

Travel Medicine

Not just bugs

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Why I love New Zealand

- Corruptions Perceptions Index 2009
 - 1 New Zealand
 - 2 Denmark
 - 3 Singapore / Sweden
 - 5 Switzerland
 - 6 Finland / Netherlands
 - 8 Australia / Canada / Iceland
 - 11 Norway

<http://www.transparency.org>

A violent world...

“In 2000, an estimated 1.6 million people worldwide lost their lives to violence – a rate of nearly 28.8 per 100 000. Around half of these deaths were suicides, nearly one-third were homicides, and about one-fifth were casualties of armed conflict.”

WHO World report on violence and health 2002

Leading causes of death in travellers

- Natural 50% Leggat, Klein JTM Vol.8,Iss.1
- Non-accidental (%'s from data by Prof M. Shaw)
 - Murder (27%)
 - Suicide (ND – Canadian study suggests \approx murder)
- Accidental
 - Aircraft (17%)
 - Road accidents (16%)
 - Drowning (11%)
 - Other accidents (11%)
- Infectious disease 2 to 5%

Room for improvement

- Only 50% of NZ GPs providing travel services give personal safety advice to their patients. JTM Vol.5,Iss.2, 2006 Leggat
- Roughly half of travellers leave without insurance and even fewer have pretrip consultations.
- As GPs, you are uniquely placed to raise your patient's awareness of pretrip preparation

Questions to ask

- Where are you going?
- Why are you going?
 - The answer may surprise you
- How will you be getting around?
- Where will you stay?
- Are you insane?!?
 - Is that such a good idea?

Non-vaccinable conditions

- Natural causes
- 'Accidental' causes
 - Transport
 - Environmental
- Non-accidental
 - Murder
 - Assault
 - Suicide
- Falling foul of the authorities

Planes

- Risk of dying per flight in a
 - Top shelf commercial jet 1:10⁶
 - Bottom shelf commercial jet 1:843 000
- <http://www.planecrashinfo.com>
- Risk of dying in a light aircraft flight much higher
 - Many insurances exclude light aircraft

Road Traffic Accidents

- Road traffic accidents kill 1.2 million people every year and injure or disable as many as 50 million more WHO 2005
- Road traffic accidents kill 33 people every hour in South-East Asia WHO 2009
- Predominance in poorer countries, where tourism is becoming increasingly popular
- RTAs affect drivers, passengers & pedestrians
- Most are avoidable

RTAs

- Reasons for increased accidents
 - Poor road construction/ maintenance
 - Unroadworthy vehicles often the norm
 - Mixtures of vehicles and animals on the road
 - Poor lighting
 - Unlicensed drivers
 - Laws non-existent/ not enforced
 - High speeds
- For the driving traveller
 - Unfamiliar terrain
 - Unfamiliar driving habits
 - Fatigue/ jet lag

Road advice

- Use official taxis/ transport
 - Prebook wherever possible
 - Learn the words for “slow down” in the local languages
- Paying for quality driver/ vehicle is money well spent
 - Hire as big a vehicle as is practical
 - Remove the rental signs if possible
- Learn the rules of the road in the new country
 - Foreigners are automatically at fault in some countries
- Never drink and drive
- Avoid driving at night
- Wear a seatbelt
- Take a child seat with if unsure of availability



Motor bikes

- Do you know how to drive one?
- Wear a crash helmet
 - Take one with if unsure of availability
 - This also applies to motor bike taxis
 - Watch for the hot exhaust pipe
- > 100cc usually not covered by insurance
- Tuk-tuks risk accidents and robberies

Public transport

- Best avoided in many countries
- Know how the system works before you leave
 - In Jamaica the bus only leaves when it's full
 - In Africa the bus is sometimes late and sometimes doesn't come at all
- Keep your belongings close
 - Ideally in front of you
- Don't travel at night
- Open truck/ ute backs are extremely dangerous

Environmental hazards

- Drowning is the biggest environmental risk
 - Don't drink and dive
 - Best to stick to chlorinated swimming pools
- Altitude sickness is a killer
 - Just being aware of the risk can be life-saving
- What are the temperatures there?
- How polluted is the air?
- Leave the jandals at home





You are a **WINNER**

Just how rich are you really?

Mindset shift

- You may not feel like one now but as soon as you land in the third world you become a millionaire
- You have easily a year's salary on your person
- You can draw millions more out of an ATM
- Life is cheap
- Westerners stand out like a sore thumb

Mugging/ Kidnapping/ Murder

- Murder is usually financially motivated
- Blend in, be inconspicuous, dress local
- Avoid any commotions
- Don't go out at night
- Don't go into ghettos/ slums/ favelas
- Leave all jewellery/ valuables at home
- Have a dummy wallet for petty cash
 - Make it look convincing
- Resisting a mugging is usually not advised
 - But sometimes they plan to kill you anyway

Rio favela 11 September 2009



www.throng.co.nz

Rio favela 17 October 2009



<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world>



www.militaryphotos.net

It's not paranoia if they really are trying to kill you!

- Common sense can save your life
- Don't give personal details to anyone
 - This includes room number
- Vary your routine
 - They may be watching you
- Know where you are going and how to get back before you leave the hotel
 - Identify landmarks
 - NEVER look at a map in the street
- If it looks dodgy, it probably is – get out fast
- Don't go out at night

Sexual assault

- Easy targets
 - Western women are reputed to be immoral
 - Westerners struggle to report assaults to police
- Don't attract attention to yourself
- Beware alcohol and drugs
- Know cultural norms (esp. Islamic countries)
 - Small talk with the taxi driver = a sexual advance
 - Take a headscarf with you
- You are safer in groups of friends
 - Agree what the plans are before you leave for the day
- Post exposure antiretrovirals within 72 hours

In the hotel

- Book a room within floors 2 to 6
- Identify 2 fire escape routes on arrival
 - Will you find your way in a dark, smokey corridor?
- Don't open the door if you aren't sure who it is
 - Did you really order room service?
 - Phone reception if there is a doubt
- Use the hotel safe
 - But remember to check it before you leave
- Use the do not disturb sign when you go out

Suicide

- Are there any pre-existing psychiatric conditions?
- Don't stop taking meds on holiday
 - Take them in their original packages with a copy of the script
- Be prepared for the stresses of travel
- What will your support networks be?
- How will you stay in touch with whanau?

Illicit drugs

- Illegal almost everywhere despite common misconceptions
- Drug dealers can turn into police informants in an instant!
- Sentences can be extremely harsh
 - Flogging/ imprisonment/ execution
- Just don't
 - Sadly, we do have to say it!



Travellers Jamaica – Thomas Cook

- “The possession of drugs is strictly illegal and offenders face strict punishment. Random roadside searches are common and tourists are favourite targets.”

Medical tourism

- 50 countries worldwide offer medical tourism, including NZ
- Worth \$2.2 billion/ yr to India by 2012
- Know all about the qualifications, facilities and outcomes before you book it
- Who is going to provide the post-op care?
- What happens if something goes wrong?

Before you leave

- Know the destination
 - Laws, customs, language, no-go zones
 - Read travel guides and reputable internet advisories
- Register with safetravel.govt.nz
- Have embassy contact details available
- Let relatives know your itinerary
- Take out comprehensive insurance
 - Check the exclusions
 - Pre-existing conditions
 - Travel into high risk areas
- Check visas and valid passport
- Take some spare passport size photos

But most importantly...

**DON'T LEAVE YOUR BRAIN
ON THE PLANE**