

International Travel Logistics

International travel for field work is exciting but it comes with certain risks. You may get sick or injured, or have your valuables stolen or damaged. While you may encounter these issues in the United States, they are more difficult to resolve when you are in a foreign country. Preparing for your trip and fieldwork ahead of time can help you avoid common first-time traveler mistakes.

While the following plan indicates a timeline, you should adapt depending on your specific destination.

Begin planning well ahead of your departure date!

6-9 MONTHS PRIOR:

Research

1. **Research proposal** – Your ability to conduct fieldwork will likely depend on the approval of local governmental agencies. You'll need a well-polished research proposal to submit to local authorities for approval. Start working on this early and ask colleagues and your advisor for comments.
2. **Budget** – Figure out what this endeavor will cost and create a budget. Seek funding through Colorado College, the Geology Department, national associations, or other general funding grants (i.e. NSF, GSA, AGU, EGU, PS, etc.).
3. **Passport** – You must have a valid passport prior to leaving the country. Obtaining a passport is your responsibility, and typically takes at least 6 weeks. To apply for a passport, you must present two photos and a certified copy of your birth certificate to a Department of State Passport Office (e.g., a U.S. Postal Office). Information can be found at <http://travel.state.gov>.
If you already have a passport, make sure it will not expire at least **six months** beyond your intended return date.
4. **Visa** – Apply for a tourist visa early—it may take up to 3 months to process and provide you with confirmation. Do not wait until you land at your destination to apply—you may not have all the information the government requires (e.g. name, phone number, and address of your sponsor, or local contact person). Some countries offer a “student visa” which may be more economical and last longer than the 30-, 60-, or 90-day tourist visa. Student visas often require a letter of affiliation with local government branches (i.e. the authorities for fish and wildlife, or those responsible for national forests and reserves).
If you do not hold a U.S. passport, you might require a visa to transit through countries entered en route to your destination, as well as at the destination(s). Any necessary visas should be obtained before leaving the United States by contacting the embassies of the countries to be visited.
5. **Permits** – Research the various entities that you need to report to in the country where conducting research.
 - a. These may require you to apply for:
 - i. Research permits.
 - ii. Sample collection permits.
 - iii. Import/export custom permits.
 - iv. Materials Transfer Authorization (MTA) from both your institution and from the country of research.
 - v. Entry permits for certain government, parks/preserves, or other protected areas.
 - b. Driver Qualifications – If planning to rent and/or drive a vehicle, you may need special documentation and permits.

International Travel Logistics

Travel

6. **Booking your tickets and reservations** – Book yourself or through the affiliate program if working with another university/institution.
7. **Baggage Allowance** – Check if there are special restrictions on baggage allowance for airlines or any other transportation that will be utilized (e.g., boats, ferries, hopper planes).

Legal – While not strictly required, it is useful to consider the following items when leaving the country or when there is a possibility of an accident or injury when away from home.

8. **Insurance** – Consider getting travel insurance, international health insurance, emergency extraction and evacuation coverage, baggage coverage, and trip cancellation coverage.
9. **Customs** – Many countries, and the U.S. upon return, will inspect your baggage for controlled substances, weapons, animal products, agricultural products (including fruits, plants, and food), etc. This may include searches of luggage, individual clothing items, and body searches.
To ease re-entry, before leaving the U.S., you can register equipment (such as cameras) with the U.S. Customs by completing U.S. Customs Form 4457.
When carrying science equipment as accompanied baggage, list it on your institution's stationery and include a statement that the material will be used for research; will not be left, sold, or disposed of in the destined country; that the goods will be exported from the destined country within 12 months of first arrival; and a list of the equipment and its value. Keep the list with the material to ease clearance through customs in other countries. This may not be enough for all countries; you may need additional government permission in advance of arriving in certain countries.
10. **Power of Attorney (POA)** – If desired, you may wish to establish a general or special power of attorney before leaving home to permit an agent of your choosing to act for you in ordinary business and commercial transactions (e.g., to endorse and write checks, to sign documents and bills of sale on your behalf, make medical decisions on your behalf if you become incapacitated, etc.). A POA automatically expires at the time of your death and defers to information contained in your will.
11. **Wills** – Ensures distribution of your estate as you desire.
12. **Absentee Ballot(s)** – If will be out of the U.S.A. during a federal/state/county election and you know you will have reliable mail delivery at your destination, you may want to arrange an absentee ballot. You must arrange to receive an absentee ballot from your voting authorities in advance. This is your responsibility.

6 MONTHS PRIOR:

Travel Medicine

Find and visit a travel clinician. Make sure to mention any prescription medication you are currently taking and any chronic health issues you may have. Keep records of everything you are given or prescribed—have your medical information with you and leave a copy with family/friends back home. Keep all medications in their original packaging.

1. **Vaccinations** – Always consult your clinician for what vaccinations are right for you. Some vaccinations are composed of a series of shots, that may require several months between injections
 - a. Yellow Fever – Protects from this mosquito-borne disease, AND some countries will prohibit your entry without a certified vaccination record (a yellow vaccination card).
 - b. Hepatitis A, B
 - c. Rabies – Could be important depending on the type and location of your work.
 - d. Meningitis
 - e. Measles, mumps, rubella (i.e. MMR) – Usually acquired in childhood.
 - f. Tdap
 - g. Flu – Not mandatory but usually recommended.
 - h. HPV – Not mandatory, but usually recommended.

2. **Prescription Medication** – Consult with your doctor about any of your prescription medications. Make sure to have extra medication in case of trip delays. Depending on the field location, you may need to consider:
 - a. Malaria prophylaxis pills – Some examples:
 - i. Atovaq (Malarone) – once a day; begin taking 2 days before arrival in the malaria zone; continue taking after leaving the malaria zone for an additional week. Typically no severe side effects, but slightly more expensive than the others. Can cause digestive discomfort (i.e. heartburn or upset stomach), so might take it with breakfast/a meal.
 - ii. Vibramycin (Doxycycline) – once a day; begin taking 2 weeks before arrival and continue taking 2-3 weeks after leaving.
 - iii. Larium – once a week; this may not be suited for everyone; side effects include hallucinations and behavioral changes.
 - b. Azithromycin – A general antibiotic.
 - c. Cipro (Ciprofloxacin) – For traveler’s diarrhea but may be used for a variety of other ailments, such as skin and respiratory infections.

LESS THAN 3 MONTHS PRIOR:

Packing List

Do not splurge on expensive gear if you do not need it. Look for used items online (even Amazon has a “refurbished or used” section). Do not depend on finding supplies at your destination. Pack as minimally as possible—paying fees for extra baggage will make your trip much more expensive.

1. Luggage

- a. Since you will likely have gear with you, consider skipping traditional backpacking packs for something more secure and easier to tote around, like a wheeled duffle bag. These can be more convenient and lockable.
- b. Also, consider the 24-inch Rubbermaid brand “Action Packer” bins. These are just within most airline’s “excess baggage” limit; they are reliably sturdy; and have padlock holes for TSA-approved locks (or zip ties).

2. Weather Gear

- a. Rain jacket
- b. Rain poncho – this is one thing that is worth spending extra on. Make sure that you get a good quality, durable poncho, and that it can cover you AND your backpack; this will keep all your samples, written notes, and electronics safe during a downpour.

3. Surveying Gear

- a. GPS unit –
- b. Anemometer – Portable wind and ambient temp meter. Research stations may have a weather station.
- c. Binoculars –
- d. Something to record data –
 - i. Field notebook
 - ii. iPad with Clino or other software
 - iii. Laptop computer, if field location appropriate
- e. Waterproof case for handheld computers/phones
- f. Waterproof roll-up stuff sacks/bags for various small electronics
- g. Waterproof binder or envelope for documents, notebook, and writing tools – always good to have on hand, even if your research station has these.
- h. Pocket compass – Possibly a Brunton, depending on the field work.
- i. Watch with an alarm and timer –

4. Personal Gear

- a. Sleeping bag
- b. Day pack – Opt for packs with both waist and chest straps to reduce the load on your back and shoulders.
- c. Reusable water bottle – You may need extra capacity depending on availability of potable water, duration away from a viable water source, etc. At least 1 gallon per person per day.
- d. Quick-dry towel
- e. Headlamp, with spare batteries
- f. Multi-tool
- g. Sturdy hiking boots – Purchase these at least a month ahead of your trip, and wear them frequently to break them in. If going to a cold or dry location, consider waterproof shoes. If going to a wet location, avoid waterproof shoes so they can dry out easily.
- h. Paracord roll and small carabiners – Variety of uses: secure valuables to backpack, create drying line, repairs, makeshift shelters, etc.
- i. Permanent markers (Sharpies) – to label your gear, food, supplies, samples, etc.

International Travel Logistics

- j. Duct tape – Variety of uses.
 - k. Large and small zip-lock bags – Variety of uses: lunch bags, leftovers, LNT toilet bag, personal trash bag, quick dry bag, etc.
 - l. TSA-approved luggage locks, a few sturdy combination locks, and a metal chain or cord
 - m. Sewing/repair kit
5. **Personal Electronics** – Pack these in your carry-on bag.
- a. Cell phone – Check cell service availability or sim card compatibility.
 - b. Laptop computer, charging cable – Note that rats like to chew on cables.
 - c. Portable solar charger and large power bank – Even if your camp has a generator or solar array, it may not produce enough power to charge personal devices. Do not plug laptops directly into solar chargers because power fluctuations can damage chargers. Always charge a power bank. Common electronics needing charging: GPS, laptop/handheld computers, rechargeable batteries, etc.
 - d. Camera and/or GoPro, accessories – Depending on the fieldwork, you may want both wide-angle and telephoto lenses. 18-55 is a decent wide-angle outcrop range, and 200-400 is a decent wildlife telephoto range. Accessories: spare batteries, a battery charger, extra memory disks, a memory disk reader, etc.
 - e. Rechargeable batteries and charger – For all devices requiring batteries.
 - f. Car charging plug – Likely need both USB-A and USB-C ports.
 - g. Plug end adapters and/or power converters – Country specific.
6. **First Aid** –
- a. Cold medication
 - b. Antihistamines (e.g. Benadryl) and/or EpiPen
 - c. Hydrocortisone
 - d. Antibacterial ointment (e.g. Bacitracin)
 - e. Throat lozenges
 - f. Motion sickness medication (e.g. Dramamine)
 - g. Various band-aids and bandages
 - h. Eye drops
 - i. Tweezers
 - j. Insect repellent
 - k. Small mirror
 - l. Hydration multipliers – Nutritional additive that is supposed to help you absorb more water when hydrating.
7. **Toiletries** – Likely can find most toiletries in the country, but may not have right away or the brands/types you prefer.
- a. Pack these in your carry-on luggage:
 - i. Small bottle of shampoo/body wash.
 - ii. Personal grooming: toothbrush/paste, deodorant, comb, Q-tips
 - iii. Feminine hygiene products – consider using reusable ones; they are eco-friendly and less wasteful.
8. **Clothing** – Don't splurge on new or expensive clothing. The clothes you bring are likely to be soiled, worn down, and possibly damaged. Try not to overpack. Most clothing items can be purchased locally if needed. Hand-wash your clothes once a week, so you only need a few items.
- a. 4x short-sleeved shirts
 - b. 1x tank-top
 - c. 1x long-sleeved thermal shirt
 - d. 1x warm jacket
 - e. 1x rain jacket

International Travel Logistics

- f. 2x quick-drying long-sleeve field sun shirts – depending on insect hazards, you may want to skip shirts with ventilation holes.
 - g. 2x pairs of hiking/cargo/field pants – Preferably quick-drying.
 - h. 1x pair of shorts – Please note that shorts may be inappropriate for both men and women in some countries. Do your research and be considerate of the local cultural and religious norms.
 - i. 1x pair of leggings/joggers for sleep pajamas
 - j. Hat
 - k. Bandana
 - l. 6x pairs of socks
 - m. 6x pairs of underwear
 - n. 2x bras
 - o. Swimming suit – Choose a somewhat conservative style, depending on local norms.
 - p. 1-2x sets of “town clothes” – Clean, somewhat nicer clothes for town, government buildings for picking up permits, tourist activities, and travel.
 - q. Town shoes – Please note that sandals may not be appropriate for local norms.
 - r. Flip flops/sandals for showering
9. **Carry-on Luggage** – Do not check in case of lost luggage.
- a. Cash – Large, new bills. Some money exchange places give better rates for \$100 than \$50 or \$20 bills, some places cannot exchange large bills.
 - b. Credit card(s)
 - c. Passport
 - d. Visa documentation
 - e. Vaccination card (official card, not a copy)
 - f. Flight/travel tickets
 - g. Copy of itinerary
 - h. Medical insurance info
 - i. Travel binder
 - j. Toiletries – small shampoo/body wash, toothbrush/paste, deodorant, comb, feminine hygiene products
 - k. Prescription medication(s)
 - l. Pajamas and 1x change of clothes
 - m. Headphones and earplugs
 - n. Laptop, camera, phone, other electronics, and chargers and cables
 - o. Reusable water bottle

Create a Travel Binder- 1 physical copy in luggage, 1 physical copy with family/emergency contact, 1 digital copy accessible by you, 1 digital copy filed with the Geology Department:

1. Copy of passport biodata page (pic & personal info)
2. Copy of state-issued driver’s license/identification card (front and back)
3. Copy of vaccination record
4. Visa approval
5. Copy of your health insurance card
6. Copy of international phone numbers to call during an emergency
7. Medical history summary
8. Closest hospital and American embassy address and phone number
9. Bank accounts and each bank’s local and international emergency phone numbers
10. Credit card numbers, expiration dates, CVV numbers, and international phone numbers to call if lost/stolen
11. Travel itinerary and boarding passes

International Travel Logistics

12. Hotel/guest house/Airbnb reservations
13. Checklist of all your valuables
14. Logbook for expenses

International Travel Logistics

BEFORE DEPARTURE:

1. **Banking**
 - a. Check credit card(s) for international use fees.
 - b. Notify your bank(s) of all locations will travel to and through. Some banks will automatically block international transactions.
 - c. Pre-pay all bills and/or set all bills on auto-pay – You may not have secure access while traveling.
2. **Mail**
 - a. Stop all deliveries – newspaper, auto-ship orders.
 - b. Have Post Office hold mail until your return.
3. **Home**
 - a. Advise home alarm company of absence.
 - b. Turn off the cold-water intake valve on water heater.
 - c. Turn down water heater.
 - d. Reset sprinkler schedule.
 - e. Arrange for care of pets, plants, lawn, and/or snow shoveling.
 - f. Set up a light timer in house on 1-3 lights.
 - g. Leave trip itinerary and house key with trusted neighbor/friend/family.
 - h. Empty refrigerator, dispose of perishables, take out all trash.
 - i. Eliminate possible fire hazards – unplug appliances, etc.
 - j. Turn down thermostat.
 - k. Store valuables in a safe place.
 - l. Lock all doors and windows.
4. **Travel**
 - a. Register with the U.S. Dept of State's **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)**, a free service to allow U.S. citizens/nationals traveling and living abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. This enables you to receive safety notifications from the Embassy about natural disasters, civil unrest, or family emergencies.

International Travel Logistics

UPON DESTINATION ARRIVAL:

1. **Make sure all your personal belongings make it to your destination.** File a claim at the airline desk for any missing items. Record the “incident number” and ask for the name and work phone number of the agent that assisted you. If it’ll take a few days to locate and transport your luggage, try asking for a voucher to purchase clothes and toiletries, or ask for information about submitting a request for refund after you purchase them. Note any refund timeline limitations for submitting receipts and where receipts will be sent to (i.e., to a U.S. branch or local branch).
2. **Exchange a small amount of money.** Although exchange rates are usually high at airports (you get less local money than what your U.S. dollar is worth), you’ll need this for any immediate expenses (food, transportation, lodging, etc.). You should exchange more over the next few days in an accredited location (Western Union, local banks).
3. **Get in touch with your field crew.** If they are not traveling with you, let them know you have arrived and coordinate meeting with them.
4. **Get a local phone line.** If you will be in the country for over a month and didn’t set up an international plan on your existing phone, it is worth investing a few dollars for a local number that will serve you throughout your stay. A local phone number is often necessary for getting approved for research.
 - a. One non-local option: T-Mobile’s One plan – You get free data and texting in over 100 countries while using my American phone number, and can then use WhatsApp or Google Voice for phone calls. *Depending on the country, coverage may be limited/non-existent.*
5. **Find transportation** – If didn’t pre-arrange, this may be tricky. Taxi companies inside airports are usually overpriced but also the most reliable. Taxis waiting outside terminal limits may be substantially more economically, but be wary of scams. In some countries, Uber (or other, similar apps) actually provide the most reliable and decently priced transportation.

International Travel Logistics

WHEN RETURN HOME:

1. Continue taking anti-malarial medication per the medication instructions.
2. Monitor all your bank accounts and credit cards for any suspicious activities.
3. Consider getting a standard blood test for common parasites.