered offensive. Purchase a guide book or search the internet for information on local customs and laws and consult the travel advisory for your destination at smartraveller.gov.au.

Be aware that local laws and penalties, including ones that may appear harsh by Australian standards, do apply to you and your family. Family responsibilities, age or health concerns are not valid excuses. Many countries apply capital punishment, including for

narcotics related crimes. Every year many Australians of all ages are arrested overseas on drug charges.

Note: In some countries children may be treated as adults under the criminal law system. Children found guilty of a crime may be placed in adult prisons.

Case Study

Matthew was only 16 when he was arrested overseas with 10 grams of marijuana in his pocket. He did not realise that under the local law if you are 16 or over you are treated as an adult. Matthew is still coming to terms with sharing a cell with hardened criminals in an adult prison. His trial is still several months away. He will be tried like any other adult when his case comes to court. If he is found guilty, he will face stiff sentences. He will not be shown any leniency on account of his age.

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

When you are travelling with children, local authorities, including customs and immigration officers, may ask you to produce documents to prove that you are the lawful parent or guardian of the children. Make sure you always carry the proper identification for yourself and your children required by the authorities of the country you intend to visit and by Australian authorities on your return. In addition to a valid passport these documents can include:

- documentary evidence or a letter that proves the child has the permission of an absent lawful parent or guardian to travel
- a copy of any separation, divorce or custody decree that proves that you have custody of the child
- a court order granting you guardianship of the child
- a copy of the child's birth certificate, particularly if only one parent's name appears on the birth certificate and the child is travelling with the other parent.

If in doubt about particular circumstances relating to your children, you should seek legal advice before travelling.

BIRTH OF AN AUSTRALIAN CITIZEN ABROAD

A person born outside Australia who is the biological child of an Australian citizen can apply for Australian citizenship by descent with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC).

Parents of children born overseas should obtain an application for Australian citizenship by descent (form 118) from the DIAC website www.immi.gov.au. Contact the nearest DIAC overseas office (located at selected Australian embassies, high commissions or consulates) for information on how to lodge your application.

Contact details for Australian missions abroad can be found at www.dfat.gov.au/missions and in the *Travel Smart: hints for Australian travellers* booklet. This booklet is issued free with your passport. To get a copy go to smartraveller.gov.au/hints.

Further information on Australian citizenship is available at www.citizenship.gov.au or by calling the Citizenship Information Line on **131 880**.

DUAL NATIONALITY

Being a national or citizen of more than one country is called dual nationality.

You should be aware that if your child was born in another country that country may consider your child as its citizen or national, even if your child is an Australian citizen and you have never sought citizenship of that country for your child.

Dual nationality may have implications for children travelling to the country of their birth. Before you depart, it is important to know about the implications of local laws for dual nationals.

You may be prevented from obtaining Australian consular assistance if the country you are in considers you or a member of your family to be one of its citizens.

If you or a member of your family holds another country's passport, seek advice about using it. Take your Australian passport and use it **to depart from and return to Australia.**

For further information, get a copy of the brochure *Travelling dual nationals* booklet available from smartraveller.gov.au.

CHILD CUSTODY (IMPLICATIONS OF DUAL NATIONALITY)

Some foreign governments do not recognise dual nationality. This can affect the future guardianship of the child, as decisions on custody can be based on local law.

Parents travelling with children who may be considered nationals of a foreign country should consult a lawyer to resolve child custody and other family law issues before travelling to the country.

INTERNATIONAL PARENTAL CHILD ABDUCTION

The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction

The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction operates to return wrongfully removed or detained children to their country of habitual residence so that issues of parental responsibility can be resolved by the authorities of that country. The Convention may also provide assistance to parents seeking to spend time or communicate with a child. Information on the countries for which the Convention is in force with Australia can be found on the website of The Hague Conference of Private International Law at www.hcch.net.

Before you leave Australia with your children, you should ensure that you have the consent to do so from any person, institution or other body that has a right of custody in relation to those children or a court order permitting their departure. Failure to do so may result in an application being made under the Convention and the children being ordered to return to Australia. You may wish to obtain the assistance of a lawyer or a legal aid body to help you make sure that you have done all that is required to lawfully remove the children from Australia.

Child abduction

If you are concerned that your child has been wrongfully removed or detained in a foreign country, you should immediately contact the International Family Law Section, Attorney General's Department on free call number **1800 100 480** (24-hour line, staffed between 8.30 am and 4.30 pm Monday to Friday, message-bank all other times) or **+61 2 6234 4840** (if you are ringing from outside Australia).

The Australian Government cannot intervene in the judicial process of any foreign country, but will do its best to ensure the welfare of the removed or detained child.

CASE STUDY

Paul, Joanne and their children returned to the Paul's country of birth for family reasons. Unfortunately, the relationship between Paul and Joanne broke down. They divorced and a dispute over the custody of the children ensued. Joanne wanted to return to Australia with her children so that her family in Australia could assist her in raising them. She was concerned that the local legal system did not provide the same access to the children as it provided Paul. Paul remarried and wanted to continue to remain in his country of birth to pursue his career. He also wanted his children from his first marriage to continue to live with him and be brought up in the culture of his heritage. Paul and Joanne continued to pursue their claims for access to their children through the local courts. For the two years it took for the custody dispute to be heard in the courts, Joanne and her children were not permitted to return to Australia. Joanne's claim for full custody of the children was unsuccessful and had to return to Australia alone.

Australians travelling overseas are reminded that Australian customs and court orders may not apply overseas.

If you are concerned that your child has been taken overseas against your wishes, you should contact the Australian Federal Police and the Family Court of Australia (or the Family Court of Western Australia if you are in Western Australia).

Further information on international child abduction, including key legislation, contacts and related support services can be found on the Attorney-General's Department website at www.ag.gov.au/childabduction.

Reciprocal recognition of custody orders

Australian parenting orders can be recognised overseas and overseas parenting orders recognised in Australia where there is a reciprocal arrangement between Australia and the relevant country. For information about the countries that are party to such an arrangement contact the Attorney-General's Department on **1800 100 480** or **+ 61 2 6234 4840** if calling from outside Australia.

STAYING HEALTHY

Make an appointment with your doctor or travel clinic for a basic check-up at least six to eight weeks before you depart and find out if any vaccinations or health checks are required.

It is recommended that if you need to take medication you:

- discuss with your doctor the quantity you will need to take
- carry a letter from your doctor detailing what the medication is, how much you will be taking, and stating that it is for your family's use
- leave the medication in its original packaging so it is clearly labelled with your name and dosage instructions.

If you or your children wear glasses consider taking along a spare pair or a copy of the prescription as glasses can be easily lost or broken.

If you are taking Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medication with you, be aware that since the National Health Act was amended in 1999, it has been an offence to carry or post PBS medication overseas, unless they are for personal use. Additional information is available from www.health.gov.au or by phoning the PBS information line on 1800 020 613.

More information on travelling with medication is available from www.medicareaustralia.gov.au or by phoning the Overseas Drug Diversion information line on 1800 500 147.

If you need to purchase locally, be careful not to buy imitation or counterfeit medication and prescription drugs. Be aware that packaging and labelling may be similar to those available in Australia, but the strength and active ingredients can vary. If you buy needles and syringes overseas ensure they are sealed and sterile.

Always check the strength of a medication with a doctor. Do not buy off-the-shelf medication even if an Australian doctor has prescribed it, as strengths may vary from country to country.

If you have or a member of your family has pre-existing medical conditions you may wish to purchase a Medic Alert bracelet or necklace to wear while travelling. They are available at chemists in Australia. Medic Alert Foundation keeps a database of patients' details and medical history and is accessible by phone worldwide + 61 8 8274 0361 or www.medicalert.com.au. Also ensure that your travel insurance covers any pre-existing conditions.

USEFUL LINKS

World Health Organization - www.who.int

Immunise Australia Program - www.immunise.health.gov.au

RECIPROCAL HEALTH AGREEMENTS

Australia has reciprocal health care agreements with Finland, Italy, Norway, Republic of Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Belgium and the United Kingdom.

These agreements enable Australians to access urgent or emergency treatment overseas. However medical services are only provided when it would be unreasonable to delay treatment until the individual's return to Australia. It is important to remember that **health care agreements are no substitute for travel insurance**. They will not cover you if a doctor recommends medical evacuation back to Australia.

Further information about health care when travelling overseas and international health agreements can be found at **www.medicareaustralia.gov.au** or by calling **132 011**.

GETTING HELP OVERSEAS

Travel insurance companies often have in place a 24-hour assistance call centre that you can call from anywhere in the world. If you get sick overseas or are involved in a medical emergency, you should contact your travel insurance provider as soon as possible.

CONSULAR SERVICES

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade provides assistance to Australians who find themselves in trouble overseas. This support is referred to as consular services.

The Australian Government will do what it can to help Australians in difficulty overseas, however there are legal and practical limits to what can be done.

The *Consular Service Charter* sets out the standard of services all Australians can expect to receive from consular staff, including what they can and cannot do, and is available at **smartraveller.gov.au**.

A directory of Australian overseas posts appears in the 'Getting Help Overseas' section of each edition of *Travel Smart: hints for Australian travellers*. This booklet is issued with your passport and available online at **smartraveller.gov.au**. Canadian posts providing consular assistance to Australians are also listed in the *Travel Smart: hints for Australian travellers* booklet.

The 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre (CEC) in Canberra can also be contacted for assistance from anywhere in the world on +61 2 6261 3305 or 1300 555 135 (local cost within Australia).

COUNSELLING SERVICES

Australians overseas in need of counselling services can contact our Consular Emergency Centre (CEC) on **+61 6261 3305**, to be transferred to a Lifeline Telephone Counsellor.



Australian Government

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- 1 Take out travel insurance to cover hospital treatment, medical evacuation and any activities in which you plan to participate.
- 2 Before travelling overseas register your travel and contact details online at ***smartraveller.gov.au*** or at the local Australian embassy, high commission or consulate once you arrive so we can contact you in an emergency.
- 3 Check the latest travel advice for your destination at ***smartraveller.gov.au*** before you go. Subscribe to receive free email notification each time the advice is updated.

While every care has been taken in preparing this brochure, neither the Australian Government nor its agents or employees, including any member of Australia's diplomatic and consular staff abroad, can accept liability for any injury, loss or damage arising in respect of any statement contained herein.

Consular Policy Branch
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
R.G. Casey Building
John McEwen Crescent
BARTON ACT 0221
Tel (02) 6261 3305; 1300 555 135

Information for travellers and travel advisories are available from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's smartraveller website: ***smartraveller.gov.au***.

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