



# Business Class

TRAVELING ABROAD FOR BUSINESS? READ THIS FIRST.

BY ANNIKA HIPPLE

**IN TODAY'S** increasingly globalized world, traveling internationally for business is becoming a necessity for many professionals. Here are some tips for making your next business trip overseas a huge success—even before you walk into your first meeting.

## Reducing Jet Lag

Staying healthy and getting as much rest as possible en route are keys to minimizing jet lag. Bring a travel pillow for comfort, as well as earplugs and a sleeping mask to block out distractions. Even if you can't sleep, just closing your eyes and listening to relaxing music can help.

Get up and move about regularly during the flight. It can be tempting to knock yourself out with sleeping pills, but staying inert for extended periods can increase the risk of blood clots. If you do take a sleeping aid, stick to short-duration pills or halve the recommended dosage if your flight is shorter than a full night's rest.

Eat lightly before, during and after your flight. Dehydration exacerbates jet lag, so drink plenty of water, and avoid alcoholic beverages.

Change your watch and start mentally transitioning to the new time zone as soon as you board the

plane. If possible, begin resetting your body clock a few days before departure by shifting your bedtime to your destination's time zone. If your trip is short, try to schedule your meetings for times close to when you'd be awake anyway. It may not be worth resetting your internal clock if you're flying home again in a day or two.

Upon arrival, go for a walk. Exposing yourself to daylight and external stimuli will help your body chemistry adapt. If you must take a nap, keep it short. Get on a normal schedule for your destination as quickly as possible.

## Staying Healthy

Before leaving home, check your health insurance to determine whether or not you're covered overseas. If not, consider purchasing travel insurance, particularly if you will be visiting remote locations or making numerous or extended trips.

In the U.S., consult the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website ([www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)) for information about recommended vaccinations and other health issues for your destination. In Canada, visit the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) website ([www.publichealth.gc.ca](http://www.publichealth.gc.ca)). If immunizations or special prescriptions are needed, visit a travel medicine clinic. Some vaccinations require repeated administrations over time to be fully effective, so plan ahead.

Both the CDC and the PHAC websites have general and country-specific information on staying healthy while traveling, including information on food and water safety. Pepto-Bismol (bismuth subsalicylate) in liquid or chewable form can help deflect stomach problems. If you do become ill, drink plenty of liquids to avoid dehydration. Drugs such as IMODIUM (loperamide hydrochloride) can suppress symptoms and help you get through meetings, but if your illness is bacteria-related you may also need antibiotics. Your hotel should be able to arrange doctor's visits if necessary.

## Passport and Security Issues

Before departing, ensure your passport is valid for at least six months from your travel dates—which is required by many countries for entry—and that you have all necessary visas. Consult your destination's embassy or consulate for current requirements. Make photocopies of your passport and relevant visa pages. Leave one at home and keep the rest separate from your passport.

If your passport is lost or stolen, contact your

country's nearest embassy or consulate as soon as possible. Information on consular services is available on the U.S. State Department's travel website ([www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)), which also maintains up-to-date information about conditions in most countries. Canadian citizens should visit the Foreign Affairs and International Trade website ([www.voyage.gc.ca](http://www.voyage.gc.ca)). Both websites are good sources of information if you're traveling to an area that is politically volatile or has recently experienced a natural disaster.

The State Department encourages U.S. citizens to register for the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program ([www.travelregistration.state.gov](http://www.travelregistration.state.gov)), which helps the government provide information and assistance in emergency situations.

### Money Matters

Once upon a time, travelers' checks were the way to go on any foreign trip, but they're no longer as easy to exchange in many countries. Cash machines such as ATMs are now the most common way of obtaining foreign currency. Call your bank to find out the fees associated with withdrawing money overseas; typically you will be charged a small transaction fee by the ATM's bank, your own bank, or both. You may also be charged a conversion fee, which is generally around three percent. If your ATM card is also a debit card and has a Visa or MasterCard logo, you can also use it to charge purchases directly. In such cases, you'll pay a conversion fee but typically no transaction fee.

Credit cards are also a good bet in many countries. Most major credit cards charge a 3 percent foreign exchange fee, but the exchange rate you receive will usually be quite favorable.

Before leaving home, call your credit card company or bank to let them know when and where you will be traveling. This lessens the likelihood that your debit or credit card will be frozen due to suspicious activity that doesn't match your usual spending patterns.

Jot down your card numbers and customer service phone numbers—which are listed on the back of the cards—and keep them in a safe place. If your cards are lost or stolen, notify the issuer as quickly as possible.

It's always a good idea to carry a decent amount of U.S. cash in case you encounter problems using your cards overseas. In less-developed countries credit and debit cards are not widely accepted outside of major hotels and high-end shops and restaurants; even in

destinations where their use is common, there may be a minimum purchase price for using a card. In many countries you can use dollars as well as the local currency for travel services and tips, so it's worth bringing some smaller bills. Avoid bringing bills that are heavily worn, torn, or otherwise damaged, as these will be rejected in many countries, particularly in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

### Driving Overseas

If you plan to drive overseas, consult your destination's embassy, consulate, or national tourist office for current rules. Many countries require or recommend that foreign drivers carry an International Driving Permit (IDP), an officially recognized multilingual translation of your driver's license information. The IDP is valid only in conjunction with your regular license and must be issued in the same country as your license is.

If you are renting a car, check with the rental agency for any additional rules. Rental agencies and insurance companies sometimes require the IDP even if it is not mandated on a national level.

In the North America IDPs cost \$15 (U.S. or Canadian) and are available through the American Automobile Association ([www.aaa.com](http://www.aaa.com)), the National Automobile Club ([www.thenac.com](http://www.thenac.com)), and the Canadian Automobile Association ([www.caa.ca](http://www.caa.ca)). Permits are valid for one year and may be issued no more than six months before the desired effective date.

Before getting behind the wheel, also be sure to familiarize yourself with international road signs, speed limits and other regulations.

### Cultural Etiquette

It's easy to cause accidental offense if you're unfamiliar with your host country's culture and etiquette. How should you greet and address foreign colleagues? Should you bring gifts? What should you do when invited to someone's home? What unspoken conversational and behavioral rules should you follow? All of these things and more affect how you are perceived, which may be critical for the success of your business meetings.

Fortunately, resources are available to help you navigate the minefields of international etiquette. Check your bookstore travel section for relevant books for your destination. General books on international etiquette include *Essential Do's and Taboos: The Complete Guide to International Business and Leisure Travel* by Roger E. Axtell.

## BUSINESS TRAVEL RESOURCES

These handy, online resources will help prepare you for your business trip overseas:

**SEATGURU.COM:** Detailed information about seat configuration and services on most major airline flights.

**XE.COM:** Currency website with user-friendly currency conversion tool.

**FLIGHTBOARD:** Mobile app that provides current flight arrival and departure information for airports all over the world.

**ALL SUBWAY HD:** App providing maps of 128 subway systems around the world.

**GOOGLE MAPS:** Popular online mapping service, now also a free mobile app ([m.google.com/maps](http://m.google.com/maps)).

**GOOGLE TRANSLATE:** Website and app providing translations between more than 50 languages.

**FREE WI-FI FINDER:** Online search tool and free mobile app that identifies free and paid wireless Internet hotspots around the world ([www.jiwire.com](http://www.jiwire.com)).

Useful online resources also exist, including Executive Planet ([www.executiveplanet.com](http://www.executiveplanet.com)) and the British website Travel Etiquette ([www.traveletiquette.co.uk](http://www.traveletiquette.co.uk)). Both have detailed country-specific information on how to behave in a variety of situations overseas. 

*Raised bilingual and bicultural, Annika S. Hipple calls both the U.S. and Sweden home. She took her first international trip at the age of five months and has been a frequent traveler ever since. From Egypt to New Zealand, Mongolia to Chile, she logs tens of thousands of miles annually as a freelance travel writer and tour leader.*