

## Tips for International Adoption Travel

The day has finally come that you, and perhaps your family, will travel for that most exciting trip—the trip where you bring your child home! This may be thrilling, scary, and exhausting all at the same time.

You are not only adding a member to your family, you're also traveling abroad, which requires a lot of planning. This can feel overwhelming. We recommend you put the pieces of the puzzle together as early as possible so you can be fully in the moment when you finally meet your new child.

Following are some tips to get you started. Find more insights on international travel for adoption from the resources at the end of the article.

### Getting all travelers ready

Are all your travelers up to date on the immunizations needed for the country you're visiting? Remember some vaccinations need to be started early, and require several doses. Consider finding a travel-medicine specialist.

Search [www.istm.org](http://www.istm.org) for listings of doctors and clinics in the area you'll be visiting abroad. Visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](http://www.cdc.gov) website and click on "Traveler's Health" to determine any health concerns for your specific country.

Lastly, work on getting physically ready to

haul around a child. Unless you're adopting a newborn, you may be surprised at how much strength it takes to carry even a toddler. Travelling abroad means lots of airports and customs lines. Also consider picking up a lightweight, collapsible stroller, since some children will not be comfortable being held.

### Bring a helper

If you are not bringing a partner or spouse, consider bringing a friend or relative who can help with the many activities you'll be engaged in on this trip. You'll want someone who is supportive, flexible, and enthusiastic.



This companion may help you haul luggage, remember important paperwork, assist with childcare, or just listen as you process the many emotions of adopting! Be thoughtful when choosing this person.

### Connect with adoption peers and do your research

Adoption agencies can provide you with suggestions from prior travelers; many adoption workers have themselves traveled to the places you'll be visiting.

If possible, talk to other adoptive parents who have recently been to your destination. They may know about products you could buy there rather than carrying in. They'll also have tips for dressing for the weather, and may know how to locate services that

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you'll need.

Do some research on the country you're travelling to. You'll want to understand some basic phrases if English is not spoken. You may need to familiarize yourself with some basic customs so that you avoid offending anyone. Lastly, there may be sites that are important for you to see, so that you can enjoy and share these cultural points of interest with your child later on.

**Luggage: decisions, decisions**

Imagine yourself with your bags in the airport, in taxis, or in train stations—the less weight and the fewer the bags the better.

You will also have an additional passenger on the way home—your new child, and all of his or her belongings.

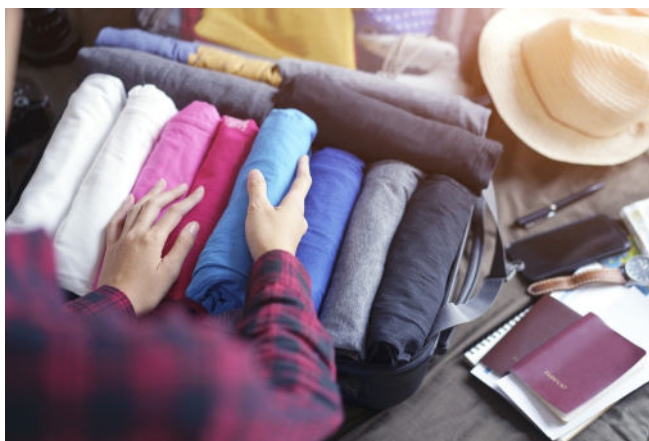
- All luggage should have wheels or be easily carried, such as a clip-on bag, or backpack.
- Pack as if you expect to lose a piece of luggage. If you are traveling with a partner or other support person, mix your luggage so you have clothing in all pieces. When planning your wardrobe, think *lightweight* and *layers*.
- Bring an empty bag for souvenirs. Bring thank you gifts for the foster family or orphanage. Your adoption agency will have suggestions if you need some guidance.

**The joys of airport security**

Airport security is what it is, but there are things you can do to speed it up. Slip-on shoes, socks, and no loose change are just a few of the recommendations for screenings at any U.S. airport. If you're bringing baby gear, practice ahead of time so you're not

holding up others while trying to fold up your stroller. You might also consider purchasing the TSA pre-check approval, which means faster security checks and no shoe removal!

You can find more airport security requirements and tips here: <https://www.tsa.gov/travel/travel-tips>.



**Packing—finding the balance**

You'd like to bring everything but the kitchen sink, but remember the tip about travelling as light as possible. The following items would be good to keep in your **carry-on bag**.

Remember to leave room for your new

baby's or child's essential items for the return trip.

- All important papers, including copies of dossier paperwork
- A notarized letter from your child's other parent if you are traveling alone with one of your children. The letter from the other parent needs to state his or her permission for your child to leave the country with you.
- Medicine
- Some toiletries
- Extra clothing (including undergarments)

For ideas on what to pack for your new baby or child, read "[What to Pack for Overseas Adoption Travel](#)" for specific suggestions.

Here's a sample of things parents may want to pack for themselves:

- Bath towels
- Umbrella
- Cellphone with camera and flashlight

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- app, and chargers that work abroad
- Zip lock bags
- Wet-wipes
- Toilet paper
- Granola bars and other easy to pack snack foods. With time changes, long travel, and remote locations you may find yourself very hungry and without any options to get food.
- Journal. Start your journal with all the emergency contact information you might need.
- Prescription medicines. Keep in original container (for airline inspection) and take more than you would need.
- Small travel guides and foreign phrase book
- Color copies of passport and visas. Pack copies separately from originals.
- Money. Being stuck somewhere without money is a scary feeling, so bring several forms: cash, ATM card, and credit card. Using an ATM is sometimes better than exchanging U.S. money for the local currencies, but it is still good to bring some U.S. cash to exchange. (Note: ATMs often charge higher fees than in the U.S.) Let your financial institution know you'll be traveling.
- Health insurance. Be sure your insurance will cover medical emergencies outside of the United States. If not, investigate travel insurance through your credit cards or go to: <http://insuremytrip.com>.

### Health considerations after arriving

Being in another country can make safe eating and drinking for you, an outsider from a completely different kind of biome, a challenge. Review the Center for Disease Control's webpage about precautions you and your family can take once you arrive in the country: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/health-during-trip>.

### Packing positivity

The most important things to bring are a positive attitude, a sense of adventure, and

patience. Your trip may be long and trying, but you already know how this story ends!

Be flexible, as most other cultures don't function on western time or standards. Many tasks may take longer or be more complicated, so try to go with the flow. Also remember you are representing your country and all adoptive families.

### Soak up your child's cultural roots

One Wisconsin adoptive parent says emphatically, "Leave the hotel! If you have the opportunity to visit sites in the country, do it. I feel like I'm better equipped to bring our son's culture into our family because we experienced the street markets, toured regional attractions, and spoke with locals."

Try new foods. Meet the locals. Take tours. Learn, learn, learn. Buy something from the country that can be included in your baby/child's room. However, note that art pictures, unfortunately, are often not allowed in customs or security.

Talk with your child's caregiver. They *know* your child and the culture of your child! Soak it all up: the precious memories created during these travels will be woven into your family's, and your new child's, story.



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Wisconsin Department of  
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## Resources

### *From the [Lending Library](#)*

- *10 Steps to Successful International Adoption: A Guided Workbook*, by Brenda K. Uekert
- International Adoption Workshop (DVD)
- *The Complete Book of International Adoption*, by Dawn Davenport
- Partners Newsletter: [Family Tool Kits](#)

### *Additional Resources*

- [U.S. Department of State – Intercountry Adoption](#)
- [Show Hope – 20+ Travel Tips for International Adoption](#)
- [Parents.com – What to Pack for Overseas Travel](#)
- [Health and Medical Advice for International Travelers](#) at <http://comeunity.com>