



**Practical Tips for An IHRP Summer Intern: Created by Joanna Kyriazis, 2010 Intern**

**Safety**

- check travel advisory sites before leaving Canada
- write down emergency numbers (credit card numbers, local contacts, UofT emergency contact info)
- prepare an envelope with all emergency documents or photocopies (vaccinations, health insurance, passport and birth certificate) for someone at home to keep
- make sure you have a ride from the airport (NGO) or you understand the taxi/public transportation system ( i.e. registered cabs vs non)
- try not to arrive after dark
- have a place to stay – use skype to book a room and make sure there will be someone at the front desk to let you in if you do arrive after business hours
- register with your embassy
- exchange some money before you arrive if you have time so you do not have to exchange at the airport or with a street vendor (their rates are higher and scams are more likely at unofficial currency exchange sites)
- have emergency phone numbers on hand. In some countries, the police and ambulance are not reliable, so make sure you have a UN security number or someone else to call if you are in trouble.
- bring a money belt that you can tuck into the front of your pants. Large purses are too noticeable and bags that sling over your shoulder can be dangerous because they are well-attached to you.

**Health**

- if you are experiencing medical issues, make sure you seek out a legitimate clinic. Receiving poor medical care or advice can place you in greater danger than not seeking help at all. Often larger cities have medical centers with English-speaking, international doctors. Even if you have to pay more for services, these centers are worth finding.
  - ensure that you understand the travel/medical insurance claim process. Submitting a claim can be more complicated than expected, often requiring you to call the insurance company before you receive medical services. You do not want to be figuring this out while you are sick or hurt.
  - be open-minded and try local foods but give your stomach a week or so to get used to the foreign cuisine
  - go to a travel doctor before hand in order to make sure you have all of the relevant vaccinations. You may also want to bring medication from home for common ailments like *salmonella* or parasites so you already have trustworthy antibiotics/anti-parasitics/altitude sickness medications/etc on hand.
  - do not take for granted that local medications will be available, take a first aid kit with you containing aspirin, allergy medications, flu medication, gravol and condoms.
  - ask your doctor for the generic names of any medication you are taking since your host country may not have your particular brand
- do not underestimate the effects of dehydration. Sometimes Gatorade or other electrolyte drinks can really relieve symptoms of dizziness and fatigue.

**Internship**

- contact NGO 2 weeks before arrival to ensure that they are ready for you
- if you contacted other organizations while initially searching for an internship, keep their contact information with you. Sometimes your original internship will fall through and you will need a plan B. Although it is difficult to get in touch with international organizations from Canada, once you are already in the country, any organization will welcome extra help!

- Ask a lot of questions about the internship and get some specifics before arrival.
- Don't be afraid to speak up about your tasks/responsibilities and interests - both you and the organization should be benefiting.
- Be proactive in getting to know the staff at your organization - both international and local!
- Go to coordination meetings/workshops to find out what other organizations are doing and to network