

GLOBAL HEALTH TRAVEL HANDBOOK
NOVEMBER 2012

This example was designed for travel to Africa and should be adjusted for your specific destination, but much of this information is applicable to many third world countries and is a great starting place for first time travelers.

History of the Country

- Settlement
- Government
- Political Stability
- Economy
- Religion
- Entertainment
- Climate
- Urban/rural

People You Will Meet

- Who will you be working with?
- Who is traveling with you?
- Who will you live with?
- Who are the natives that will assist with your medical work? (planning, recruiting, organizing logistics of everyday work)
- Will you be using translators?

Cultural Orientation

There are some basic differences or orientations between the African and American frame of thinking that produce vastly different responses, conclusions, and beliefs about life and social interaction. Some of these are:

American Thinking

Time
Future
Young
Truth
Individual
Conscience Fear
Respect / Performance
Pizzazz
Objective
Proactive
Direct Communication
Free Will

African Thinking

Event
Present
Old
Relationship
Community
Shame
Respect / Status
Function
Subjective
Reactive
Indirect Communication
Choice Fatalism

Scientific
(Everything works on principles
laws, methods, causes and effects.)

Spiritualistic
(Everything is affected by the dead,
curses, charms, and spirits.)

Event – We see this most clearly in Sunday services and seminars. They will come in at any point during a meeting. They may sit inside and listen or go outside and bathe their children. They may come to a meeting on the second day or even on the last day. Punctuality is not important. Most people are farmers and still think seasonally. Few people own watches, TV's, or clocks. Almost no one punches a time card.

Present – Money is not saved for future planting needs. It is spent on present needs. No clothing is purchased for a baby until after it is born. It is better to gouge an unsuspecting customer with a high price (for today's profits) than to court his continued business (for future profits).

Old – The elderly are highly regarded in the African society. The elderly is equivalent to wisdom and can be an influence for either blessing or curses. For a funeral, it is the elderly members of the family who decide where a body is to be buried. If a man wants to marry a woman, but the elders of her family refuse him, then the wedding will not take place, whether or not the man and woman want to marry. The elderly play a major role in the function of the community.

Relationship – Pretending everything is well between people is better than addressing a problem. Bosco had a relative staying at his rented house for about two months. The guest became sick and Bosco had to borrow money to pay for the hospital bill. The debts became so high that Bosco decided the best way to handle the situation was to quit his job and return to the village rather than to tell the sponging relative to go home.

Community – Funerals, weddings, circumcision, births, holidays and other events are often observed in community. Holidays are often celebrated with stadium gatherings where speeches are made and entertainment provided. Leave from work for burials is a legitimate excuse for not working and staying away for two or more weeks. Circumcision creates large, dancing, singing crowds that purposefully block roads – an exhibitionist mentality. Community may also provide outlets for frustration that would not be expressed individually - mob justice, public drunkenness, rioting, etc. Community is more important than the individual. To be a friend, you must participate in the community functions.

Fear / Shame – Police act menacingly and threaten to scare people into line. Trouble in Diwan brought a special army unit in that beat everyone. They camped in the middle of the village and the problem stopped. When thieves become too many in Shimoletewa, the police swoop in and raid every house beating everyone they can catch. They take everyone in and let some go only after they prove their innocence. Pokot cattle rustlers were given an ultimatum to turn in their guns. When they refused the government went in and killed everyone they could find - men, women, children, and cattle, until the Pokot gave up the guns.

Respect / Status – Respect is given on the basis of who you are and not on what you do. Idi Amin enjoyed popularity with the north simply because of his Nilotic ancestry while his barbarism was overlooked or even applauded. The former mayor of Kampala, Sebbaggala, spent 18 months in U.S. prison for theft, yet his tribe, Baganda, want to see him run for president of Uganda in the next election. Museveni, the current president, is not a member of the Baganda tribe. Local authorities are given respect even though they do nothing to help the people.

Function – Roads have numerous potholes, but cars can still pass. Vehicles may have dents, no paint, no windshield, broken headlights or taillights, but they still work. Bookshelves, doors, cupboards, chairs, and other furniture may not be level, sanded, straight, close properly, or even finished well, but they are sold and bought because they function. When I first arrived in Africa, we had a bookshelf built. When we pointed out all the flaws, the carpenter's response was, "But, Bwana, it will hold a lot of books." The basic building principle seems to be: measure with a micrometer, mark with chalk, cut with an ax.

Subjective – Reports of an event or some argument or personal interaction with others is told from a subjective viewpoint. Details which might incriminate the reporter or his point, will be left out of the narrative. Here are several examples. The problems Kenya has today stem from colonialism. The killing in Rwanda is because of the Belgians. Bribery and corruption were introduced by the Asians. And so forth. Americans have a saying: There are two sides to every coin. Here the saying should be: There are three sides to every coin – each party's, and the true one.

Reactive – Government makes reactive policies. For example, used clothing is being imported and sold by corrupt government officials, so ban everyone from receiving used clothing, including orphanages and churches. Karamojong are raiding the Teso people, so arm the Teso. Some fisherman on Lake Victoria are using poison to gather fish, so make every fisherman register with the government and be charged an annual fee. We have run out of electricity and need to ration what we have; let's build another dam. The road has become impassable; let's build a new one. A problem must arise, then the government or church or some group will react to it. Planning or anticipating future problems is not a natural response.

Indirect Communication – Because of relationships and the process of giving and receiving respect, conversation takes on a subtlety and finesse that American conversations do not always have. A problem may be introduced for the employer to see why he should give an advance or loan. The African will not say no to a request, but explain why he can not help at this time. The missionary receives details about a problem, but is usually NOT asked for a definite amount of money or solution. The listener is expected to make the final jump to the conclusion or action needed. Complaints about other's actions are clouded in ambiguity and generalizations often without mentioning the other person's name. Sometimes examples are given in teaching situations that actually reflect someone's personal problem. Direct communication can sometimes be considered rude.

Fatalism (the belief that all events are determined by fate and are hence inevitable) – The willingness to accept hardships like electricity shortages, water shortages, poor road conditions, poor community and health services, poor phone services, and a host of other things can be seen as a result of fatalism. Sexual promiscuity with and by AIDS victims is fatalism.

Spiritualistic (the belief that the dead survive as spirits and can communicate with and affect the living) – Why did someone die? Because they were cursed! Why is someone sick? Because they are cursed or because a spirit ancestor is mad! How can I keep sickness away from my children? Put charms on them! How can I get my husband to love me? Buy a charm to put under the bed or put some medicine in his food! The African is easily swayed and convinced by anything with a spiritual dimension. The approach of urban dwellers is somewhat different because of Western influence, such as the media and education of the youth. This blend confuses Westerners. Everything an African does has a spiritual aspect, though not necessarily godly, either consciously or unconsciously. In the rural setting, an African will pour out some of his drink onto the ground before drinking it to please the ancestors.

Cultural Considerations

- What should I know about greeting people?
- Guidelines for friendships
- Rules about eating and relationships
- How to give gifts and assistance
- What is expected of an American in their country?
- How does the culture resolve conflict?
- Public display of affection
- Offensive gestures
- How to dress for the culture
- How should you treat visitors
- How to say thank you
- Respect of authority figures and elders
- How should I approach religion and how will the religious beliefs of the people be presented to me?

Top 10 Cultural Dos and Don'ts

• Top 10 Dos

- 1. Be friendly and shake hands with people you meet.
- 2. When you arrive each day, take time to greet people.
- 3. Take time to talk to the people during downtime.
- 4. Get involved in activities.
- 5. Take an interest in your surroundings and ask questions.
- 6. Work together with others, sharing your problems and triumphs during our time together.
- 7. Ask questions about things you are uncomfortable with or don't understand.
- 8. Seek out the advice of the experienced visitors and try to follow that advice, particularly in area of culture.
- 9. Take a third person with you if you must do something with the opposite sex.
- 10. Eat food that is offered to you when visiting an African home.

• Top 10 Don'ts

- 1. Touch the opposite sex in public except when greeting with a handshake.
- 2. Be in a hurry as you talk to people, even in places of business.
- 3. Try to "straighten out" a native. Instead, try to listen, and if you need help, ask.
- 4. Don't promise the world unless you are willing to deliver. Examples are sending pictures, money, or making promises that we might find difficult to keep.
- 5. Get angry or impatient with people in a way that might repel them from you.
- 6. Ask someone to come using the "come here" finger wag. If you want someone to come, use a motion similar to a child's wave.
- 7. Spend time alone with a member of the opposite sex unless your intention is to be dating, and then keep the relationship out in the open.
- 8. Be openly confrontational or show anger.

- 9. Give money or things to people who ask without first consulting someone about how to give without causing conflict.
- 10. Make negative comments or observations about the culture when in the midst of natives.

Expectations of Short-term Workers

- **1. Learner posture** – Take a learner posture during your stay. Be a student. **Ask questions.** Seek to understand.
- **2. Sensitivity to culture** – There will be many differences in dress, actions, language, and situations. Make an effort to experience this through the natives' eyes. Follow the examples set for you and respect the suggestions given to you by the other team members.
- **3. Pictures** – You will probably be taking many pictures. The native people will ask you to take pictures of themselves or their families. They will want you to give a copy of that picture to them. Be careful about promising to send pictures back from the States, because you will disappoint them if you forget.
- **4. Benevolence** – Poverty hits the average American very hard. The most natural response will be to try to help. Please resist this initial urge. Talk to someone about the situation and try to understand the best way to deal with it without doing more harm than good.
- **5. Safety** – There are many tips you can follow which will promote your safety while abroad. Never go anywhere alone and always let someone know where you are going. Keep your money and valuables out of sight. Do not carry your passport around with you. Do not walk around at night, and try to be home before dark.
- **6. Health** – Don't drink un-boiled or unfiltered water. Be current on your vaccines. Take a malaria prophylaxis. If you feel ill, please do not be a martyr or try to outlast it. Tell someone so you can get treatment. Sickesses in Africa can get out of hand quickly.
- **7. Household appliances** – Remember that the electricity is 220v. If your hairdryer or curling iron is not dual voltage, it will require a transformer. If it has an American plug, it will generally need a transformer. If you do not use a transformer, you will damage it.

Culture Shock

- **Am I Suffering from Culture Shock?**

- 1. Are you upset because...uh...just because?
You've got csgoomfs (culture shock get out of my face syndrome).
- 2. Are you irritable because...well...it's your right?
You've got csdtms (culture shock don't touch me syndrome).
- 3. Are you feeling alienated while not alone?
You've got csils (culture shock I'm lonely syndrome).
- 4. Are you perhaps, possibly, maybe indecisive?
You've got csases (culture shock ask someone else syndrome).
- 5. Are you mad at your hosts or the missionaries?
You've got csihms (culture shock I hate missionaries syndrome).

- Ok, you get the picture. Culture shock comes in many shapes and sizes. Here are some more manifestations of culture shock, but certainly not all:

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Panic | 11. Loneliness |
| 2. Fear | 12. Homesickness |
| 3. Lethargy/sleepiness | 13. Physical illness |
| 4. Estrangement | 14. Resentment |
| 5. Anger | 15. Self-pity |
| 6. Hostility | 16. Preoccupation with cleanliness |
| 7. Indecision | 17. Hypersensitivity |
| 8. Sadness | 18. Feeling cheated |
| 9. Frustration | 19. Thinking everyone is against you |
| 10. Unhappiness | 20. Thinking everyone else is wrong |

- **Six Stages of Culture Shock:**

1. Preliminary stage: even before departure
2. Spectator stage: initial weeks in the culture
3. Participation stage: from watching to doing
4. Shock stage: resistance to the culture
5. Adaptation stage: acculturation
6. Reentry stage: going home again

- **A Real Solution for a Real Dilemma**

While the symptoms of culture shock vary from person to person, culture shock is a very real problem. In fact, anyone that has ever encountered a culture different from his own has been face to face with the monster called culture shock! Therefore, the question is not "Will I undergo culture shock?" But rather, "How will I handle my encounter with culture shock?"

Preparing to Go

- **Climate** (temp, precipitation, altitude)
- **Plane tickets** (layovers, rates, luggage allowances, allow time for luggage checks and customs)
- **Travel documents**
 - **Passport-** every person leaving the US will need a passport. Applications are found at the local post office or online. As of (Monday October 29, 2012), Passports are being processed in approximately 4-6 weeks from the time of application. Fees as of 2012 are \$165 for adult 1st time applicants.
 - **Visa-** what type of visa will be needed? Student, work, travel, etc. these vary by specific destination country. Some countries require interviews and photos as well as a fee and must be processed months in advance and some countries want some money upon arrival and require nothing else.
 - **Certificate of immunization-** many countries require proof of immunization prior to entry at customs. Yellow fever documentation is an especially common requirement.

Navigating the International Airport

- Upon arrival into a foreign country you will often be given a declaration card. This card asks questions about you and your contact information. Be prepared to include the address of the place you are staying. The card also asks about declaring specific items. Be careful about bringing plants, animals, food, fruits, etc. into or out of other countries as this is sure to at least slow your progress through customs if not get some of your items taken. Proceed with others to customs and be ready with your passport and declaration card. My experience with this process is that the more organized you are the friendlier and faster the process goes.
- **Departure checklist:**
 - Not all of the following things will apply to each person visiting or moving to other countries, but hopefully this list will help when you are trying to remember a million different details as you're packing and get ready to leave.
 - **6-9 months in advance:**
 - **Begin getting your immunizations** – check the CDC for current recommended immunizations for the specific area of travel
 - **4-6 months in advance:**
 - **Apply for passport**
 - Obtain passport.
 - Buy plane ticket. (use the same exact name as listed on your passport)
 - Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
 - Obtain voucher for third bag if necessary.

- **Copyright (c) USMLEWorld, LLC., Please do not save, print, cut, copy or paste anything while a test is active.**
 - Check to see if your health insurance will cover you while you're out of the country.
 - Purchase traveler's health insurance if necessary, including medical evacuation insurance.
 - **MedjetAssist**- is an air-medical transport membership program that arranges medical transfer to the hospital of the member's choice. If a Medjet member becomes hospitalized more than 150 miles from home and meets transport criteria, Medjet will arrange medical transfer to the hospital of their choice at no additional cost. All the member pays is their membership fee.
<http://medjetassist.com/>
- **Communications**
 - Inform who you need to that you will be out of the country.
 - Make a list of names and addresses of family and friends to whom you will want to contact.
 - Give overseas address to family and friends.
 - Check international cell service options (more details below)
- **Household**
 - Arrange for someone to pay your bills and pick up your mail while you are gone.
 - Arrange a caretaker for your house.

What should I bring?

- **Packing list**

These recommendations may have to be altered depending on the length of your stay and what you'll be doing.

- **Men and women's clothing:**

- Sleepwear
- Swimsuit
- Sweatshirt(s)/flannel shirt(s)
- Windbreaker/light jacket
- Rain jacket/poncho/umbrella
- Hat
- Socks

- **Women's clothing:**

- At or below the knee skirts
- At or below the knee dresses
- Something dressy for an evening out
- Something fun for a casual get-together
- Extra comfortable dresses or skirts for traveling
- Blouses
- T-shirts
- Pants for casual wear
- Shorts (conservative length) and/or sweats (for around the house or exercise)
- Cotton underwear/bras
- Slip (preferably cotton)

- **Men's clothing:**

- Khakis or cotton pants
- Jeans
- Button-down shirts
- T-shirts
- Sports coat/suit jacket
- Shorts (conservative length) and/or sweats (for around the house or exercise)
- Cotton underwear

- **Shoes:**

- Durable, comfortable walking sandals

- Tennis shoes
- Hiking boots for the serious explorer
- Dress shoes, or nice slip-on, open-toed shoes
- Comfy around-the-house shoes

- **Toiletries:**

- Most of these items are available, but not necessarily the brand you use, and they may be expensive to buy.
- Soap
- Bath/shower gel
- Shampoo/conditioner
- Toothpaste/toothbrush
- Feminine hygiene products
- Gel, mousse, hair spray
- Razors/shave cream
- Anti-perspirant/deodorant
- Sunscreen
- Contact lens supplies
- Cotton swabs
- Prescription drugs
- Pepto, Tylenol, Ibuprofen and other meds. (Antibiotics, malaria medicine, etc., available)
- Anti-bacterial hand gel
- Makeup
- Blow dryer, curling iron
- Baby wipes or hand wipes

- **Miscellaneous:**

- Journal
- Camera/film
- Flashlight
- Battery-operated alarm clock
- Sunglasses
- Backpack

Packing tips:

- The basic idea is to leave no space unoccupied. **Don't bring air!** Break things down into their smallest components
- Take things out of boxes
- Stuff socks and underwear inside of shoes
- Use pens, batteries and other small items to fill in small holes and corners
- Spread heavy items (especially books and liquid) throughout all luggage
- Put clothing in each piece of luggage (if some of your luggage gets sent somewhere else you still have underwear)
- For liquids – tape screw-on lids and put bottles into Ziploc bags
- Don't try to keep clothes neat – stuff, roll – fill up the space
- Use clothes, diapers, and other soft things in place of bubble wrap and newspaper
- Pack toiletries last (on top) to deter customs officers
- **Luggage:**
 - Rubbermaid "Action Packers," "Totelockers" and "Rough Totes" are popular choices for packing
 - Check plane ticket or call airlines for luggage weight and size restrictions
 - Put name, address and phone of destination inside and outside of luggage
 - Use good locks and know where you put the keys (due to heightened security, these may not be allowed).
 - Have a general inventory list of what you've packed
 - Include a copy of your passport in your luggage in case your passport gets lost while abroad.
- **Carry-on:**
 - Double-check for passport and plane ticket
 - Bring a change of clothes and underwear (if your luggage doesn't make it, you'll have something to wear)
 - Bring soap and shampoo if you want to shower at the airport during your layover
 - Don't forget your book or magazine to read
 - You tend to "dry out" on the plane, so pack bottled water, lotion, lip balm, and even eye drops for contacts
- **Excess baggage**
 - When you come, you are only permitted two pieces of luggage to check. Ask your travel agent for a voucher for a third bag if you need it. Bags are typically restricted by weight and size (height+width+length). Although restrictions on size and weight of checked bags and carry-on luggage can be approximate this is not always the case in other countries. I have had my carry-on weighed and measured prior to boarding in other countries. Be sure to check restrictions for each airline you will be traveling with.
- **Getting money**
 - Bring enough cash to survive for a while until you can get to a bank (food, visa, and taxi money from the airport may be needed as soon as you get off the plane)
 - **Cash** – check before departure on how to change money. Some countries will only exchange US \$50 and \$100 bills, and several countries I have traveled to only exchange US currency newer than 2006.
 - **Traveler's checks** – They can be cashed at most banks although exchange rate may not be good.

- **Credit card services** – don't rely on this being available in other countries (although sometimes this is a great way to manage finances abroad)
- **Money transfer** – It is possible to wire money in case of an emergency, but often the exchange rate is lower than for cash.
- **Communications**
 - **E-mail**- Many countries have “cyber cafés” that provide internet access for a small hourly fee.
 - **Phone**- check your provider for international cell plan. Make sure your account is eligible and activated for international use, and make sure your specific phone is compatible with the tower type in the country you are traveling to. We have found that sometimes a pay by the minute phone can be purchased for about \$50 and is a much cheaper and more reliable source of phone service than trying to deal with US phone compatibility in other countries.
- **Electricity**- Most countries outside the US use 220volt power and many of our electronics cannot handle this without a transformer. **Note:** there is a difference between a transformer to convert the power from 220V to 110V and an adapter that only changes the shape of the plug going into the wall and will not reduce power voltage.

Staying Healthy

- Other countries expose you to pathogens that your immune system has not been trained to recognize. This means your risk of becoming ill is high while traveling abroad and it is important to have a plan for keeping yourself healthy.
- **Health Insurance**- call and find out if your insurance provider covers healthcare while traveling abroad. If not several providers specialize in healthcare abroad.
- **Vaccinations**- use www.cdc.gov to find the recommended vaccinations required for your destination prior to travel. Sometimes insurance will help with the cost of these vaccines.
- **Health precautions**- water, food, common diseases, malaria and prevention. See attached handout on clothes dipping for insect control. Contact your doctor for information and a prescription for anti-malarial medicines if you are traveling to a country where malaria is a problem.

Get to Know the Area you will be staying

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| ● Food (restaurants, groceries, etc) | ● Community events |
| ● Entertainment | ● Social opportunities |
| ● Shopping | ● Language |
| ● Tourist attractions | |

Don't pass up an opportunity to try something new and to meet new people! It is likely that you will get more out of your experience in another country than you could ever provide to them.







DIRECTIONS FOR SPRAYING WITH PERMETHRIN AEROSOL

One 6 oz. Aerosol will treat 1-2 sets of clothing (shirt and trousers = 1 set) or 2 nets.

1. Place the clothing or mosquito net on a plastic sheet out-of-doors.
2. Spray, using a low, circular motion, holding the can 8"-12" above the fabric. Moisten all areas. Fabric will temporarily darken when moistened.
3. Shirts: Spray each side 30-45 seconds. Trousers: Spray each side 30-45 seconds. Jackets: Spray each side 30-45 seconds.
4. Mosquito Nets: Partially unroll the net onto the plastic sheet. Spray 30-45 seconds. Turn net, and spray another 30-45 seconds. Keep turning and spraying the net until you moisten all areas.
5. Hang up, or lay out, clothing or net to dry. Allow 2-3 hours for complete drying. Effective for 2-6 weeks. Permethrin, when applied, is odorless and non-staining.

TECHNIQUE FOR IMPREGNATING CLOTHING OR MOSQUITO NETTING WITH PERMETHRIN SOLUTION

Concentration may be anything between 10% and 15%

-  1. Pour 4 to 8 oz. of 13.3% permethrin solution (PermaKill) into the plastic bag or a small basin.
-  2. Add 2 to 4 quarts of water. Mix. Solution will turn milky white.
-  3. Place mosquito net or 1 to 2 garments in bag or basin. (Tie bag shut.)
-  4. Submerge fabric in solution to impregnate. Let rest 10 minutes.
-  5. Remove items from solution. Wring out excess solution.
-  6. Hang up clothing or netting for 2 to 3 hours to dry. You can also lay out fabric to dry on a clean surface.

NOTE: Permethrin is toxic to fish and other aquatic life. Don't flush leftover permethrin solution into streams or waterways—bury it or take it to the dump!

From the "International Travel Health Guide", Stuart R. Rose, M.D.

- **BE FLEXIBLE!!!!**
- Every clinic will likely be very different from anything you will experience in the US and will vary from location to location.
- Expect to be amazed and possibly uncomfortable with the supplies, equipment, location, sanitation, privacy, and every other aspect of the clinic.
- Attempt to really get to know your translators. This will give you an idea of the reliability and the completeness of the information they tell you about your patients. We have had situations in the past where we knew the translator well and after a long conversation between the translator and the patient we found out the patient was being told her medical problem was present because she was cursed. Always keep in mind the reliability of the information presented when using a translator.
- Non-medical staff are just as important as physicians for organization and relationships. Often patients visiting the clinic have never been to a clinic and do not understand appropriate behavior for the setting.
- Consider logistical problems including space, patient flow, and organization of very long lines and lots of people. Keep in mind that some cultures have never had to stand in a line and do not understand the concept.
- Establish and publish a systematic approach for dealing with patients of different acuity levels. Often a local leader can be helpful in helping the people understand why you need to bring someone from the back of the line to be seen sooner than someone who is well enough to safely wait in line.
- Establish a system for keeping up with who has been seen. In the past we have used multiple methods such as dipping a thumb in ink to keep patients from coming through the line multiple times.
- Be aware that people are often intrigued by American physicians traveling to help them. On past trips we have had patients talk to friends and find out what they told the doctor in order to get medicine. Then all of the sudden everyone has syphilis and wants to be treated.
- **It is likely that if your clinic is a temporary setup there will be more patients present than can possibly be treated. It can be helpful to have small packets of things like vitamins, Tylenol, anti-helminthic, and dehydrated food (when possible) to give to these people and avoid some of the conflict of turning away patients at closing time.**
- Be very aware of the complaints and why and where the patient has the problem. You are likely to hear stories about cause of illness that make no sense but may have a huge impact on patient compliance with treatment plans.
- If distributing medications be sure to consider the patient's ability to understand directions of use and the importance of compliance. (use ml for liquid quantities, explain that one pill twice a day means one in the morning and before bedtime, etc.)
- Understand that often patients will not be able to get more medicine for extended periods of time and they tend to save the medicines for long periods without refrigeration or proper storage