



INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL TIPS AND TRICKS

Prepared for

Westfield High School Band



TRC PERFORMANCE TOURS

Dietary Restrictions

TRC asks for dietary restrictions as a standard practice during trip registration, but please double check that this information was submitted prior to the tour and also introduce yourself to the tour manager upon arrival. While most European waiters in major cities speak English, we highly recommend bringing plastic or laminated cards in the local language with photos to present to servers and waitstaff. A quality example can be found here - <https://equaleats.com>. Please remember that our tour managers will advocate on your behalf at planned meals, but every traveler with a dietary restriction also needs to advocate for themselves at all times.

Check Your Passport!

If your passport expires before 185 days/6 months after your return date, you should renew your passport before you travel. When you check in at the airport for a European trip you must have in-hand a passport valid for at least 6 months *after your scheduled return date*. The airline will not issue a boarding pass without it.

Travel Tip: You must have in-hand a passport valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return date. The airline will not issue a boarding pass without it.

Scan a copy of your passport, email it to yourself and save it to your phone.

Make photocopies of the picture page of your passport and keep a copy in your luggage. Leave another copy at home with someone who can be easily contacted. It's easier to replace a lost passport if you have a copy of the document. Also consider scanning the passport, attaching it to an email, and emailing it to yourself, so that you can retrieve it from anywhere you have email access should you lose your paper copy.

If you hold a non-US passport, it is your responsibility to obtain an Entry Visa (if applicable) and also know the stipulations of traveling with a Green Card or Permanent Resident Card.

Staying Connected

Using your phone just like at home...

Before your trip, be sure to check with your individual carriers on using your phone abroad.

- **International data packages.** Many carriers bundle a limited amount of international data and minutes at a significantly reduced rate compared to standard International Data Charges.
- **VoIP applications** (WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Signal, Telegram, Line, etc) that will work on your phone overseas
- **Group Travel Videos** – an app which allows you to communicate with each other and share photos and videos

International Data Packages - Using your cell phone in a foreign country can be very expensive, IF you do not plan ahead. The costs for a roaming data connection other than Wi-Fi can run up huge bills very quickly. This includes making cell phone calls, texting, file transfers, surfing social media sites, posting pictures, using GPS navigation and any other data-intensive application on your phone or other cellular communications device. Each cell provider has an International Data Package, often with differing levels of coverage. We recommend taking at least the minimum level of coverage, even if you plan to exclusively use Wi-Fi.

Avoiding Unintentional International Data Charges -

The worst possible thing you can do is leave your phone or other cellular communications device in its *normal* mode so that you receive calls, emails, and notifications via satellite while “roaming.” Doing so can quickly rack up huge data charges even for things we pay little or nothing for in the U.S. (real-time email notifications, texting, chatting, and receiving calls, etc.).

Travel Tip: Do not leave your cell phone in its normal mode. Each carrier has its own data plan available on a per day or month option.

What about Wi-Fi? Our group hotels have Wi-Fi access, often for free, but in rare cases there is a connection charge. There are also coffee shops, pubs, or restaurants with Web access in cities, so while having lunch you can check in back home. To call back home you can use a **VoIP option** (such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Skype, Google Hangouts, etc.) for free using Wi-Fi or cell data.

Translation App

If you are already planning to use International data during your trip, using an app such as Google Translate or Translate (iPhone only) can be incredibly helpful. Both applications have the ability to translate road signs, menus, concert program texts and much more. You can also experiment with translating voice to text when using hand signals has failed!

Power Bank Backup Batteries

Many of us use our phone frequently enough that we need to recharge it during the day. When traveling, this can be a challenge. Having a power bank backup battery solves this problem. However, it cannot be checked in your luggage (carry on only) and should not be used to charge your device when in an enclosed space.

AirTags from Apple (a big help with lost items)

Easy to Use – AirTags are an Apple product that places a Bluetooth tracker inside of your luggage, backpack or purse. It uses the same technology of “Find My iPhone”, notifying you when you are separated from your luggage. It is very useful when you check your luggage in with the airline, so you can see where your luggage may be “vacationing” if it is not with you at the baggage claim. Unfortunately, this product is only offered for Apple users at this time.

About Electrical Appliances and Adapters

U.S. electrical appliances run on a 110-volt current. Most other countries use 220 voltage. In nearly every instance, a simple, inexpensive plug adapter designed for use in the electrical outlets of the country(ies) you visit works fine for common electronic devices (*except for hair dryers**). The key is to check out your electronic devices to see whether they are *single* or *dual* voltage. The UK uses a Trapezoid shaped Plug.

Dual voltage devices accept both the U.S. power source range (110-120V) and the European power source range (220-240V). Most modern devices (again, except for hair dryers), including device battery chargers, are dual voltage. To make sure, find the power supply label (on the “brick” on the power cord or on the device itself) and look for the voltage rating.

- **Dual voltage devices** . . . If you see a range listing two voltages (like 100/240V or 110~220V AC), the device is a *dual voltage device*. All you need is the correct plug adapter (or adapters) for the country(ies) you’re visiting. (There are 13 different types so please do your research.)
- **Single voltage devices** . . . If you see a single number (like 110V AC or 120V AC) the device is a *single voltage device*. To use it, you’ll need a voltage converter (rated at 2 to 3 times higher) along with a plug adapter.

*** Note:** *Want to use a hair dryer on your trip?* If the hotel you stay at doesn’t already have one available (most do nowadays), buy one when you get there. You’ll save money and hassle.

What about Money?

Cash - Often the only expenses not covered during your tour are lunches, an occasional dinner, and whatever you want to spend on snacks and souvenirs. Consider bringing along only \$100 to \$200 cash to start, then use credit or debit cards to withdraw the local currency as needed from ATMs. You'll get a better exchange rate and reduce the risk of irreplaceable loss or theft. ATMs are available virtually everywhere on the planet.

Credit & Debit Cards KNOW YOUR PIN CODE - Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted . . . American Express and Discover (currently an American-only company), less so. Be sure to call your bank or credit card company prior to departure to let them know where you plan to travel. Credit card companies sometimes refuse larger charges or charges made far from home without prior notification. If you'd rather not take your regular credit or debit card, some banks offer pre-paid credit cards. Some cards waive international transaction fees – you may have several credit cards, but only one has the best offer internationally.

Get a “TAP” card – many places in Europe prefer using a TAP card. It is recommended you keep your Tap card safe in a RFID sleeve. It is the simplest way to pay for everyday expenses when traveling.

What about Travel Insurance?

A variety of group travel insurance policies (including the coverage of most medical and travel-related expenses) has been offered as part of your tour package. You can find a full summary of the policies, coverage and additional information about your group's policy on the TRC portal on WeTravel.com. You may also purchase your own travel insurance from another company.

All about Packing

Each traveler is limited to one suitcase and one smaller piece. You may take a checked bag and a carry-on bag or personal item such as a purse or travel bag at no additional cost. You may bring along your laptop, but be aware that packing it in your carry-on may risk data loss from airport security scans and carrying it separately may make it count as a carry on (you'll have to check your other carry on). The reason that the luggage is limited to two pieces is not an airline rule, but a TRC rule which applies to storage room on the motorcoaches.

One checked bag - The maximum weight set by the airlines is 50 pounds, size 26 x 21 x 12 inches (62 linear inches total). We suggest packing only about 40 pounds in a 22-inch-tall suitcase to make it easier to carry your bag from hotel to bus and to leave some room for souvenirs. Make sure your checked bag has wheels and a pull-out handle! Luggage space is limited on buses and storage is often limited to just the luggage bay.

One carry-on bag – Your carry-on can be a backpack, briefcase, or purse. It should be small enough to fit underneath the seat in front of you on the flight, which should also allow it to fit in the overhead space on the motorcoach. Additional carry-on space may incur an additional fee. **Your instrument MAY be your carry on – please check with your group leader or director.**

Note: Airlines enforce checked bag size rules and fines; overweight or oversized luggage will incur a significant surcharge. Oversized carry-on bags may also be checked and subject to additional charges. Costs vary based on airline and location. Common charges for an overweight bag or additional checked bag is about \$300 - \$500 *per flight*.

How to pack your carry-on - In your carry-on bag, we suggest that you pack everything you'll need should your checked bag be delayed or lost, plus things you might need during the flight, such as:

- **A change of clothes.** Or at least a change of underwear and socks.
- **Absolutely necessary toiletries.** What can you get by with for a few days? Use the TSA 3-1-1 Rule for liquids and gels. See sidebars on next page for details.
- **Prescription medications.** Note that the TSA allows containers larger than 3.4 oz. for medications.
- **In-flight Entertainment.** Wireless headphones, Kindle, pocket-sized game, puzzle books or cards.
- **Extra batteries and chargers.** Lithium batteries are not allowed in checked bags.
- **Film.** New security scanners for checked luggage may harm film.
- **Laptop.** Leave your laptop at home. (If you bring it, it may be counted as your carry-on luggage.)
- **Credentials backup.** Pack paper copies of your credentials (driver's license, passport, visas, credit cards, etc.). Keep digital copies on your phone.

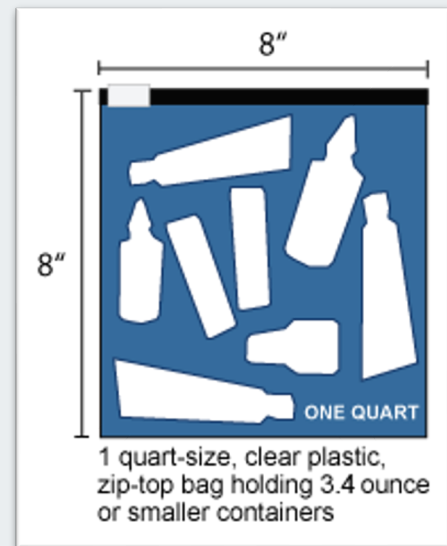
What clothes should you bring?

Pack as light as possible while including everything you need. Plan your wardrobe around mix-and-match separates and layering. Lay out what you think you need, then choose about one-third of it and leave the rest at home! Never pack expensive jewelry or jewelry with a sentimental value in your checked luggage. Please leave your valuables at home.

TSA 3-1-1 Rule and Guidelines for Liquids and Gels

The TSA relaxed some requirements for Liquids and Gels, increasing the limit per container to 3.4 oz. and adding exceptions for certain items (e.g. baby food), allowing these and other items to exceed 3.4 oz. However, it's still safest to comply with the original 3 oz. limitation.

Your liquids and gels must be packed in a clear, closeable, "zip-lock" style container. For more information, visit <https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/liquids-rule>



We suggest that you bring:

- Concert attire, including concert shoes
- Comfortable tops and shirts, pants/skirts
- Ladies: you might need a shawl or other cover-up (see Dress Code on the last page)
- Comfortable walking shoes and weatherproof shoes. Do not bring flip-flops! (Very slippery on wet surfaces and too flimsy for everyday use on a tour.)
- A weatherproof jacket, weatherproof hat, and/or a fold-up umbrella.
- Underwear, socks or hose, and sleepwear.
- Toiletries as needed.
- Washcloths. Some hotels provide towels and soap but no washcloths. Consider bringing one for each hotel and tossing them before check out.
- Pack no dry-clean-only clothing.

Travel Tip: Exchange a change of clothes with your roommate and pack it in each other's checked bags. If one is delayed or lost, you have clean clothes to wear.

Also, don't pack prescribed medications in your checked baggage. Instead, pack sufficient medication for the entire tour in their original containers in your carry-on bag. Bring photocopies of all vital prescriptions.

Luggage Tips

Tips on Packing from the Pros

On your tour, you will probably be required to carry your own luggage off the bus and in and out of the hotel . . . **so pack light!** If you've expanded your suitcase before you leave, you've already packed too much. Save space for your purchases!

Instead of packing a different outfit for each day, pack wrinkle-free, wash-and-wear clothes in mix-and-match neutral colors like black, dark blue or gray so that garments can be worn at least twice during your tour. Bring extra underwear, socks, etc. Use the nesting method—place socks and small items in a pair of shoes, smaller clothing items inside of larger ones, etc. Instead of folding, try *rolling up your clothes*. Consider placing clothes in separate 2-gallon-size Ziploc bags or commercial travel bags (underwear in one, shirts in another, etc.) . . . if your luggage is hand-searched, the searchers can see the contents of your suitcase without directly handling your garments.



What if Your Luggage is Delayed?

It rarely happens, but it pays to be prepared. Make sure you've packed one change of clothes, including underwear, necessary toiletries, and prescription medication in your carry-on. Never pack jewelry of monetary or sentimental value in your checked luggage. *Leave your valuables at home.*

If your baggage is delayed for more than 12 hours and you have to buy essential items, the group travel insurance policy through TRC reimburses you for up to \$200 of the cost to replace essential items. Save your receipts for filing your claim after the tour. Your group travel policy also includes coverage for lost baggage.

General Travel Tips

About Security

At TRC, the safety of our travelers is of paramount importance. Through the years, we have adopted specific steps and plans to enhance the safety and security of our groups. Our strategic action plans and policies have been constantly reviewed and updated through the years. Among the steps we take to protect our travelers:

- Careful consultation with institutions, faculty, and directors constructing programs which balance educational and cultural experience with managed risk.
- All travelers are enrolled in the STEP program, operated by the US State Department, so that officials know where our travelers are located at all times throughout the tour.
- We monitor the State Department Advice for Travelers website, reviewing all alerts and advisories.
- We keep our travel staff and tour leaders aware of a potential or current situation with clear communication, reacting swiftly whenever necessary.

***Travel Tip:** Make a list of everything in your checked bag and leave the list at home or with a family member or friend.*

What's Different About Traveling Abroad?

- **Dress code** – Most cathedrals and some other locations have specific rules about clothing: 1) no bare shoulders, 2) knees must be covered, and 3) no bare midriffs. Being uncovered is considered disrespectful in some places. If you are wearing shorts or a tank top, take pants, a skirt, blouse or shawl to slip on as a quick cover-up. Remember: no flip-flops.
- **Passing through security and long flights** – Wear easy-on, easy-off shoes. These are good for going through security and allow you to be comfortable in-flight.
- **Zip through Security** – Shoes, belt, and coat first; then electronics and the bag they go in; next your purse or camera bag; and finally your carry-on bag. You will have time to put your shoes, belt and coat back on while everything else goes through the scanner.
- **Credit Cards** – Take only one or two. Write down credit card company customer service numbers, card numbers, expiration dates and PIN numbers in case you have to report a card lost or stolen. Carry your credit and debit cards in different places, with at least one in your checked luggage.



- **A Travel Pouch?** – Consider wearing a travel pouch rather than carrying a wallet or purse. A travel pouch holds your wallet, passport, credit card, cash, etc. in a more secure location and keeps your necessities close at hand. If you decide not to use a travel pouch, **do not carry anything in your back pockets.**
- **Duty-Free Shopping** – Whether you have freely indulged in shopping or kept strict control of your purchases, airport duty-free shops offer new temptations. These tax-free shops take Visa and MasterCard and make it oh-so-easy to give in to last-minute shopping. Some shops may offer to ship your purchases directly home to the US.

Patience and a Sense of Humor

Don't expect things to be as they are in America. Perhaps the two most important things you can bring with along with you on a group tour are patience and a sense of humor. These two intangibles go a long way toward making the trip a great experience. Remember, you are on a group tour. At times, things may become “interesting.” Having patience helps your Tour Manager works things out. Social media posts can make a simple delay seem like a worrying crisis to nervous parents back home. Avoid creating unnecessary distress.

What TRC Provides for Your Tour

Great Tour Managers

We select Tour Managers because of their group travel experience, language and communication skills as well as their in-depth knowledge of the regions you are visiting.

Of course, they speak English. They will be with you throughout your tour to assist you and to render personal assistance. Please remember that their first priority is always the needs of the group. However, they will also do everything they can to assist you with individual problems or questions, but please be patient while your Tour Manager works out any group matters first.

Generally, Tour Managers are willing to share interesting tidbits about the areas you are touring, but they are not tour guides. They may not know everything there is to know about various topics and places.

Knowledgeable tour guides

When you have guided tours of cities or individual places of interest, you will most often have a professional guide to explain in detail everything you want to know and more. Most are interested in answering your questions, but remember that they are scheduled to complete your tour in an allotted time.

Have a Wonderful Tour!!!

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