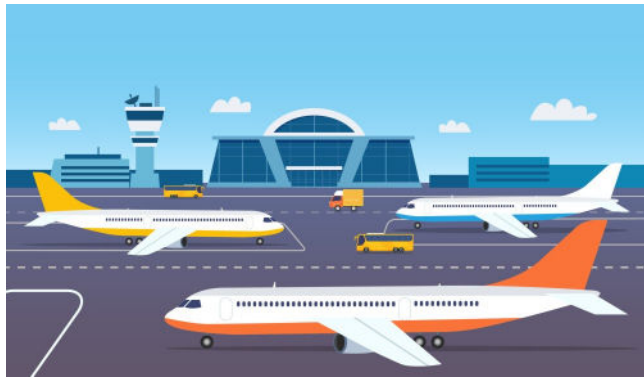


Tips for International Adoption Travel

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 adding a member to your family and traveling abroad, which requires a lot of planning and can feel overwhelming. We recommend you put the puzzle pieces together as early as possible so you can be fully present 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 <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 website](#) and click on "Traveler's Health" to determine any health concerns for your specific country.

Lastly, work on getting physically ready to carry a child. Unless you're adopting a newborn, you may be surprised at how much strength it takes to carry even a toddler.

Traveling 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 supportive, flexible, and enthusiastic.

This companion may help you haul luggage, remember necessary paperwork, assist with childcare, or listen as you process the many emotions of adopting.

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.

Talk to other adoptive parents who have recently been to your destination if possible. 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 you'll need.

Do some research on the country you're traveling to. You'll want to understand some basic phrases if English is not spoken. You may need to familiarize yourself with some essential customs to avoid offending anyone.

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Lastly, there may be important sites to see so 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 another passenger on the way home—your new child and all their 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 up your items so you each have some clothing in all pieces. When planning your wardrobe, think lightweight and layers.
- Consider bringing an empty bag for souvenirs and thank-you gifts for the foster family or orphanage. Your adoption agency will have suggestions if you need 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 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 tips about airport security requirements here: [tsa.gov/travel/travel-tips](https://www.tsa.gov/travel/travel-tips).

Packing—finding the balance

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 their permission for your child to leave the country with you.
- Medicine
- Some toiletries
- Extra clothing and 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 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 for food.
- Journal. Start your journal with all the emergency contact information you might need.
- Prescription medicines. Keep it in the original container (for airline inspection), and take more than you need.
- Small travel guides and foreign phrasebook
- Color copies of passports and visas. Pack copies separately from originals.
- Money. Being stuck somewhere without money is scary, so bring several forms: cash, ATM card, and credit card. Using an ATM is sometimes better than

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exchanging U.S. money for local currencies, but bringing some U.S. cash to exchange is still good. (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 covers 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 a challenge for you, an outsider from a completely different kind of biome. [Review the Center for Disease Control's webpage about precautions you and your family can take once you arrive in the country.](#)

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 can visit sites in the country, do so. I feel 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, and take tours. Buy something from the country that can be included in your baby/child's room.

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.



Resources

From the [Resource Library](#)

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

Additional Resources

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