

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO!

# International Travel



**Go Impact**

Go Impact offers coaching assistance for student teams as they seek to work with an assigned travel agent to establish the flight itinerary and other travel arrangements for their project. Here is an overview of a good travel arrangement process.

insurance that provide evacuation services and a basic level of accident, disability, and property coverage.

## Get your passports early!

The best international travel arrangements are meaningless without a passport, and waiting to apply for a passport often results in participants paying high fees to rush their application. Be aware that international ticketing and visas cannot be finalized without passport information.

## Use a travel agent

- With today's competition for limited airline group seating, travel agents can block seats well in advance of the project to ensure that a suitable itinerary for participants is available.
- Agents make sure that everyone is booked to arrive at the right airport at the right time with an itinerary that fits within the trip schedule.
- Group travel through an agent makes it possible for groups to book seats with a deposit rather than having to buy instant purchase tickets. Also, groups do not have to present a final name list until a given deadline.
- The IMB-approved travel agent is fully informed on international travel and seeks to minimize logistical difficulties by helping you avoid unnecessary restrictions, inadequate layover times, trouble spots, and more.
- The travel agent offers you constant availability, support, and problem-solving ability with travel to and from the project. In the event of a problem, the agent can act as an advocate, ensuring that a solution is reached and, where appropriate, restitution is made.
- Our travel agent helps us ensure that participants get international emergency

## Gather the information you will need to arrange flights in advance.

Many trip leaders have made serious mistakes by not clearly confirming these details!

- Best USA departure airport for your group. Be open to alternatives. You may need to fly a segment or drive to get to a gateway airport like Atlanta, Charlotte, Miami, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, or Washington DC.
- Best arrival airport in your project country. Be sure to confirm this with your missionary. Most likely there will need to be additional arrangements to get you from the airport to the project location.
- Number of seats you wish to reserve. If you are making plans far enough in advance, you won't need passenger names up front, but you will need settle on a number. Don't under-book. Additional seats may be hard to come by later. Don't overbook by more than a few seats. Some airlines will impose a penalty if you drop too many seats.
- Actual dates you need to be in the destination country. Remember that most international flights from the USA are overnight, which means arriving the next day. Many return flights to the USA leave in the morning and arrive on the same day.

- Be aware that group fares require a minimum of 10 passengers. If at any point you fall below this number you will lose the group fare and must purchase individual tickets. Group fares allow you to pay a deposit to hold the seats until a certain date.

## Review your itinerary options and decide.

- Check arrival and departure times to make sure they are acceptable. Communicate these to your missionary host as another checkpoint.
- Check layovers (times between flights). For groups we recommend at least a two-hour layover to give your group time to change gates and/or go through security checkpoints.
- Make sure the itinerary does not involve “split tickets”- using two different airlines that are not “code sharing” and require separate check-ins along the way. While a split ticket can be a cheaper option, the airlines do not have to cooperate and rebook if you are delayed on a flight.
- Find out if there is a visa (passport stamp) or entry fee required for your project country. This will usually be an additional cost above and beyond airfare.

## Follow a checklist leading up to your trip.

- Monitor the health of your team prior to travel. A fever or other signs of infection will likely result in an inability to travel internationally. Some countries require arriving travelers with signs of infection to go immediately into quarantine.
- Check and confirm all your participants’ passports well in advance of the project. Most countries require a passport to be valid for at least six months after the dates of the project.
- Be careful to provide exact passport names to the travel agent. A misspelled name on a ticket can be very costly and problematic!
- Obtain signed and notarized “permission to travel” forms for the minors in your group, even if a parent is traveling with a child. Some

countries require signed permission from two custodial parents.

- Check on the latest rules and restrictions for luggage for your itinerary. What can you expect with luggage fees? Luggage sizes? Carry-ons?
- Monitor for changes in entry or exit requirements for your country of destination as well as the return home to the U.S. In an age of pandemic, countries may require vaccinations or COVID-19 tests as part of entry and exit.

## Follow best practices while traveling.

- Carry emergency numbers for the travel agent and the emergency insurance.
- Arrive early at the airport. In most cases, check in at least two (2) hours prior to the domestic flight departure time or three (3) hours prior to an international flight departure time. Local regulations may vary.
- Keep your passport close and carry copies in your luggage and carry-on.
- Know what to do to replace a lost passport.
  - Locate the local US embassy or consulate: <http://www.usembassy.gov>. Ask to speak to the American Citizens Service Department of the Consular Section and inform a representative that a U.S. passport has been lost or stolen. Instructions for obtaining new passport photos and completing a new passport application will be provided by the Citizens Service Department.
  - File a local police report if a passport has been stolen. Although not always required, a police report may be helpful when replacing a passport.
  - Contact a friend or relative in the United States and inform them that they may be needed to help with identity verification.
  - Provide the U.S. consulate or embassy with any information requested to verify identity.
  - Complete an affidavit with the embassy or consulate describing the circumstances under which the passport was lost or

stolen. A replacement passport will be issued once all documents are completed.

- Be ready to handle flight changes and cancellations.
  - Remain calm! Most likely the airline will rebook you on the next available flight.
  - Act quickly. As soon as you receive notice that your flight is cancelled, get in line as quickly as possible to speak directly with the airline's gate agent regarding re-accommodation. It can make a difference! This is your first line of defense.
  - If the reason for the delay or cancellation lies with the airline and it is the day of travel, the airline is responsible for your meals (and housing if necessary) until they are able to get you on your way.
  - Your next line of defense is your travel agent. In extreme cases, it may be possible to obtain space on another carrier or obtain permission to refund the ticket and reissue on another airline.
- Come ready to handle a surprise overnight stay. Airlines are not responsible to cover your expenses if the cancellation is weather-related. It is wise to carry a change of clothing and other essential items in your carry-on
- Know and prepare for TSA requirements.
  - It is likely you will have to wear a face mask at all times while in the airport and during flights.
  - Have your ID and boarding pass out for inspection.
  - Do not joke with agents.
  - Remove everything from your pockets and anything with metal before screening. United States airports require you to remove shoes, belts, and coats.
  - Follow the 3-1-1 rule:
    - 3.4 ounces or less per container
    - 1 quart size, clear plastic, zip top bag (all liquids must fit in bag)
    - 1 bag per passenger
  - Review the prohibited items list for both carry-on and checked baggage.
  - If purchasing a baggage lock, be sure to look for those that are TSA recognized.
  - Tape a card with your name and contact

information on your electronics.

- Be smart with luggage.
- Keep your luggage receipts with your travel documents. Mark or tag your luggage so as to distinguish it from all others.
- Pack extra clothes, glasses, medicines, and toiletries in your carry-on in case your luggage is lost.
- Know the delivery address and phone at your final destination so you can arrange the delivery of lost luggage.
- If your luggage doesn't arrive, fill out a claim form. Get the phone number for baggage services so you can check on your bag. Also ask for the person's name who took the report.