

ParentMap

'cause parenting is a trip!

BABY HEALTH + DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION FOOD + FUN PARENTING CALENDAR

PARENTING | EDUCATION | TRAVEL | PARENTING TOOLS

8 Questions to Ask When Your Child Is Traveling Overseas

With the right preparation, sending your child abroad doesn't have to be scary

By Brette Sember



Studying abroad is an exciting opportunity for any teen or college student. But as a parent, it's easy to worry about all the things that could go wrong. Planning ahead can help ease your mind and ensure that your student has a wonderful experience. Here are eight questions to answer before you say "bon voyage!"

1. Does your child have medical insurance?

No matter how healthy your student is, you want to confirm there is medical coverage during the trip. Check your own policy first, which likely will not offer complete coverage. The exchange or study abroad program will probably make a health policy available and if not, your travel agent can recommend one. Check to see if the policy covers things like medical transport back to the United States as well as care in the country or countries your child is visiting.

2. Has your child joined the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program?

Enroll your child with the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, also known as STEP. This program keeps your kid in touch with the State Department should there be an emergency or disaster in the area where he or she is visiting. The program also **informs registrants about concerns that may arise in the area** and helps family back home reach the student in case of an emergency.

3. Have you discussed how to keep belongings secure?

Pickpockets and theft are legitimate concerns for all travelers. **Consider buying your child a money belt or traveler's wallet.** Purses, backpacks and bags are all prime targets for theft, so make sure your child secures them when in use. If he's staying in a dorm, hostel or hotel, make sure he knows to lock the doors and to keep valuables hidden. Don't pack expensive items if possible.

4. Does your child know these personal safety basics?

Before you sign your child up for study abroad, check the State Department's travel website for alerts and warnings from the places she will be visiting. **How safe is it to currently travel there as an American?**

Also be sure to discuss the basics of personal safety before your child sets sail. Cover safety in numbers and why it's important to go out with a trusted friends. Recommend she avoids unlicensed cabs, doesn't accept packages, food or beverages from strangers and remains in areas designated as safe for visitors.

5. Do you have any remaining questions about the trip?

Get all the details about where your student will be staying. If it is with a family, do they speak English? Will he have his or her own room? Has the program vetted the family in some way? Which meals are provided? Is the neighborhood safe? Is someone from the program available 24/7 if a problem arises? Are outings chaperoned? Determine if there are areas of the city or region that are not considered safe for travelers and warn your child to stay away from these.

6. What's your emergency plan?

Make sure your child learns how to call for emergency services wherever she is visiting and pre-programs the number into her phone. Also have her **add the contact information for the nearest U.S. Embassy.** Be sure to get the contact information for the program director, local guide, host family and/or hotel/hostel so you can easily get in touch with your child as needed.

7. Does the country or countries your child is visiting have specific laws to note?

Laws are different in other countries — sometimes in surprising ways. For example, in some countries it's illegal to buy specific antiques. A prescription your child brings from home might be illegal in a foreign nation, or taking photographs of certain buildings or areas might not be allowed. If your child is LGBTQIA, **remind him that not all countries offer protections against sexual orientation discrimination.** Find out if there are laws that ban displaying or acting on "untraditional" sexual identity in the country your child will visit.

8. Finally, is your child financially safe?

Get your child at least one credit card (two is a good idea in case something happens to the first one) and inform the credit card company of the dates of the trip. Keep a copy of the account number and contact information for the company with you in case the card is stolen or lost. **Make sure your child has a bank account with an ATM card that will function overseas.** It is safer to withdraw small amounts from an ATM than to carry large amounts of cash (and the exchange rate is better than exchanging at a currency exchange).

With a little planning and some precautions, your child can have a wonderful — and safe — experience overseas. Be sure they send a postcard or two!

Originally published by [Avvo](#)

April 7, 2016

about the author



Brette Sember

Brette Sember is a former attorney and author of more than 40 books, including *The Divorce Organizer & Planner*, *The Complete Divorce* and *How to Parent With Your Ex*. She writes often about law, parenting, food, travel, health and more. Brette also writes for [AvvoStories](#), created by [Avvo](#), the leading online legal marketplace connecting consumers and lawyers.

related articles:



Unforgettable Vacations on a Dime: Home Exchange for Newbies



Do You Have a Solid Parenting Plan?



Tips for Travel With Kids



Your Questions Answered About the Zika Virus



sign up!

for ParentMap enews

