



We often get questions from seniors considering their first international trip. Here is some basic advice to help make that journey safe and enjoyable.

Prepare: While planning, check with the US State Department site www.state.gov for passport info and any travel advisories that apply to your anticipated itinerary. From a trusted local travel agent, you'll get valuable help. Careful research will make your trip more economical, relaxed and enjoyable.

Documents: You'll need a passport with at least 6 months remaining before expiration. Make several copies of data pages and give to family and/or friends in case of problems. Pack another copy in your luggage, but not with the original passport. This will help greatly if your passport is lost or stolen. If it happens, you'll need to contact the closest U.S. embassy or consulate for a replacement.

Money: ATMs are available almost everywhere, and the best way to get cash is the ATM. Be sure you know which cards to use and their passwords and PINs. Use all number PINs, as some foreign ATMs do not have letters! Call your card company or bank and report upcoming international travel, so legit purchases aren't rejected.

Check with your card issuer about fees. Some charge extra for foreign transactions. Research before traveling so you can make the best decisions for best card to use.

Communication: Create an Email account with Yahoo, Gmail or Mail.com. Then you can access the account from web cafés to send and check email. Many countries also have cheap netphone phone calls available in web cafés, and may be cheaper than using your own phone.

Health: Be sure you're fit for travel. Bring prescription meds and copy of your prescriptions. Carry pills in original prescription bottles to avoid any airport security hassles.

Summary: If prepare for your foreign journey, it will go much more smoothly. Then, you'll be able to relax and enjoy that first foreign experience, and many more in the future.