

SECTION 3 – TRAVEL INFORMATION

OKLAHOMA VOLUNTEERS IN MISSION

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NOTES:

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Airline Travel Information

If you are making your own airline arrangement, the OKVIM office highly recommends Educational Opportunities as the travel agent, arranging airline tickets, for your mission team. Gordon Moody, Missions Director, is the contact. E-mail him at gmoody@travelwithus.com or call 1-800-235-8795 Ext. 1321.

In order to get the very best pricing we can, OK Volunteers in Mission purchases **NON-REFUNDABLE Group-Rate** airline tickets. This requires prior planning. We realize at times less expensive internet fares can be found, however often these cannot be reserved for more than 6 at a time or guarantee the same flight itineraries.

BASIC CALENDAR FOR AIR TRAVEL:

6 – 9 months out

Read, complete, and send the **Airline Arrangement Form** and the **Airline Arrangement Fee** of \$50 to OKVIM. Following receipt of this form and fee, airline arrangements will be made (Airline Arrangement Fees are non-refundable and non-transferable).

OKVIM will research the airline tickets based on the information provided on the Airline Arrangement Form. The Team Leader will be provided with a tentative itinerary and cost for approval. After approved by the Team Leader, tickets will be reserved and a deposit will be paid, if needed.

After the original Airline Group Agreement is completed and approved, an additional \$50 Airline Arrangement Fee will be charged each time flights are renegotiated.

120 days out

120 days prior to the mission, the Team Leader must provide the OKVIM office with the final number of group ticket seats needed by a team. **This is the last chance to cancel seats without being penalized.** Deposits and Penalties GENERALLY range from \$40-\$250/person. The airline will keep the deposit for each seat not used after this date, unless your team uses a certain percentage of seats being held on this date. The percentage depends on your destination and can range from 80 – 100%.

A minimum of 10 passengers is required for group rates. At this time, if the number of team members falls below the required 10 passengers for group travel, the group airline contract will automatically be cancelled by OKVIM. If a team of less than 10 people has formed and wishes to fulfill the mission, the OKVIM office will work to acquire the best possible single rates on flights with all the team members traveling together and adjust the budget accordingly. If the team agrees to pay any difference in cost per missionary, OKVIM will continue to plan for the mission.

70 days out

No later than 70 days out, teams using OKVIM to make air travel arrangements must fax (must be clearly viewable), email, or mail to the OKVIM office, **copies of official identification of team members that they will use at the airline's check-in desk.**

Official identification needed includes:

Copy of first 2 pages of passport w/ photo
Copy of driver's license or photo ID

This applies to those 16 and under as well. Photo IDs for minors can be obtained at a local tag agency or through the DMV.

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Airline Travel Information

OKVIM will submit the names of travelers to the airline to print tickets. **The team will not be ticketed unless every team member's airline payments AND copies of identification have been received by the OKVIM office.**

Once tickets are printed, it is likely that any changes will incur significant costs. Additional cost for changes will be the responsibility of the missionary or the team. For travel including both domestic and international segments, airlines could assess fees for each flight, so that one date or name change could significantly affect the cost of the mission to a single missionary or the whole team.

15 days out:

No later than **15 days out**, obtain the **final flight itinerary from the OKVIM office**. Check to make sure the names and dates on the tickets are correct. Most commonly, spelling corrections are considered name changes. Names must match EXACTLY as printed on the traveler's official ID.

CHANGES IN TICKETS:

1. At this time, airlines are not issuing refunds for any reason, including illness and death in the ticket holder's immediate family.
2. For this reason, tickets cannot be refunded; they can only in some cases be changed. **All changes must be made at least 48 hours before original scheduled flight departs (and, then, only if the airline allows changes), or the ticket will be null and void.**
3. Due to frequent changes made by airlines regarding their policies on altered tickets, OKVIM is unable to quote the fees mentioned above prior to any necessary changes. OKVIM will not be responsible for absorbing any added cost for altered or unused tickets.

LUGGAGE:

1. As a general rule, airlines allow for 2 checked bags and allow one bag and one personal item to be carried on. We ask that only one checked bag be personal luggage. The other should be used to carry team items, such as tools, bible school supplies, and medicines. OKVIM recommends highly visible matching luggage tags or yarn pompoms should be placed on all luggage to ensure easiest pick up at crowded carousels.
2. Because regulations differ in regards to sharp instruments, OKVIM advises all sharp instruments be packed in your checked luggage. Check the Transportation Security Administration website for any banned items (www.tsa.gov).
3. Medications, tools and supplies are best packed in luggage or duffel bags. Boxes are considered non-luggage and in the event of an over-full plane will be left behind first. Also, include an inventory list in each bag in order to expedite the customs process.
4. **Team Leaders are responsible for investigating the cost of baggage and weight and size limitations of luggage and passing these requirements on to their team members.** Check the website for each airline the team will be traveling on during the course of the mission for weight and size limitations.
5. Sometimes the team will travel on small regional jets which significantly limit the amount of luggage that is allowed. The Team Leader should contact the airline and tell them the size of team and number of suitcases estimated. Some carriers will allow luggage to be sent on a flight ahead of the team.

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Airline Arrangement Form (When OKVIM Makes Arrangements)

Prior to airline tickets being researched, provide the following information to the OKVIM Coordinator:

1. Estimated number of team members needing airplane tickets. As a rule, it is easier to reduce the number of tickets before 100 days, rather than add tickets at a later date.
2. Originating airport. Teams travel together. We understand that some teams are comprised of members from various cities. At this time, please let us know if your team will have multiple departing cities so that we can research the best US city in which the team will meet.
3. Destination city
4. Preferred departure date and time
5. Preferred return date and time

I have read the Airline Arrangement Section of the Team Leader Packet and understand that:

- All tickets are NON-REFUNDABLE. Once tickets are issued, no refund for airfare can be made.
- If my team does not reach the required 10 people by 100 days from the mission, the airline tickets will be cancelled by the OKVIM office. If the team agrees to be responsible for any financial penalties incurred or increases in missionary cost due to the lesser number of team members, the OKVIM office will continue to plan the mission.
- Change fees and loss of deposits will be the responsibility of either the team or individual team member.
- To avoid imposing hardships to our hosts and to develop the sense of team, deviations in travel are not allowed.

Team Leader Signature

Date

Printed Name

Team Number

Location of Mission

Dates of Mission

Complete and return to OKVIM office along with \$50 Airline Arrangement Fee:
1501 NW 24th St, OKC, OK 73106

** Tickets will be researched after form is returned.*

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Personal Air Miles Policy and General Travel Information

Air Miles Policy

Team Leaders are responsible for informing all team members of this policy:

OKVIM will work in cooperation with individual team members who have access to airline miles under these conditions:

1. Use of air miles will be considered only when 12 or more members of the team are paying full group rate for their tickets. This ensures that they receive a group rate and OKVIM is not financially penalized.
2. The itineraries of those using personal air miles must be the **same as** that of the team. Individuals who have miles must make the **exact same arrangements** for travel as the team. OKVIM will not support team members traveling separately from their team. Separate arrangements cause hardships on our hosts and the team. This does not support our purpose. This is non-negotiable.
3. Team Leaders are responsible for making requests that air miles be used on behalf of their members under the same conditions as cash paid airline arrangements through OKVIM. Requests will only be considered prior to the utilization deadline (100 days prior to the mission). Requests from individual team members will not be considered by OKVIM. Only requests made by Team Leaders will be considered.
4. Team Leaders must present copies of itineraries for those who have arranged to use air miles to the OKVIM office prior to ticketing the team. This ensures that OKVIM has documentation of travel arrangements made for all missionaries.

General Travel Information

When traveling outside of the US, be sure to leave a copy of your passport with someone at home and carry a copy with you when you travel. In case of loss or theft, it may be replaced much faster with a copy handy. It is also advisable to keep a written record or copy of credit card numbers and instructions for cancellations in case of theft.

It is also advised that, when outside of the US, you take your passport, but leave your driver's license at home unless you will be driving in another country. In that case, be sure to make a copy of your license and leave the copy at home also.

When entering another country and filling out visa forms, you should always describe the reason for your visit as "pleasure" or "vacation" and not "work" or "missionary". To work as a missionary in a foreign country usually requires a lengthy application process and is intended for those who will be staying in the country longer than OKVIM teams.

When traveling, it is advisable to carry as small a bag as possible. Wear fanny packs and backpacks on the front of your person. Put billfolds in front pockets. Avoid purses with long shoulder straps. It is advisable to carry important documents and/or money in money belts or bags **worn under clothing**.

When in other countries, leave expensive jewelry and sunglasses at home. It may even be advisable to leave look-a-likes (such as copies of Ray Ban's) at home. In some countries, where petty theft is a problem, thieves will grab things off of your person. It is better not to tempt them.

Cameras, camera batteries, film and film developing are almost always more expensive in other countries.

A few countries provide tax rebates for certain purchases upon exiting with the required receipts. It is a good idea to keep all receipts for purchases handy in such a case.

Some stores and credit card companies may charge more if you pay with a credit card. It is a good idea to ask first.

Beware not only of the water quality, but also ice cubes and certain fruits and vegetables, especially lettuce. As a rule, "peel and eat" fruits and vegetables are ok.

Research to see if a team member will be able to obtain signal and international phone calls on their cellular phones or see if it is possible to rent a cellular phone in the country you are serving.

Make sure team members have the address and phone number of the lodging location in case team members get separated from the group.

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How to Obtain a Passport

Four weeks prior to your mission, make sure that you have a copy of all team members' passports. If a team member has not received their passport three weeks prior to the mission, please call OKVIM with the team member's last four digits of their social security number, date of birth and name as it appeared on the application. Two weeks prior to the mission, the team member should contact their U.S. Senator's office. If you have difficulty reaching your U.S. Senator, contact OKVIM. **Please do not wait until the week (or day) before the mission to notify OKVIM that your team members are still waiting on passports.**

The general information given below is from the U.S. State Department Website at <http://travel.state.gov/passport>. For more detailed information, fees, forms, etc., please go to this website and follow the links provided therein.

The Passport Services Office provides information and services to American citizens about how to obtain, replace or change a passport.

A passport is an internationally recognized travel document that verifies the identity and nationality of the bearer. A valid U.S. passport is required to enter and leave most foreign countries. Only the U.S. Department of State has the authority to grant, issue, or verify United States passports.

New Application for a U.S. Passport

To obtain a passport for the first time, you need to go in person to one of 6,000 passport acceptance facilities located throughout the United States with two photographs of yourself, proof of U.S. citizenship, and a valid form of photo identification such as a driver's license.

Acceptance facilities include many federal, state and probate courts, post offices, some public libraries and a number of county and municipal offices. There are also 13 regional passport agencies, which serve customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. Appointments are required in such cases.

You will need to apply in person if you are applying for a U.S. passport for the first time; if your expired U.S. passport is not in your possession; if your previous U.S. passport has expired and was issued more than 15 years ago; if your previous U.S. passport was issued when you were under 16; or if your currently valid U.S. passport has been lost or stolen.

Renewal of a U.S. Passport

You can renew by mail if your most recent passport is available to submit and it is not damaged; if you received the passport within the past 15 years; if you were over age 16 when it was issued; and/or if you still have the same name, or can legally document your name change.

You can get a passport renewal application form by downloading it from the Department of State website.

If your passport has been altered or damaged you cannot apply by mail. You must apply in person.

Passport Card

The passport card facilitates entry and expedites document processing at U.S. land and sea ports-of-entry when arriving from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean and Bermuda. **The card may not be used to travel by air.** Otherwise, it carries the rights and privileges of the U.S. passport book and is adjudicated to the exact same standards.

The Department of State is issuing this passport card in response to the needs of border resident communities for a less expensive and more portable alternative to the traditional passport book. The card has the same period of validity as a passport book: 10 years for an adult, five for children 15 and younger. Adults who already have a fully valid passport book may apply for the card as a passport renewal and pay only \$20. First-time applicants pay \$45 for adult cards and \$35 for children.

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Staying Healthy Abroad Article by Christopher R. Cox, *Travel + Leisure*

From contaminated water to malaria, international travellers confront a wide array of health risks. Here, 10 essential tips that will help you prepare for your next trip.

Nearly half of all visitors to developing countries will get sick during a two-week trip, according to Dr. Phyllis Kozarsky, a travel-health consultant for the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). But health problems aren't limited to these regions, of course; viruses don't recognize borders, and accidents can and do happen anywhere.

"American travellers tend to think of the world as a giant amusement park—that they can have a wonderful experience with little risk," says Dr. Edward T. Ryan, director of the Travellers' Advice and Immunization Center at Boston's Massachusetts General Hospital. "The reality is that the world is a risky place. A well-informed traveller is most likely to come back healthy." Taking these 10 precautions should be as much a part of your trip preparation as buying a plane ticket or booking a hotel.

Before you go

1. Do your homework.

Know the health risks of your destination and what immunizations are required by checking the country's Consular Information Sheet on the State Department Web site (www.travel.state.gov). Some countries, such as Uganda, require proof of yellow fever vaccination prior to entry. The CDC site also offers a travellers' health section (www.cdc.gov/travel) and the International Society of Travel Medicine site (www.istm.org) has a link to Outbreak News, a rogues' gallery of "hot zone" diseases compiled by the CDC and the World Health Organization. The list should compel any reader to make a doctor's appointment, ideally at least one month before heading overseas, to ensure routine immunizations are current and to begin specific vaccines or prophylactic drugs, such as an anti-malarial, if required.

2. Consider a travel-medicine consultation if you're heading to a high-risk area.

Although a personal physician can advise on destinations such as Europe, Dr. Jay Keystone, a Toronto-based travel- and tropical-medicine specialist, recommends visiting a travel-health clinic for anything more complex. You can find a comprehensive list of travel clinics on both the CDC and ISTM Web sites. "Family physicians don't have the time to keep up with the risks and outbreaks, disease and drug-resistance patterns, or the newer vaccinations and drugs," says Keystone, who is also the former president of the ISTM.

3. Check your current health insurance policy.

It's crucial to have medical insurance that's valid overseas, says Dr. Joan Pfinsgraff, director of health intelligence for iJET, an Annapolis, Maryland, international risk-assessment firm. Since many health care plans don't cover emergency medical evacuation or even basic medical attention overseas, you should consider buying a travel-health insurance policy. The State Department Web site lists companies such as Travelex Insurance Services (www.travelex-insurance.com; 800/228-9792) and Travel Guard International (www.travelguard.com; 800/826-4919) that provide supplemental insurance. ***[OKVIM missionaries are covered under a worldwide assistance plan. Medical evacuation and basic medical attention are both covered under this plan.]***

4. Consider purchasing evacuation insurance.

Many air-ambulance companies do not repatriate patients to hospitals in their home countries but instead transport them to the nearest acceptable medical facility. However, travel-insurance providers MedjetAssist (www.medjetassist.com) and Global Rescue (www.globalrescue.com) will fly patients to the U.S. hospital of their choice; individual and family policies are available for trips lasting from seven days to one year.

5. Pack a small medical kit.

The CDC has a helpful checklist: items such as tweezers, a digital thermometer, anti-diarrhoeal medications, and hydrocortisone cream. Depending on your destination or allergies, you may want to include insect repellent, anti-malarial medications, water-purification tablets, prescription pills for skin or parasite infections, and an epinephrine auto-injector. Medex Assistance sells several kits on its site (www.medexassist.com; from \$18). Also: bring extra prescription drugs, and carry them in clearly labelled, original containers. It may be hard to find your medications while abroad.

6. Carry your medical history with you at all times.

Travellers who suffer from a chronic or pre-existing condition should bring a copy of their medical history (which can be stored on a wallet-sized disk or USB drive). Med-InfoChip (877/872-3475; www.medinfochip.com; from \$70) sells USB drives that contain prepared forms for information on allergies and medications, medical history, and doctor contacts.

Once you're there

7. Don't drink the water.

It may seem obvious but it bears repeating: In undeveloped countries, stick with bottled water in sealed containers, even for brushing your teeth, Pfinsgraff advises. (Refilling discarded bottles with tap water is a thriving business in many poor countries, so be sure that the bottles you buy are sealed.) Also, resist the urge to buy food from street vendors and avoid fruit that's already been peeled, salad, and leafy green vegetables. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use an antibacterial hand sanitizer.

If you become ill

8. Seek top-notch medical care.

A high-end hotel's concierge should have the names and numbers of reputable physicians, dentists, and clinics. Some hotels, such as the Four Seasons Buenos Aires, have an in-house registered nurse. Many others, such as the Conrad Bangkok, have doctors on call 24 hours a day.

If you buy travel-health insurance, you can get referrals from your provider. Otherwise, the consular-services section of an American Embassy can suggest preferred physicians and facilities. Also, the non-profit International Association for Medical Assistance to Travellers (www.iamat.org) inspects clinics and has a list of English-speaking, Western-trained physicians around the world. Membership is required, but it's free.

9. Avoid buying medication locally.

"A large number of anti-malarials and antibiotics available overseas are counterfeit," Kozarsky says. Drugs in many developing countries can be purchased without a prescription, so if you must buy medicine abroad, make sure you get your hotel doctor to okay it. A 2004 study in the journal *Tropical Medicine & International Health* found that 53 percent of anti-malarials purchased in five Asian countries were bogus. Other medications may be adulterated with additional narcotics.

Follow up at home

10. If you have a fever, seek medical attention.

Up to 11 percent of returning travellers can experience febrile illness, according to a study published in the journal of the American Academy of Family Physicians. If you've been to a malarial area, a fever is "a medical emergency," Kozarsky says, and you need to see a doctor immediately. The American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene (www.astmh.org) has a list of post-travel experts.

Prescription for confusion

Many prescription and over-the-counter drugs have the same (or similar) brand names as drugs sold overseas—but contain different active ingredients. Here, a few to look out for.

U.S. Brand Name and Purpose	Overseas Brand Name and Purpose
Ambien sleeping pill	Ambyen (U.K.) abnormal heart rhythm
Allegra allergy medication	Allegro (Germany) headaches
Prozac antidepressant	Prazac (Denmark) high blood pressure

For the full list, go to www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/reports/confusingnames.html.

Avian flu

First it was mad cow. Then it was SARS. Now the disease that everyone is concerned about is avian flu. If a worldwide pandemic does happen, there could be travel restrictions and enforced quarantines. However, at press time, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was not recommending that you cancel your travel plans—especially since avian flu was reportedly on the wane in Asian countries. Here's what you need to know if you're headed to one of the 10 countries where an outbreak has occurred.

Most trip-cancellation insurance plans will cover medical and travel expenses should you catch avian flu while travelling (though no tourist has to date). They will also cover you if your trip is interrupted due to quarantine or a flight ban in the country you're visiting. But if you cancel your trip ahead of time because you hear about an outbreak of avian flu, most policies won't pay. For that, you need to buy a policy that has a "cancel for any reason" option, which will add 40 to 50 percent to the premium, according to Jim Grace, president of online travel-insurance vendor InsureMyTrip.com. The site has two such policies available, from M. H. Ross and TravelSafe.

Stay away from live poultry farms and markets—even in urban centers. The virus is passed primarily through poultry feces and blood, but can be transmitted via other secretions too. It's safe to eat poultry and eggs, says Christine Pearson, a spokesperson for the CDC, as long as they are cooked thoroughly (at 165 degrees Fahrenheit).

Finally, if you develop flu-like symptoms while travelling, seek medical care immediately. —M.A.

For the most up-to-date information, log on to:

www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/pandemic/en/index.html

www.cdc.gov/flu/avian