

Traveling to foreign ports from Timbuktu to Katmandu

By Amy Lenzer

So you want to travel abroad, but the thought of hassling with passports, shots, foreign laws and regulations is making you procrastinate. To help you along, here is a sampling of items you will need to know for traveling.

Apply for your passport at the main post office, 700 R St. You will need to present a certified copy of your birth certificate, two identical passport photos and \$13.

After applying, it will take about four weeks for your passport to arrive—if you apply now. During the peak tourist season there is a minimum wait of six weeks, according to John Deckinger, head of passports at the Lincoln post office.

If you were born in Nebraska, certified copies of your birth certificate can be obtained from the Department of Vital Statistics, 301 Centennial Mall South. Each copy costs \$3. If you were born in another state contact the Bureau of Vital Statistics in that state.

Passport photos must not be larger than two by two inches. It must have a front view of the person on a plain background. The distance from the top of the head, including hair, to the bottom of the chin or beard must be at least one inch and no more than 1 3/8 inches.

Photographic Productions, a university studio, will take and process passport photographs. The service takes about a week. The cost is \$3.30 for each print.

If you are in a hurry, Miller and Paine studios will take two color instant pictures for \$6.50. Black and white pictures cost the same, but the processing takes about a week.

The color instant pictures cannot be used if you will be needing visas because two exact duplicates of your passport photos are required for each visa.

Visas are special permits required to enter some countries. The post office passport division has a list of which countries require visas. Western European countries usually do not require visas for visits less than three months.

To obtain visas, contact the consulate of the country you wish to visit for a visa application.

Some countries require proof of inoculations before granting entry to visitors. Currently, no shots are required if traveling to Europe. But the immunizations division of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare suggests that you call for current requirements before you leave.

Their department gets weekly updates on infected areas of smallpox, cholera and yellow fever. Smallpox vaccinations are usually only valid for three years if traveling to some Asian, African or South American country.

To enter these countries you must have a certificate of vaccination signed by a physician and possessing an official vaccination stamp.

Shots can be obtained at the Student Health Center. The Overseas Opportunity Center, Nebraska Union, Room 345, also suggests that other health prevention measures be taken when traveling. Specifically they recommend taking along an extra set of eyeglasses in case of breakage and written prescriptions for any medications you are taking.

The OOC library has lists of English speaking doctors abroad.

The cost of your trip will depend on your plans and tastes. The OOC recommends that you develop a budget and take a \$100 emergency fund.

There are several alternative means to carry your money. The OOC advises that you take your money in the form of travelers checks. If the checks are lost or stolen, you report the serial numbers of the missing checks to the appropriate office. Most companies will replace them within a day.

American Express travelers checks are the most popular, according to the OOC, because they have a large number of offices throughout the world. But Thomas Cook says Bank of America and First National City Bank checks can be used.

It also is possible to get travelers checks in a foreign currency. The international division of the National Bank of Commerce has travelers checks in Swiss and French francs, German marks, English pounds and Canadian dollars.

First National Lincoln carries the same currencies as NBC except for Canadian dollars.

The main advantage of carrying travelers checks in a foreign currency, according to Pat Kuehn of NBC bank's international division, is that while larger banks and hotels will honor American checks, small stores are more likely to accept their own currency.

Credit cards are another option. Visa, Master Charge, American Express and Diner's Club are honored in Europe, according to the OOC. Credit cards can be used to get emergency funds and can sometimes be used as identification.

A disadvantage, however, is that you pay the exchange rate when you are billed. If the dollar value declines after your purchase you pay more for it.

According to Ellis Soll, of the First National Lincoln international division, the best places to exchange money abroad are banks and railroad stations because they will give you the best rates. Hotels will usually give the worst rate, she said.

Travelers should exchange or spend their coins before leaving a country because coins cannot be converted to another currency in a new country, Soll added.

The OOC recommends you convert some of your money into the currency of your destination before leaving the United States and before you enter each new country of your journey. You will need money right away for subways, buses, and telephones. With some ready money you won't need to worry about exchange windows being closed.

If you lose your money or become stranded abroad, you should contact the American Embassy. Embassies are located in almost every major foreign city and can be found in the telephone book. Or you can list the embassies near your destinations.

A State Department brochure states that although embassies have no funds to give to needy travelers, they may suggest sources of assistance. They also will contact your family and deduct the cost of the cable for the phone call when your money arrives.

Embassies are also your source of aid if you lose your passport. After verifying your identification, the embassy will issue a temporary passport. The OOC suggests that you carry two extra passport photographs and a copy of your birth certificate in case this occurs.

If you are arrested abroad contact the nearest embassy. However, since Americans are subject to the laws of the country they are visiting, the embassy can do very little on your behalf.

According to the brochure, many Americans arrested in foreign countries are arrested on drug charges. Many did not realize that foreign drug laws are stiff and carry heavy penalties.

The penalty in most countries is a minimum of six years hard labor and a heavy fine. In many countries the pre-trial detention period may last a year. In others there is no jury trial.

United States consulates can do little for prisoners. They can visit you and inform you of your rights under the laws of that country. They will provide you with a list of attorneys and will inform your family and friends.



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