



Travel Health - By: Rob Clement

How can I remain in good health when travelling to exotic places?

Do not make assumptions. The food will be different. Even if you regularly eat an Indian curry in the US or UK the taste and the action of the spices on your stomach may be very different as the mixture of spices varies from house to house (let alone from restaurant to restaurant). The spices will be the fresh spices and not the dried ones used in the UK.

The beds may be very different. Even in well-known hotels the beds will need to cater for the local people. In India and China the hotel beds are a lot harder than in the UK and US.

Do not take a simple ailment lightly. If you have an upset stomach then make sure your tour guide knows that you have it. There may be an infection going around that could need antibiotics to sort it out and the sooner you get them the better you will be.

Do drink plenty of bottled water. Even if you are advised it is safe to drink the tap water you can sometimes have an upset stomach from the minerals etc in the water that you are not used to. The medical advice is to drink at least 2 litres a day and that should be increased in a hot climate. Often it is as well to use some lip-salve on your lips to prevent them drying out.



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Do use sun block. Your skin will often not react well to the brighter sunlight and you may go red and blister so slap on the sun-cream, especially on high mountains or near water. On a personal note I once got sunstroke on an overcast day as I was at altitude in China in the snow near a frozen lake and I had left my hat in the vehicle.

DO TAKE MEDICAL ADVICE. Yes I am shouting but some of you do not listen. The first time I travelled to Mumbai (Bombay) in India a number of years ago now, my doctor advised us to keep our mouths shut in the shower and not to touch our lips with the flannel. The reason is that the water is so polluted that to swallow it will mean an illness. On the same trip I visited a family in Hyderabad and they took all their water for drinking and food preparation from the local well as the water was too polluted in the tap. When your doctor advises you to have injections to prevent various diseases he is doing it with your best interests at heart. He will have up-to-date information available on the medical problems in various countries and the advised injections. So please take the advice and check online (see below for web sites with up-to-date information).

You will hear a lot of holiday disaster stories a small medical kit of plasters and sterile wipes are always handy. You will find that for a lot of countries it is useful to carry a small bottle of hand wash that does not need water. It will mean that wherever you are you can have clean hands for that picnic or barbeque.

Do have a carefree and sickness free holiday. You have worked hard for it all year and now you can have the benefit.



Web sites

UK foreign office - www.fco.gov.uk

Centres for Disease Control and Prevention - www.cdc.gov

U.S. Department of State's web site - www.state.gov travel.state.gov

If you find any other useful travel health web sites, please let us know.

Author

Rob is the web master at www.mywisdomtravel.com

You will find a website full of interesting and helpful travel tips.