

BIG FIVE

TOURS & EXPEDITIONS

AUSTRALIA



The following offers practical information, suggestions, and answers some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip. Be sure to check the suggested reading list included here for more information.



DARWIN, NORTHERN TERRITORY ~ Elevation: 102 feet Latitude: 12 26S Longitude: 130 53E												
Average Temperature												
°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	83	83	83	83	81	78	77	79	82	84	85	84
Average Precipitation												
in.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	16	13.7	12.3	3.9	0.8	0.1	---	0.3	0.7	2.8	5.6	9
CANBERRA, AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY ~ Elevation: 1873 feet Latitude: 35 19S Longitude: 149 12E												
Average Temperature												
°F	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	69	68	64	56	49	44	42	45	49	55	60	66
Average Precipitation												
in.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.1	1.9	1.5	1.6	1.9	2	2.6	2.4	2.1

CLIMATE / CLOTHING

In Australia the seasons are opposite to those in Europe and North America. There are 2 climatic zones: the tropical zone and the temperate zone. The tropical zone (consisting of 40 per cent of Australia) has two seasons, summer ('wet') and winter ('dry') while the temperate zone has all four seasons.

November-March: (spring-summer): Warm or hot everywhere, tropical in the north, and warm to hot with mild nights in the south.

April-September: (autumn-winter): Northern and central Australia have clear warm days, cool nights; the south has cool days with occasional rain but still plenty of sun. Snow is totally confined to mountainous regions of the southeast.

Suggested clothing: Lightweights during summer months with warmer clothes needed during the cooler winter period throughout most of the southern States. Lightweight cottons and linens all year in the central / northern States with warm clothes only for cooler winter evenings & early mornings. Sunglasses, sunhats & sun lotion are recommended year round in the north & during the summer months in the south.

PASSPORT / VISA

Passports: For international travel, a U.S. passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing at least two blank pages is necessary.

Visas: For your tour to Australia, you will need to apply for an electronic visa, or an ETA (Electronic Travel Authority). You can do this by going to www.eta.immi.gov.au/ and clicking on the link "Apply for ETA".

Important: Please check your passport prior to travel to insure that:

- 1) Your passport is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

Please note: Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.

AIRPORT FORMALITIES

Approximate flight times: From Los Angeles to Sydney is 13 hours 30 minutes. From New York to Perth is 30 hours 10 minutes and to Sydney is 20 hours.

Duty-Free: The following items may be taken into Australia by persons over 18 years of age without incurring customs duty: 250 cigarettes or 250g of tobacco or cigars; 1.125l of any alcoholic liquor; articles for personal hygiene and clothing, not including perfume or fur apparel; other goods to a value of A\$400 (A\$200 if under 18).

Prohibited items: There are very strict regulations against the import of non-prescribed drugs, weapons, firearms, wildlife, domestic animals and foodstuffs and other potential sources of disease and pestilence. There are severe penalties for drug trafficking. For further details on customs regulations, contact the information center of the Australian Customs Service (tel: (2) 6275 6666 (from outside Australia) or 1 300 363 263 (from anywhere in Australia); website: www.customs.gov.au). Customs information booklets can be obtained from the Australian High Commission or Embassy.

CURRENCY

Australian Dollar (A\$) = 100 cents. Notes are in denominations of A\$100, 50, 20, 10 and 5. Coins are in denominations of A\$2 and 1, and 50, 20, 10 and 5 cents.

Currency exchange: Exchange facilities are available for all incoming and outgoing flights at all international airports in Australia. International-class hotels will exchange major currencies for guests. It is recommended that visitors change money at the airport or at city banks.

Credit & debit cards: American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are accepted. Use may be restricted in small towns and outback areas. Check with your credit or debit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

Travelers checks: These are accepted in major currencies at banks or large hotels. However, some banks may charge a fee for cashing travelers checks. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travelers are advised to take travelers checks in a major currency.

Currency restrictions: Export and import of coins / notes in Australian or foreign currency above A\$10,000 must be declared to customs at the port of entry or departure.

Banking hours: Mon-Thurs 0930-1600, Fri 0930-1700. These hours vary throughout the country.

HEALTH

Yellow Fever: A yellow fever certificate is required from travelers over 1 year of age arriving within 6 days of leaving or transiting countries with infected areas.

Food & drink: Standards of hygiene in food preparation are very high. Milk is pasteurized and meat and vegetables are considered safe to eat. Care should be taken, however, when sampling 'bush tucker' in outback areas as some insects and fauna are highly poisonous unless properly cooked.

Other risks: Occasional outbreaks of dengue fever and Ross River fever have occurred in rural areas in northern Australia in recent years. There have been reports of Murray Valley encephalitis in the Northern Territory. Corals, jellyfish and fresh water crocodiles may prove a hazard to the bather, and heat is a hazard in the northern and central parts of Australia. Insectivorous and fruit-eating bats have been found to harbor a virus related to the rabies virus and should be avoided. Venomous snakes and spiders exist throughout Australia and can be extremely dangerous. Medical assistance should be sought immediately if bitten.

Note: There are strict customs and health controls on entering and leaving the country, and Australian law can inflict severe penalties on health infringements. Australia reserves the right to isolate any person who arrives without the required certificates. Carriers are responsible for expenses of isolation of all travelers arriving by air who are not in possession of the required vaccination certificates. All arriving aircraft are sprayed before disembarkation to prevent the spread of disease-carrying insects.

Health care: Doctors and dentists are highly trained and hospitals are well equipped. There is a reciprocal health agreement with the UK, in emergencies only, which allows residents from the UK free hospital treatment. Passport or proof of UK residence, such as an NHS medical card or a UK

driving license, must be shown. Prescribed medicines, ambulances and treatment at some doctors' surgeries must be paid for. Personal insurance for illness and accidents is highly recommended for all visitors. Those wishing to benefit from the agreement should enroll at a Medicare office; this can be done after treatment.

COMMUNICATIONS

Telephone: There are full facilities for national and international telecommunications. Full IDD is available. Country code: 61. Outgoing international code: 0011. Payphones are red, green, gold or blue. Only local calls can be made from red phones. Green, gold and blue phones also have International Direct Dialing (IDD) and Subscriber Trunk Dial (STD). The cost of a local phone call is 40c. Telstra Smart Phone cards are available at newsagents, supermarkets and chemists and can be bought in denominations of A\$2, 5, 10 and 20 and used for local, STD or international calls. Credit phones, which take most major credit cards, can be found at airports, city-center locations and many hotels. Multimedia payphones are available in parts of Sydney. A touch screen allows visitors to gain access to information services including tourist information which can be printed off for future reference. Phone cards for these telephones can be purchased from nearby shops.

Mobile telephone: GSM 900 and 1800 networks in use. Coverage extends to all major cities including good coverage in Tasmania; access in some of the more isolated, outback and rural areas is limited. US handsets are not compatible.

Fax: Services are widely available from various retail outlets. Free collection by courier is available in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and Adelaide. Fax number guides are available at post offices, and prices vary. Services are hard to find in the outback.

Internet: Internet cafes are prevalent in all capital cities including over 24 outlets in Tasmania, and individual hotels may also provide facilities.

Post: There are post offices in all the main towns of every State. Opening hours are Mon-Fri 0900-1700. Some post office are also open Sat 0900-1200. Stamps are often available at hotel and motel reception areas and selected newsagents. Poste Restante facilities are available at selected post offices throughout the country; mail is held for 30 days free of charge.

INTRODUCTION TO AUSTRALIA

Australia is bounded by the Arafura Sea and Timor Seas to the north, the Coral and Tasman Seas of the South Pacific to the east, the Southern Ocean to the south, and the Indian Ocean to the west. Its coastline covers 36,738km (22,814 miles). Most of the population has settled along the eastern and south-eastern coastal strip. Australia is the smallest continent (or the largest island) in the world. About 40 per cent of the continent is within the tropics and Australia is almost the same size as the mainland of the United States of America. The terrain is extremely varied, ranging from tortured red desert to lush green rainforest. Australia's beaches and surfing are world renowned, while the country is also rich in reminders of its mysterious past. These range from prehistoric Aboriginal art to Victorian colonial architecture. The landscape consists mainly of a low plateau mottled with lakes and rivers and skirted with coastal mountain ranges, highest in the east with the Great Dividing

Range. There are rainforests in the far northeast (Cape York Peninsula). The southeast is a huge fertile plain. Further to the north lies the enormous Great Barrier Reef, a 2000km (1200 mile) strip of coral that covers a total area of 345,000 sq km. Although Australia is the driest land on Earth, it nevertheless has enormous snowfields the size of Switzerland. There are vast mineral deposits.

Australia's main tourist attractions are Sydney, the Great Barrier Reef, the Gold Coast of Queensland and Uluru (Ayers Rock), in the rugged outback of the Northern Territory. Other attractions in the continent range from the wild flowers of Western Australia to the vineyards of the Barossa Valley, and from Western Australia's ghost towns to the remarkable wildlife on the island of Tasmania. It is possible to visit the relatively undisturbed Aboriginal communities on Bathurst and Melville Islands, about 80km (50 miles) north of Darwin, providing valuable insights into the continent's ancient indigenous culture. The Australian coastline has thousands of miles of beautiful beaches.

Situated 1400km (870 miles) off the east coast of Australia, Norfolk Island is not part of any State but is instead administered by the Australian government. The island is best reached by air from Sydney. Its history as a penal colony has left the island with some of Australia's finest Georgian colonial architecture. Many of the island's small population are directly related to the mutineers of HMS Bounty who settled in the area.

Area: 7,692,030 sq km (2,969,909 sq miles).

Population: 19,546,792 (official estimate 2002).

Capital: Canberra. **Population:** 309,900 (estimate 1999).

Government: A Constitutional Monarchy which gained independence from the UK in 1901. Head of State: HM Queen Elizabeth II, represented locally by Governor-General Guy Stephen Montague Green since 2003. Head of Government: Prime Minister John Winston Howard since 1996. All individual States and Territories have their own autonomous legislative, executive and judicial systems (though certain powers remain under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government).

The bicameral Federal Parliament holds legislative power. Both chambers are elected by universal adult suffrage. The 76-member Senate serves a six-year term, while the House of Representatives is voted in every three years. The Prime Minister is the leader of the largest party in the Lower House and wields executive power at the head of a Cabinet of Ministers. The Queen of England is formally head of state, represented locally by a Governor General. Each of Australia's six states also has its own directly elected legislature, enjoying considerable autonomy in areas such as health, education and transport policy.

Language: The official language is English. Many other languages are retained by minorities, including Italian, German, Greek, Vietnamese, Chinese dialects and Aboriginal languages.

Religion: 26 per cent Roman Catholic, 24 per cent Protestant and smaller minorities of all other major religions.

Time: Some States operate daylight saving time during the Australian summer. Clocks in these States are put forward by 1 hour in October and put back again in March. Australia spans three time zones:

Northeast / southeast: 1. GMT + 10 (GMT + 11 October to March, except Queensland). **Central:** 2. GMT + 9.5 (GMT + 10.5 October to March, except Northern Territory). **West:** 3. GMT + 8.

Electricity: 220/240 volts AC, 50Hz. Three-pin plugs are in use, however sockets are different from those found in most countries and an adaptor socket may be needed. Outlets for 110 volts for small appliances are found in most hotels.

Social Conventions: A largely informal atmosphere prevails; shaking hands is the customary greeting. Casual wear is worn everywhere except in the most exclusive restaurants, social gatherings and important business meetings. Most restaurants forbid smoking.

Tippling: Not as common as it is in Europe and America nor is a service charge added to the bill in restaurants. 10 per cent for food and drink waiters is usual in top-quality restaurants, but is optional elsewhere. With taxis it is usual not to tip but round up the cost to the next dollar.

FOOD & DRINK

There are numerous specialty dishes and foods including Sydney rock oysters, barramundi (freshwater fish), tiger prawns, macadamia nuts and yabbies (small freshwater lobsters). Beef is the most popular meat and lamb is also of a high quality. There is a wide variety of excellent fruits and vegetables. Service is European-style and varies from waitress and waiter service to self-service. Bistros, cafes, family-style restaurants and 'pub' lunches at the counter offer good food at reasonable prices. Some restaurants will allow guests to bring their own alcohol and are called 'BYO' restaurants. Australia also offers an enormous variety of cuisines, including Italian, French, Greek, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Malaysian, Thai, Japanese, Indian, African, Lebanese and Korean.

The major vineyards (wineries) are outside Perth, Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, Canberra and Adelaide. The largest single wine-growing region is in the Barossa Valley, South Australia, 2 hours' drive from Adelaide, where high-quality red and white wines are produced. Most restaurants and hotels are licensed to serve alcohol; private hotels and guest houses cannot be licensed by law. Australian wines are good and inexpensive. Beer is served chilled. Licensing hours in public bars are 1000-2200 Mon-Sat, however most pubs are open until 2400; Sunday hours vary. Restaurants, clubs and hotel lounges have more flexible hours. Drinking age is 18 years or over.

SHOPPING

Special purchases include excellent local wines; wool, clothing, leather and sheepskin products; opal and other precious or semi-precious stones; and modern art sculpture and paintings. Exhibitions of bark paintings, boomerangs and other tribal objects are on view and for sale in Darwin, Alice Springs and the State capitals; many depict stories from the Dreamtime. Many cities and towns have small shops devoted to the sale of 'Australiana', where Australian souvenirs, ranging from T-shirts to boomerangs, can be bought.

Shopping hours: Opening hours for most stores in the cities are Mon-Fri 0900-1730, Sat 0900-1700, except in South Australia and Western Australia where shops are open all day Saturday. Late-night shopping is available Friday to 2100 in Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane, Hobart and Darwin. Late-

night shopping is available Thursday at the same times in Sydney, Canberra and Perth. Major stores in some states are open 1000-1600 Sunday. Corner stores, restaurants and snack bars are open in most cities until well into the night.

HISTORY

Terra Australis, as the continent was first known to Europeans, is thought to have been inhabited by man for at least 40,000 years. The aboriginal population, whose modern remnants describe themselves as Kooris, are thought to have migrated from southern India or Sri Lanka. The first European settlements were initiated by the Dutch East India Company in 1606. The company charted and claimed for their mother country the 320km (200 miles) of northwest coast, which they named New Holland.

The explorations of Captain James Cook, 150 years later, opened up the east coast. The British Empire, having just lost her American colonies, was in need of a new prison colony. By 1868, when transportation ended, Britain had sent more than 160,000 convicts to Australia. They were settled around the coast – several of modern Australia's biggest cities grew from the penal settlements and those set up by freed convicts and other European immigrants – and eventually enabled the British crown to claim the entire continent. The colonizers treated the Kooris with appalling brutality but as long as European settlement was confined to the coast, the majority of tribes were able to live as before.

This ended in 1851, when, following an exodus to the gold fields of California, the administrators sought to stem the tide by offering rewards for the discovery of gold in Australia. The subsequent gold rush prompted the first wave of voluntary migration to the continent in modern times; the population doubled within months of the discovery of gold in Victoria. Around the same time, the interior was charted for the first time, while towns sprang up both there and on the littoral. The Kooris, meanwhile, were massacred, driven into barren areas or into lives of virtual slavery. Most of Australia was granted the right to self-government in the 1850s.

The Commonwealth of Australia, a Federation of States, was set up in 1901, establishing Australia as an independent democracy. Nonetheless, close links with the UK were maintained; Australian troops fought alongside the British during both World Wars. The politics of the country remained under firm British supervision until years after World War II. In the aftermath, Australia assumed some of the trappings of a regional power, taking control of some of Germany's former territories in the area and developing links with Japan, India and South East Asia. It also joined in a secretive strategic alliance with Britain, the USA, Canada and New Zealand, which remains the country's principal defense commitment. Until its abandonment in the mid 1960s, a 'White Australia' policy was officially adopted with regard to immigration.

Between '49 and '72, Australian governments were composed of the Liberal Party in a center-right coalition with the smaller National Country Party. Sir Robert Menzies was the dominant political figure, serving 16 years as Prime Minister. In 1972, the coalition was finally defeated at the polls and the Labor Party under Gough Whitlam took office with a comparatively radical agenda. There followed one of the most controversial periods of recent Australian history, culminating in the Whitlam government being dismissed by the Governor General, Sir John Kerr, in circumstances still hotly disputed. The immediate beneficiary was the Liberal Party leader, Malcolm Fraser, who won the next elections, which followed in December 1975, within weeks of Whitlam's

dismissal. Fraser remained in office until 1983, when Labor was returned to power under the leadership of the ex-trade-union leader, Bob Hawke. Under Hawke and his acerbic Treasury Minister and eventual successor, Paul Keating, the Labor party won five elections in a row.

Finally, in March 1996, tiring of Labor, the Australian public turned to the Liberal Party led by John Howard. Howard's center-right coalition was returned to office for a second term at the 1998 general election, an ill-tempered affair in which a key issue was aboriginal land rights. Successive Australian governments have found considerable difficulty in reconciling Koori peoples' traditional claims and conceptions of land ownership with, to take but one example, the requirements of mining companies.

The other dominant political issue of the period was Australia's constitutional future. There were two options: to maintain the existing link with Britain; or to establish Australia as a fully fledged republic. A split in the republican camp produced a surprise victory for the traditionalists in the national referendum on the subject, held in October 1999. Despite that, most Australians now look to links with America and Asia as more important and relevant to their future than those with the 'Old Country'. The country's foreign policy (irrespective of the party in power) is now geared to the strengthening of economic and political links with the countries of the Asian Pacific Rim and the affirmation of the existing links with the USA (exemplified by Australia's participation in the 2003 invasion of Iraq).

Under the Howard governments, migration has come to dominate the Australian political agenda. In the run up to the most recent election in November 2001, the anti-immigrant One Nation Party – which burst onto the political scene in 1997, before subsiding within a year – showed signs of a brief resurgence before disappearing without trace. But the incumbent Conservative Premier, John Howard, cleverly exploited the issue to pull off an unlikely victory over Kim Beazley's Labor Party. The hard line which Howard set down has been rigorously pursued ever since – 'boat people' from the troubled states of Asia have been prevented from landing in Australia and instead directed to small Pacific islands; those who do reach Australia are detained in remote outback encampments. The government's hard line has been confirmed and reinforced by the October 2002 bomb in Bali, which killed 200 mostly Australian tourists. This brought Australia to the center of the US-inspired global 'war against terrorism'.

LUGGAGE

Traveling light is always the first and best rule! We recommend passengers limit their luggage to one medium-sized soft bag per person or two small duffle bags. In this security conscious era, airline luggage restrictions may change without notice. Also, luggage limits vary depending on ticket class, plane size, destinations, etc. It is always best to confirm with airlines for specific limitations.

Generally speaking, from the US, economy class passengers are allowed to check in two (2) normal size pieces of luggage (each piece measuring no more than about 62 linear inches, which means length plus width plus height), and not exceeding 70 pounds per bag.

Scheduled flights from other countries and within foreign countries generally limit luggage to 44 pounds total, plus one carry-on personal item. Further restrictions apply for charter flights. We will advise you of those restrictions in your final documents.

Most airlines now allow only one carry-on bag in addition to one personal item such as a laptop or handbag. Most bags within the 22 x 14 x 9 (or, a total of 45 linear inches) size restriction will be considered legal carry-on size by major domestic U.S. airlines. Many US airlines check-in desks have sizing boxes within which your bag must fit. Obviously, no knives or cutting instruments are allowed in carry-on baggage.

All luggage should have identification inside as well as secure baggage tags on the outside. Please note that the US National Transportation and Safety Board now suggests that you do not lock your checked luggage. If a screener has to open your bag, the locks may have to be broken. This applies to flights within the US and international flights originating in the US. This, however, does not address other international travel issues. We suggest that you lock your luggage and bring a couple of spare locks in the event one or more are cut off. But the choice is up to each individual traveler to make.

Hint: Some companies such as Aurora Luggage (www.auroraluggage.com/) post the most current luggage requirements for many individual airlines on their web sites.

CAMERAS & FILM

Photography: Please, approach people with an attitude of respect, just as you would want to be treated. Do not take anyone's picture without permission. It may be necessary to negotiate a fee beforehand. Never take any photos of airports, police or government buildings, military installations, or borders.

Equipment: Bring cameras and lenses you are comfortable using. If you get new equipment before you go, do so as far in advance as possible. Shoot and develop at least a dozen rolls before departure to work out problems. Cameras should be packed with good cushioning. The roads are sometimes rough, and constant vibration can do damage. Keep your camera with you as much as possible. Make sure you have lens caps for all your lenses. Clean your equipment frequently.

Lenses: A combination of fixed and / or zoom lenses with focal lengths from 28 mm to 200 mm is good for general travel photography, although you can take excellent photographs with only a 50 mm lens. Zoom lenses such as 35-80mm, 70-210 mm, or 100-300 mm will help you capture the sights in a variety of different settings. A macro lens is helpful for shooting close-ups, but a good set of extension tubes will work very well. Point and shoot cameras are nice for a group or indoor shots, but leave something to be desired when photographing outdoors.

Video: If you are planning to shoot video on a safari, be sure to bring plenty of tape and batteries with you. Do not plan to buy videotape. Videotape is not affected by airport x-ray; only magnetic fields or prolonged exposure to heat will damage videotape. Your battery charger should be capable of automatically adjusting to 240 volts. You will probably have no problem finding a plug in most of the lodges and larger tented camps, but be prepared with plenty of batteries

Batteries: Put fresh photo-quality batteries in your camera and other electric equipment before you leave and bring at least two sets of spare batteries with you. Your camera will be useless without them, and batteries can be hard to find and expensive.

Film: It is always best to bring along whatever you need with you. Film is generally more expensive abroad and it may be hard to locate. You'll be surprised at how much film you use when you are trying to capture all those special moments. Even those not all that interested in photography will probably shoot a couple of 36-exposure rolls per day, and enthusiastic shooters will easily double or triple that amount. Be sure film is fresh and, when possible, keep it refrigerated. A film speed of ASA/ISO 64 is an excellent choice for color slide film. Use this speed when possible rather than higher speed films. There is a noticeable difference in quality that it is worth the extra effort to keep your camera steady at a somewhat slower shutter speed than you would otherwise use. For color prints, there are several good choices, including Kodak and Fuji films (ASA/ISO 100 & 200) for daylight photography, ASA/ISO 400 & 1000 are good for lower light and nighttime situations.

Note: Recent news reports warn that new explosive detectors used in more than 100 US airports to scan checked baggage will ruin unprotected, unexposed film. This technology will eventually be in place at all airports worldwide. Experts suggest either carrying your film in your carry-on luggage and/or placing film in safety, lead-lined bags to prevent X-ray damage. Avoid airport x-ray machines whenever possible and request a hand search of your film only. While security people are often obliging, some are not so allow a little extra time. X-rays are cumulative on exposed and unexposed film so the more times film is x-rayed, the more risk of damage. This is especially true with older machines found in many countries. Lead bags for film are available for purchase and are worth the small investment. Do not have film in your camera because it may be opened for inspection.

SAFETY

Common sense safety precautions you normally observe when traveling anywhere should be followed to minimize the risk of personal injury or property loss.

Leave jewelry at home! Do not leave cash, traveler's checks, airline tickets, etc. in an unattended room, even in a locked suitcase. Most of the accommodations have safe deposit facilities at the front desk for your valuables. Use them.

In cities here as in cities at home, be aware! During the day and in crowds, be careful when carrying purses or cameras. Do not carry large amounts of currency or valuables. Take taxis from hotels and do not accept rides from unauthorized cabs. Do not walk around unfamiliar cities alone at night. Be wary of entering into conversation with unknown people on the street. These are the same precautions a visitor would observe in North American cities. Common sense is the best defense.

Pamphlets addressing safety issues abroad are available from the Bureau of Consular Affairs' website: <http://travel.state.gov>.

DEALING WITH JET LAG

With the joys and adventures of international travel come certain unavoidable inconveniences such as occasional lost luggage or bouts of jet lag. In fact, studies reveal that as much as 90% of long distance travelers experience a degree of jet lag.

Jet lag describes that out-of-sorts feeling associated with long flights, particularly those across time zones.

Symptoms and severity vary but may include drowsiness, fatigue, irritability, difficulty concentrating, headaches, insomnia, and swelling of the extremities.

The number of time zones crossed affects the severity of jet lag. The internal body clock follows circadian rhythm, which is controlled by the hypothalamus that processes nerve signals. That clock is designed for regular cycles of light and darkness. Depending on the number of time zones crossed, it may take several days for that rhythm to be restored. That is not the only influence. Other factors include cabin pressure, stale air, lack of humidity, and your overall physical condition at the beginning of your trip.

Although jet lag can not be completely avoided, there are some simple things you can do to help minimize its affects. Consider the following for your next scheduled trip.

- Start your trip well rested with a good night's sleep prior to departure. Getting adequate rest before starting on your journey will help minimize the amount of catching up you'll have to do when you arrive at the destination. Once home, try to schedule a day of rest before returning to work.
- Drink plenty of fluids -- water and juices will help you to stay well hydrated. Seasoned travelers recommend that you carry a bottle of drinking water with you and drink eight ounces every hour.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine just before and during flights. Both possess diuretic properties that promote dehydration. Alcohol also causes drowsiness and contributes to feeling sluggish.
- Once settled onboard, reset your watch to the time zone to which you are traveling. This small act helps you begin adjusting to your destination's local time.
- As much as possible, create a dark environment during flight. Studies have shown that bright lights strongly affect individuals' body clocks. If necessary, try eyeshades and earplugs to help block distractions and convince your body that it is nighttime. Closing window shades and turning off overhead lights may also help. Sleep on the plane if your flight has an early morning arrival time.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing and comfortable shoes that will help in the event you experience mild swelling. Experienced travelers often bring lightweight slippers to wear during flights.
- Although not always feasible, look for opportunities to walk around while in flight. Do simple isometric exercises (contracting and relaxing as many muscle groups as possible) in your seat. These will improve circulation, help promote increased alertness, and reduce chances of swelling.
- If you arrive in the morning, plan to stay awake. If possible, wait until the local bedtime to sleep. Many people swear that this is key in determining how quickly they adapt to local conditions. You will sleep better and will be less likely to suffer insomnia than if you nap upon arrival.
- During extended stopovers, showers are sometimes available. If you have the opportunity, shower. Trans-Pacific pilots report that taking a shower in Hawaii helps them recover more quickly from the general effects of jet lag after the flight.

