**The mother of all overseas travel checklists – Microsoft Word version**

**Brian Ralph**

Please note that the checklist below is supported by another article I have written for the Principal Futures website called ***Detailed comments on the mother of all overseas travel checklists***. This second article comes with lots of comments and additional information about each of the tick boxes below, should you wish to follow up on any of the specific points I make here.

The checklist provided below is based on a much more modest one that I have been using for many years, but my original checklist has now been significantly expanded through additional research and the inclusion of many helpful suggestions from Chris Bonnor and Ken Gill during the proofreading stage.

In its current state this checklist is obviously very detailed. *You need to decide what works for you and ignore or delete the rest.* To make this easy for you, this is a *Microsoft Word document* that you can edit to your heart’s desire.

In addition, it is obvious that some of this information will become incorrect as time marches on. While every effort will be made to keep it up-to-date over the coming years, this checklist will never be absolutely correct or fully inclusive of everything you need to consider when planning an overseas trip. Happy travels!

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***Research your destinations***

* Create a new trip folder on your computer into which you can save all your documents etc.
* Commence detailed research, bookmark useful websites, save relevant info into your new trip folder.
* Check [Smartraveller](http://smartraveller.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx) for warnings and general travel advice about your destinations.
* Also subscribe to [Smartraveller](http://smartraveller.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx) to receive the latest travel advice on each destination.

***Confirm key dates, start making bookings and take out travel insurance***

* Develop a draft itinerary and confirm key dates for your trip – essential flights, tours, accommodation etc.
* Start booking these essential items so that your critical dates, flights, tours etc are locked in.
* Can you pay for some of these using a credit card that offers complimentary overseas travel insurance, thereby providing you with overseas travel insurance at the same time as you pay for your trip?
* Can you get a discount for early payment of the full cost of your cruise or tour package?
* Do you need to provide your frequent flyer number or membership number?
* If you book your airline seats online, use [SeatGuru](https://www.seatguru.com/) to show you the best seats on your aircraft.
* Arrange travel insurance (if not already done via use of your credit cards).
* Arrange cover for pre-existing medical conditions if necessary.
* Start saving all important travel documents to your new trip folder.
* Start typing up your day-by-day itinerary. Include all major flights, tours, cruises and accommodation.
* Now start booking your minor travel arrangements – other accommodation, transport, transfers etc.
* Consider early online booking of cruise port excursions and optional excursions on bus tours etc.
* Consider online booking of tickets for local attractions, tours, live shows etc before you leave home.

***Passports, visas and ID***

* Check that all passports are valid *for at least six months after your planned return date* *to Australia.*
* Check that all passports have at least three blank pages in them.
* Check that all passports are not damaged in any way.
* Check what visas are required 🡪 do the necessary paperwork.
* Confirm all visas have been approved and all relevant documents have been saved to your trip folder.
* Scan the ID page in each passport and save these to your trip folder.
* Take a spare copy of each passport photo in your hand luggage or scan them into your trip folder.
* Scan your driver’s licence and save it to your trip folder as well – ‘just in case’.

***Money and banking***

* Decide how much money you will need and how you will access it while you are away.
* Check that your normal debit/credit cards won’t expire for at least a month after you return home.
* Notify your financial institution that you’re going away – including where and when.
* Check that your ‘Cash Passport’ overseas currency card (or similar product) won’t expire for at least a month after you return home.
* Upload your ‘Cash Passport’ card (or similar product) with the necessary currencies.
* Calculate how much foreign cash you will need to take with you 🡪 purchase it before you go.
* Decide how and where you intend to carry cash on your person while travelling.
* Make sure you will have sufficient funds in your bank account and on your credit cards while away.
* Make sure you have a system to allow top-ups of credit cards etc should you exceed your credit limit.
* For cruises, factor in enough on credit cards to cater for the pre-authorisation charge at check-in.
* Decide how you will access your banking passwords and debit/credit card PIN codes etc.
* Check you have a currency converter app on your phone or make up a table of overseas currency rates.
* Confirm that you can readily access your debit/credit card emergency phone numbers.
* What bills are you expecting while you are away? How will they get paid?

***Medical matters***

* Check what vaccinations are required 🡪 get these done sooner rather than later.
* Check if you need to take specific medical precautions, e.g. exposure to high altitudes, malaria.
* Organise sufficient medications to cover the period you will be away 🡪 pack them in your hand luggage.
* Get a signed printout of your current prescriptions/medications from your GP 🡪 copy
* Check if you also need letters re: medical conditions, syringes, medical equipment etc 🡪 copy
* Fill any required scripts from the doctor, e.g. courses of antibiotics to take with you.
* Calculate your tablet schedule if flying overseas 🡪 add this info to your itinerary.
* Prepare sets of tablets etc for the first few days of your trip.

***Further planning considerations***

* Print out your tried and trusted packing list so you won’t forget anything at the last moment.
* Decide how you will access your internet passwords etc.
* If on a cruise or coach tour, how will you manage gratuities to key people?
* Research tipping expectations for each country you will visit and decide how you will manage this as well.
* If taking several flights etc, what is your *lowest* maximum baggage allowance? 🡪 pack less than this.
* Calculate backwards to determine sensible arrival times at terminals etc 🡪 add to your itinerary.
* How you will get from your home to your departure point, plus get back home at the end of your trip?
* Book your shuttle bus, airport parking or confirm other arrangements to get you to/from there.
* Identify where else during your trip you will need hotel, airport or other transport transfers etc.
* Investigate what transport options are available for these transfers 🡪 book these if necessary.
* If using airport metros, trains etc 🡪 research costs, ticket system, timetables, where to catch, how to get there, platform changes required en route, accessibility of platforms (lifts, stairs, travelators) etc
* If renting a vehicle on arrival 🡪 carefully plan your first day, including which roads or even lanes to use
* Double-check check-in/out times at hotels etc. Can they store your bags if arriving early/leaving late?
* Investigate whether your airline(s) will demand baggage payments at the time of check-in.
* Decide on your phone requirements while away, e.g. Telstra International Day Pass?
* Decide on your map requirements while away, e.g. phone app, paper maps and/or GPS unit?
* Check if you need an international driver’s licence 🡪 get this if necessary 🡪 make copy.
* Do you need a translation dictionary – either a phone app, paper or online version?
* Do you need a printed list of simple phrases and words you can carry around?

***Documentation matters***

*Please note: When I talk about “one copy per person” I mean that everyone in your party could carry a copy ‘just in case’*

* Print out a colour copy of each person’s passport ID page (one copy of each to each person).
* Print out copies of all other major documents – visa approvals, flight details, e-tickets, train tickets, hotel vouchers etc (one copy per person).
* Make sure all these have also been saved as files to your trip folder.
* Print out your travel insurance policy, emergency assistance phone numbers etc (one copy per person).
* Check that all travel insurance documentation is also saved in your trip folder.
* Print out any doctor’s letters re: medications, medical conditions, equipment etc (one copy per person).
* Check that these are also saved to your trip folder.
* Decide how you will access addresses and phone numbers you might need while overseas.

***Some final things before you go***

* Confirm that all necessary bookings of transport, accommodation and tours are now complete.
* Confirm that any online advance bookings of attractions etc are now complete.
* Confirm that all essential trip information has been entered in your day-by-day trip itinerary.
* Double-check that your itinerary has all the correct times and locations for flights, trains departures etc.
* Confirm that all relevant documentation and information has been saved to your trip folder.
* Save a copy of your final trip folder to Dropbox, iCloud, OneDrive etc.
* Email a final set of essential files to yourself if you don’t have access to Dropbox, iCloud, OneDrive etc.
* Print out a copy of your final itinerary (one copy per person).
* Send copies of your itinerary and any essential files to the family etc.
* Update all the apps on your mobile phone and save files offline if necessary.
* Pack emergency undies, toothbrush etc in your hand luggage.
* Pack a set of survival clothes in your travelling companion’s bag (and vice versa).
* Make a list of the contents of all bags, plus leave a copy of this at home.
* Prepare ‘This bag belongs to’ cards for the front pocket or inside of each piece of luggage.
* Label all bags clearly with robust luggage tags and bright-coloured bag straps etc.
* Don’t forget to label your hand luggage as well.
* Also consider taking a photo on your mobile phone of each bag – just in case.
* Consider an early online check-in from home for plane travel.
* Lock or otherwise secure your bags before checking in.
* Divide your cash, cards etc between you and your travelling companion.
* Do a final check to make sure that everything you need has been packed and is ready to go.
* Make sure you have a key to get back in when you get home :-)

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Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Smartraveller website (<http://smartraveller.gov.au>)

The Sun-Herald, *Exit strategies*, 17 December 2017, p16-19

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