



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

TRAVELLING WITH CHILDREN



smartraveller.gov.au

Every traveller, every trip.

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Travelling with children can be rewarding and fun if you're properly prepared and do your research before you leave.

This brochure provides parents with information to help prepare for a hassle-free and safe journey. It should be read in conjunction with *Travel smart: hints for Australian travellers* and *Travelling well*, available at **smartraveller.gov.au**.

When you travel abroad, you leave behind Australia's support systems, emergency service capabilities and medical facilities. The Australian Government will do what it can to help Australians in difficulty overseas, but there are legal and practical limits to what can be done to assist travellers in other countries. You should have realistic expectations about this and read the *Consular Services Charter*, available at **smartraveller.gov.au**, before you go.

Before you go – be prepared

The better prepared you are, the safer and more enjoyable your travel will be.

Read the travel advice

Start with the latest travel advice for your destination at **smartraveller.gov.au**. This will give you information on the main risks you may face and some precautions you can take. Our travel advice also includes practical information on the safety and security situation, local laws and health issues. Also check out the latest guidebooks and talk to other parents who have travelled overseas with children.

Register before you travel

Make sure you register your travel and contact details online at **smartraveller.gov.au** before you travel. This will make it easier to contact you in an emergency, whether it's a natural disaster, civil disturbance or family issue. The registration information you provide is protected by Australia's strict privacy laws.

Subscribe to travel advice

While at **smartraveller.gov.au**, subscribe to receive free email updates to travel advice. This will help you stay across any major changes to the safety and security situation, local laws and health issues in the countries you plan to visit.

Travel insurance

If you can't afford travel insurance for you and your family, you can't afford to travel.

We strongly advise you to take out comprehensive travel insurance for yourself and your family. Make sure it covers all medical expenses for

injury or illness, as well as theft of valuables, damage to baggage, and cancellations or interruptions to flight plans. It will save you worry and a possible financial burden. Medical costs overseas can be in the tens of thousands of dollars and many families have been burdened financially in paying these costs when things go wrong.

Compare insurance policies and make sure the cover provided suits your family's needs and is valid for the whole time you and your family will be away. Always read the product disclosure statement carefully and ensure that you understand exactly what your travel insurance covers. You may be able to obtain travel insurance for yourself and your immediate family under the one policy. Cover, however, varies from policy to policy. Make sure you confirm all details with your insurance provider and receive written confirmation of your policy.

If you plan to rely on the travel insurance provided by your credit card, before travelling you should obtain written confirmation that you're covered and ensure that you have the details of the policy clearly outlined in writing.

Smartraveller tips

- ✔ Always read the product disclosure statement carefully and ensure that you understand exactly what your travel insurance covers.
- ✔ Make sure you understand the terms and conditions of your insurance policy and any legal requirements.
- ✔ Compare insurance policies and make sure the policy you choose suits your needs, covers the activities you plan to do and is valid for the whole time you'll be away.

The Australian Government won't pay for your medical treatment overseas or medical evacuation to Australia or a third country. Travellers without travel insurance are personally liable for covering any medical and associated costs they or their families incur.

For more information on travel insurance, including tips for choosing a policy that's right for you and your family, visit [smartraveller.gov.au](https://www.smartraveller.gov.au).

Case study

Kate and Jim took their children for an overseas holiday. Everyone had a terrific time until toddler Susie developed stomach pain, fever and vomiting. Kate and Jim took Susie to the local hospital where she was diagnosed with a ruptured appendix. The doctor recommended that Susie be immediately evacuated by air ambulance to a major hospital. The flight cost \$30,000. Treatment at a private hospital with a specialist paediatric unit cost \$1,000 a day. Susie survived but was very sick. The family missed their flight home and had to pay for new tickets and accommodation. As Kate and Jim had not covered their family with travel insurance, Susie's illness cost the family \$40,000.

Smartraveller tip

- ☑ If you can't afford travel insurance for you and your family, you can't afford to travel.

Passports and visas

Your passport is your most important travel document. All Australian citizens must have a valid passport before leaving Australia and maintain a valid passport while overseas. All children travelling overseas, including newborn infants, must have their own passport.

Be aware that countries have different passport validity requirements. Make sure your passport has at least six months validity from your planned date of return to Australia. Carry extra passport photos just in case your passport is lost or stolen and you need to replace it while away.

Find out early what visas you and your family need by contacting the foreign mission (embassy, high commission or consulate) of the countries you intend to visit. Some countries have specific entry and exit requirements, including compulsory vaccinations. Be aware that a tourist visa may not allow any form of work—including voluntary or unpaid activities. Remember to also check the visa requirements of countries you might be transiting. Contact details for foreign missions in Australia can be found in *White Pages* or online at **www.dfat.gov.au/embassies.html**.

More information on Australian passports can be found at **www.passports.gov.au** or by calling the Australian Passport Information Service on **13 12 32** in Australia.

Remember

- The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in Australia and Australian missions overseas cannot help you arrange visas or work and residency permits for other countries.
- A visa does not guarantee entry to a foreign country.
- In most cases, a tourist visa does not allow you to work in a foreign country, including voluntary or unpaid activities.

Dual nationality

Being a national or citizen of more than one country is called dual nationality.

Some countries offer citizenship to people who marry their citizens, or to persons whose parents or grandparents were born in that country. You should be aware that if you and/or members of your family have dual nationality, it may have implications when you visit the country of your second nationality.

You should also be aware that if your child was born in another country, that country may consider your child as its citizen or national,

even if your child is an Australian citizen and you have never sought citizenship of that country for your child.

Dual nationality may have implications for children travelling to the country of their birth. Before you depart, it's important to understand the implications of local laws for dual nationals. You may be prevented from obtaining Australian consular assistance if the country you're in considers you or a member of your family to be one of its citizens.

If you or a member of your family holds another country's passport, seek advice about using it. Take your Australian passport and use it to depart from and return to Australia.

For further information, read the *Dual nationals* publication available at **smartraveller.gov.au**.

Child custody

Some foreign governments don't recognise dual nationality. This can affect the future guardianship of a child, as decisions on custody can be based on local law.

Parents travelling with children who may be considered nationals of a foreign country should consult a lawyer to resolve child custody and other family law issues before travelling to the country.

Important documents – guardianship

When you're travelling with children, local authorities, including customs and immigration officers, may ask you to produce documents to prove that you're the lawful parent or guardian of the children.

Make sure you always carry the proper identification for yourself and your children required by the authorities of the country you intend to visit and by Australian authorities on your return. In addition to a valid passport, these documents can include:

- documentary evidence or a letter that proves the child has the permission of an absent lawful parent or guardian to travel

- a copy of any separation, divorce or custody decree that proves that you have custody of the child
- a court order granting you guardianship of the child
- a copy of the child's birth certificate, particularly if only one parent's name appears on the birth certificate and the child is travelling with the other parent.

If in doubt about particular circumstances relating to your children, you should seek legal advice before travelling.

Minors travelling alone

Every country has specific entry and exit requirements for children travelling alone or without parents or legal guardians. Check these requirements with the relevant foreign mission before you travel.

Contact details can be found at **www.dfat.gov.au/embassies.html**.

Airlines also have rules regarding unaccompanied minors. Children under the age of 15 travelling alone are generally regarded as unaccompanied minors. In most cases, parents or guardians will need to fill out a permission form for the child's travel. For further information, contact the airline you're planning to use or visit their website.

Planning your trip

Research and preparation before you leave can save you a lot of hassle.

Research your destination

Find out about the political, cultural and economic environment of your destination so you'll know what to expect on arrival. Consult the travel advisory for your destination at [smartraveller.gov.au](https://www.smartraveller.gov.au) and either purchase a guide book or search the internet for recent information. Talk with family or friends who are familiar with the countries you'll be visiting. You could also consult DFAT's country briefs available at www.dfat.gov.au to learn more about your destinations.

Airlines

If you're concerned the airline may question your fitness or a member of your family's fitness to fly, we recommend you obtain a letter from your doctor confirming that you're fit for air travel.

If you, or a member of your family, has a disability, contact your airline to find out about services provided including shuttle services, seating arrangements and special meals.

If you need to carry needles and syringes with you, obtain a letter from your doctor explaining why you need them and seek early advice from your airline on how to comply with enhanced airport and air travel security regulations.

Accommodation

If you're due to arrive at your destination late at night, it's recommended that you book your accommodation prior to arrival. If you have young children, you may ask what furniture (such as cots and highchairs) and facilities (such as child-minding or play areas, and lifts) are available.

Baby products

When travelling with babies or very young children, it's a good idea to research the availability of baby products, including baby formula, in the countries you'll visit. You may wish to stock up on items that will be difficult to purchase at your destination.

Childcare facilities

Overseas childcare facilities, nannies and babysitters, including those on cruise ships, are not bound by Australian regulations. Standards can differ greatly from those in Australia. Make sure you're satisfied with the level of care provided before leaving your children in the care of others. For useful ideas on how to select reputable childcare providers, visit the National Childcare Accreditation Council website, www.ncac.gov.au, or the Child Wise 'Choose with Care' program available at www.childwise.net. You can also contact Child Wise on **1800 991 099** (free call within Australia).

Luggage

Protect yourself against loss and theft by carrying minimal pieces of luggage, especially when travelling with children. Overloaded, you make yourself more vulnerable to bag snatchers and pickpockets. Secure credit cards and passports under your clothes or in a money belt.

Information on luggage security and safety is available from the Civil Aviation Safety Authority at www.casa.gov.au and the Australian Government's travel security website, www.travelsecure.infrastructure.gov.au.

If you're travelling to the USA, make sure you familiarise yourself with their specific airline baggage lock requirements. Information is available from the US Department of Homeland Security at www.tsa.gov.

Staying safe overseas

You can take practical steps to help keep your family safe overseas and avoid running into difficulties and dangerous situations.

Money and valuables

You can take a number of steps to protect yourself and your family against loss and theft of your money and valuables.

- Organise a variety of ways of accessing your money overseas, such as debit or credit cards, traveller's cheques and cash.
- Check with your bank whether your ATM card will work overseas.
- Register with your bank the period you expect to be travelling.
- Never let your credit card out of your sight.
- Make two photocopies of valuable documents such as your passport, tickets, travel insurance policy, visas and credit and ATM cards. Keep one copy with you in a separate place to the original and leave the other copy with someone at home.

Local transport and tours

When organising how to get around overseas, check out the local travel section in our travel advisories at [smartraveller.gov.au](https://www.smartraveller.gov.au) and read our travel bulletin on 'Overseas Road Safety'.

Be aware that the safety standards you might expect of transport and tour operators, including child restraints, are not always met. Sufficient safety equipment may not be provided and recommended maintenance standards and safety precautions may not be observed.

Make sure you organise an International Driving Permit before you leave Australia if you're planning to drive overseas.

Learn about road conditions and traffic culture of the places you plan to visit. If you're renting a car, make sure it's roadworthy.

Local laws and customs

Familiarise yourself with local laws and show sensitivity to local customs.

Read the travel advice for your destination at **smartraveller.gov.au** for practical information on local laws and customs. In some countries conservative standards of dress and behaviour apply; for example, in some cultures people are deeply offended by revealing or inappropriate clothes. Breastfeeding in public may also be considered offensive. You should talk to other travellers and consult guidebooks or search the internet for more information on local customs and laws.

Be aware that local laws and penalties, including ones that may appear harsh by Australian standards, do apply to you and your family. Family responsibilities, age or health concerns are not valid excuses. Many countries apply capital punishment, including for narcotics-related crimes. Every year many Australians of all ages are arrested overseas on drug charges.

In some countries children may be treated as adults under the criminal law system. Children found guilty of a crime may be placed in adult prisons.

Case study

Matthew was only 16 when he was arrested overseas with 10 grams of marijuana in his pocket. He didn't realise that under the local law if you are 16 or over you're treated as an adult. Matthew is still coming to terms with sharing a cell with hardened criminals in an adult prison. His trial is still several months away. He will be tried like any other adult when his case comes to court. If he's found guilty, he'll face stiff sentences. He won't be shown any leniency on account of his age.

Smartraveller tip

- ☑ When you travel overseas, you're subject to the laws of that country. Make sure you obey the law at all times and don't get involved with drugs.

Birth of an Australian citizen abroad

A person born outside Australia who is the biological child of an Australian citizen can apply for Australian citizenship by descent with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC).

Parents of children born overseas should obtain an application for Australian citizenship by descent (form 118) from the DIAC website, **www.immi.gov.au**. Contact the nearest DIAC overseas office (located at selected Australian embassies, high commissions or consulates) for information on how to lodge a citizenship application.

Contact details for Australian missions abroad can be found at **www.dfat.gov.au/missions** and in the *Travel smart: hints for Australian travellers* booklet. This booklet is issued free with your passport and is also available online at **smartraveller.gov.au**.

Further information on Australian citizenship is available at **www.citizenship.gov.au** or by calling the Citizenship Information Line on **13 18 80**.

Child abduction

If you're concerned that your child has been wrongfully removed or detained in a foreign country, you should immediately contact the International Family Law Section, Attorney-General's Department, on free-call number **1800 100 480** (24-hour line, staffed between 8.30 am and 4.30 pm, Monday to Friday, message bank all other times) or **+61 2 6141 3100** (if calling from outside Australia).

If you're concerned that your child has been taken overseas against your wishes, you should contact the Australian Federal Police and the

Family Court of Australia (or the Family Court of Western Australia if you're in Western Australia).

The Australian Government cannot intervene in the judicial process of any foreign country, but will do its best to ensure the welfare of the removed or detained child.

The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction

This convention operates to return wrongfully removed or detained children to their country of habitual residence so that issues of parental responsibility can be resolved by the authorities of that country. The convention may also provide assistance to parents seeking to spend time or communicate with a child. Information on the countries for which the convention is in force with Australia can be found on the website of the Hague Conference on Private International Law at **www.hcch.net**.

Before you leave Australia with your children, you should ensure that you have the consent to do so from any person, institution or other body that has a right of custody in relation to those children or a court order permitting their departure. Failure to do so may result in an application being made under the convention and the children being ordered to return to Australia. You may wish to obtain the assistance of a lawyer or a legal aid body to help you make sure that you've done all that's required to lawfully remove the children from Australia.

Reciprocal recognition of custody orders

Australian parenting orders can be recognised overseas and overseas parenting orders recognised in Australia where there is a reciprocal arrangement between Australia and the relevant country. For information about the countries that are party to such an arrangement, contact the Attorney-General's Department on **1800 100 480** or **+61 2 6141 3100** (if calling from outside Australia).

Case study

Paul, Joanne and their children returned to Paul's country of birth for family reasons. Unfortunately, the relationship between Paul and Joanne broke down. They divorced and a dispute over the custody of the children ensued. Joanne wanted to return to Australia with her children so that her family in Australia could assist her in raising them. She was concerned that the local legal system didn't provide the same access to the children as it provided Paul. Paul remarried and wanted to continue to remain in his country of birth to pursue his career. He also wanted his children from his first marriage to continue to live with him and be brought up in the culture of his heritage. Paul and Joanne continued to pursue their claims for access to their children through the local courts. For the two years it took for the custody dispute to be heard in the courts, Joanne and her children were not permitted to return to Australia. Joanne's claim for full custody of the children was unsuccessful and she had to return to Australia alone.

Smartraveller tip

- ☑ Make sure you understand any legal or child custody issues that may apply to your family before you travel overseas. Australian customs and court orders may not apply overseas.

Further information on international child abduction, including key legislation, contacts and related support services, can be found on the Attorney-General's Department website at www.ag.gov.au.

Staying healthy overseas

Think about your family's health needs before you travel.

Health checks and vaccinations

Make appointments for yourself and your family members with your doctor or travel clinic for a basic check-up at least six to eight weeks before you depart and find out if any vaccinations or health checks are required for your destination.

Medication

If you or your family members are taking medicines overseas, we recommend that you:

- discuss with your doctor the quantity you'll need to take
- carry a letter from your doctor detailing what the medication is, how much you'll be taking with you, and stating that it's for your family's use
- leave the medication in its original packaging so it's clearly labelled with your or your family member's name and dosage instructions.

If you're travelling with medication, make sure it's legal in the countries you're visiting by contacting the relevant foreign mission in Australia.

Contact details are available at www.dfat.gov.au/embassies.html.

If you need to travel with large quantities of medication, it's good practice to separate the quantity between your luggage, in case bags go missing. Keep all medication in the original, labelled container to avoid customs problems.

If you have to inject your medication, it may be preferable to carry your own needles and syringes if it's allowed in the countries you're visiting. If you buy needles and syringes overseas, ensure they are sealed and sterile.

Take enough medication to cover the length of your trip. If you need to purchase medication at your destination, be careful not to buy imitation

or counterfeit medications and prescription drugs, and always check the strength of a medication with a doctor. Be aware that packaging and labelling may be similar to those available in Australia, but the strength and active ingredients can vary from country to country.

It's an offence to carry or send Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) medication overseas unless it's for your own personal use, or for the use of someone travelling with you. You could be fined \$5,000 and spend two years in prison if you break the law. Additional information is available at **www.health.gov.au** or by calling the PBS information line on **1800 020 613**.

More information on travelling with medication is available at **www.medicareaustralia.gov.au** or by calling the Overseas Drug Diversion information line on **1800 500 147**.

Prescription glasses

If you wear glasses, take along a spare pair and/or a copy of the prescription so that they can be replaced more easily if lost or broken.

Reciprocal health agreements

Australia has reciprocal healthcare agreements with Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

These agreements enable Australians to access urgent or emergency treatment overseas. However, medical services are only provided when it would be unreasonable to delay treatment until the person returns to Australia. It's important to remember that healthcare agreements are no substitute for travel insurance. They won't cover you if a doctor recommends medical evacuation back to Australia.

Useful links

To find out more about health and vaccination issues you can visit:

- World Health Organization – **www.who.int**
- Australian Immunisation Handbook – **www.immunise.health.gov.au**

Further information about health care when travelling overseas and international health agreements is available at the Medicare Australia website, www.medicareaustralia.gov.au, or by calling **13 20 11**.

Getting help overseas

The Australian Government will do what it can to help Australians in difficulty overseas, but there are limits to what can be done.

Consular services

DFAT provides assistance to Australians who find themselves in trouble overseas. This support is referred to as consular services; however, there are legal and practical limits to what can be done.

The *Consular Services Charter* sets out the standard of services all Australians can expect to receive from consular staff, including what they can and cannot do, and is available at **smartraveller.gov.au**.

Contact details for Australian missions overseas are available at **www.dfat.gov.au/missions**. A directory of Australian missions also appears in the 'Getting Help Overseas' section of *Travel smart: hints for Australian travellers*. This publication is issued with your passport and is also available online at **smartraveller.gov.au**.

Australia has an agreement with Canada to provide consular assistance to Australians in some countries. Canadian missions providing consular assistance to Australians are also listed in the *Travel smart: hints for Australian travellers* publication.

The 24-hour Consular Emergency Centre in Canberra can also be contacted for assistance from anywhere in the world on **+61 2 6261 3305** or **1300 555 135** (local call cost within Australia).

Contact your travel insurance provider

Travel insurance companies often have 24-hour assistance centres that you can contact from anywhere in the world. If you get sick overseas or are involved in a medical emergency, you should contact your travel insurance provider as soon as possible. Make sure you take your travel insurance policy information and contact numbers with you so you can

easily contact your insurer from overseas. Consider leaving details of your travel insurance policy with family or friends back home.

For more information on insurance, read the 'Travel Insurance' section of this brochure.

Counselling services

Australians overseas in need of counselling services can contact our Consular Emergency Centre on **+61 2 6261 3305** to be transferred to a Lifeline telephone counsellor.

Other Smartraveller publications

DFAT publishes a range of brochures with travel hints for specific travel groups, and information about how to cope with unexpected events, available at smartraveller.gov.au.

Titles include:

- Travel smart: hints for Australian travellers
- Consular Services Charter
- Arrested or jailed overseas
- Backpacking overseas
- Death overseas
- Dual nationals
- Living and working overseas
- Sexual assault overseas
- Travelling seniors
- Travelling well
- Travelling women
- When someone is missing overseas

Copies of these brochures are also available at DFAT state and territory offices, Australian Passport Offices, and Australian missions overseas. You can also order copies online at smartraveller.gov.au.

The brochures *Travelling well*, *Travelling seniors* and *Dual nationals* are also available online in a number of community languages at smartraveller.gov.au.

Top 10 travel tips

- 1.** Check the latest travel advice at **smartraveller.gov.au** and subscribe to receive free email notifications each time the advice for your destination is updated.
- 2.** Take out comprehensive travel insurance and ensure it covers you for the places you plan to visit and the things you plan to do.
- 3.** Before travelling overseas, register your travel and contact details online at **smartraveller.gov.au**, or at the local Australian embassy, high commission or consulate once you arrive so we can contact you in case of an emergency.
- 4.** Obey the laws of the country you're visiting even if these appear harsh or unfair by Australian standards. Don't expect to be treated differently from the locals just because you're Australian.
- 5.** Make sure you have the right visas for the countries you're visiting or transiting and check any other entry or exit requirements.
- 6.** Make copies of your passport details, insurance policy, traveller's cheques, visas and credit card numbers. Carry one copy in a separate place to the original and leave a copy with someone at home.
- 7.** Check with health professionals for information on recommended vaccinations and other health precautions. Remember that vaccinations can be an entry requirement to some countries. Also find out about taking medication overseas—certain medicines aren't allowed in some countries.

- 8.** Make sure your passport has at least six months' validity from your planned date of return to Australia. Carry extra passport photos in case your passport is lost or stolen and you need to replace it while you're away.
- 9.** Keep in contact with friends and family back home and give them a copy of your itinerary so they know where you are.
- 10.** Check to see if you're regarded as a national of the country you plan to visit, and whether dual nationality will have any implications for your travel plans.

smartraveller.gov.au

Every traveller, every trip.

1. **Register** your travel and contact details online at *smartraveller.gov.au* before you travel overseas—or at the local Australian embassy, high commission or consulate once you arrive—so we can contact you in an emergency.
2. Check the latest **travel advice** for your destination at *smartraveller.gov.au* before you go. **Subscribe** to receive free email notification each time the advice is updated.
3. Take out comprehensive **travel insurance** to cover hospital treatment, medical evacuation and any activities you plan to undertake in the countries you intend to visit.

While every care has been taken in preparing this brochure, neither the Australian Government nor its agents or employees, including any member of Australia's diplomatic and consular staff abroad, can accept liability for any injury, loss or damage arising in respect of any statement contained herein.

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Information for travellers and travel advisories are available from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Smartraveller website *smartraveller.gov.au*.

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