

Our Special Consultants:

Any business is only as good as its staff.

Specialty Travel is proud to be associated with.

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Top 10 Travel Tips

(All information courtesy Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade)

1. Check the [latest travel advice](#) for your destination and subscribe to receive instant e-mail notification each time the travel advice for your destination is updated.
2. Take out appropriate [travel insurance](#) to cover hospital treatment, medical evacuation and any activities, including adventure sports, in which you plan to participate.
3. Before travelling overseas [register your details](#) online or, when overseas, register in-person at any [Australian embassy, high commission or consulate](#).
4. Check to see if you require visas for the country or countries you are visiting or transiting. Be aware that a visa does not guarantee entry.
5. 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 originals and leave a copy with someone at home.
6. Check with health professionals for information on recommended vaccinations or other precautions and find out about overseas laws on travelling with medicines.
7. Make sure your passport has at least six months validity and carry additional copies of your passport photo with you in case you need a replacement passport while overseas.
8. Leave a copy of your travel itinerary with someone at home and keep in regular contact with friends and relatives while overseas.
9. Before departing Australia check whether you are regarded as a national of the country you intend to visit. Research whether holding [dual nationality](#) has any implications for your travel.
10. Obey the law. Consular assistance cannot override local laws, even where local laws appear harsh or unjust by Australian standards.

If you can't afford travel insurance, you can't afford to travel.

When organising travel insurance, ensure you are covered for general medical expenses, existing medical conditions, hospitalisations and medical evacuations. Shop around for a policy that meets your needs and covers you the whole time you will be away. If you plan on participating in adventure tourism or sports like scuba diving or parasailing, be upfront about your plans with your insurance provider and ensure your policy covers these activities. Why you need travel insurance:



- daily hospitalisation costs in South-East Asia regularly exceed \$800
- a stay in a general ward in Noumea's main hospital costs a minimum of \$1500 per day, in the Intensive Care Unit the daily charge starts at \$3000
- the return of a deceased person's remains from Europe can cost in excess of \$10,000
- the cost of medical evacuations from the United States regularly range from \$75,000 to \$95,000 and sometimes up to \$300,000

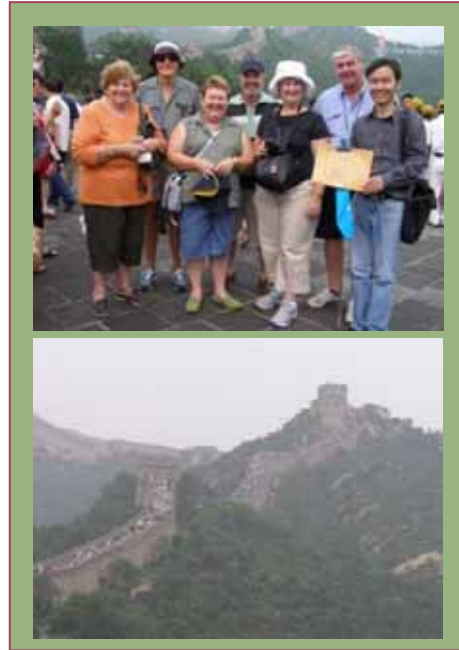
Following are two examples of the kind of cases handled by the Department of Foreign Affairs:

1. In Bali, 5 Australians were injured in a mini-van accident. Consular assistance was limited to support and routine contact with next-of-kin (NOK), as all the Australians involved had travel insurance. The travel insurance company paid their hospital bills and arranged their medical evacuation to Australia.
2. A young man who worked in a US ski resort for four months then took time off to travel around the US. He permitted his 12-month travel insurance policy to expire just a few days before his departure for home. He was hit by a car while crossing a road and suffered serious head injuries. He was admitted unconscious to intensive care and required highly intensive sophisticated care until he was able to be flown back to Australia. He was still unconscious and returned on a stretcher. The cost to the family for the medical evacuation alone was \$80,000. They have taken out a second mortgage on their house to raise the funds.

A Taste of China with Sharon



What a wonderful experience!! Our tour began in Beijing and what a culture shock it was. The sheer numbers of people was mind blowing. (15,000,000 in Beijing alone) Travelling China in July did tend to get quite hot at times although being from the Tropics ourselves we handled it quite well.



We were met at the airport by our local guide Jimmy. All of our guides were great and all spoke fluent English; thank goodness.

On our first day out Jimmy warned of beggars and pickpockets. He wasn't wrong. It was quite intimidating at first but as the tour wore on we became quite adept at handling the beggars and peddlers.

Our tour in Beijing took in Tiannamen Square, the Forbidden City, The Summer Palace, the Ming Tombs, the Sacred Road and of course the Great Wall. It really was all we expected it to be and more.

From Beijing we went to Xian, (Tony was our guide) the home of the Terracotta Warriors and then on to ChongChing where we boarded our boat for the cruise down the Yangtse River. The Yangtse Cruise ended at Yichang but only after our encounter with the Pea Pod Boats. It is a local tradition and quite exciting as the boats are powered by men. Firstly rowing and then hauling us up the river with yokes around their bodies. It didn't hit home until this day, that parts of China are so apart from the rest of the world. We gave our lovely little guide Regina a koala bear. She didn't know what it was! She had lived in the little fishing and farming village all her life and the rest of the world didn't exist.

From Yichang we flew to Shanghai where (John was our guide) Shanghai is very westernised compared to the other cities we visited. We were all quite taken with it as it seemed to be worlds apart from the others. We did some great shopping in Shanghai although it was very hard to fit this type of activity in as all of our time was taken up. We left our hotel at 8am at the latest every day and didn't return until 8 or 9 at night. I could go on and on about the things that fascinated us and had us in awe but it would take too long. We can only recommend a trip to China on your list of holiday destinations.

Sharon Polkinghorne

My favorite Websites:

- www.lonelyplanet.com
- www.timeanddate.com
- www.tripadvisor.com
- www.geographicguide.com
- www.bank-holidays.com
- www.thingstodo.com
- <http://maps.google.com>
- <http://airlines.ws>

Norway - Breathtaking



In the northern spring this year we flew to Stockholm, Sweden, to join our friends, Lars and Inger. From Stockholm we drove north for four days through the Arctic Circle visiting the Sami town of Jokkmokk in Sweden and Santa's office in the city of Rovaniemi, Finland en route. We arrived at the world's most northerly port of Kirkenes, Norway, to board the Hurtigruten. Our ship was the "Nordgorge". The Hurtigruten began as a mail and freight service from Bergen to Kirkenes servicing the fishing and rural communities in between. It has now developed into a tourist cruise as well.

For four magical days we sailed in luxury around the Norwegian coastline from Kirkenes to Trondheim. Several times each day we disembarked to wander around the towns while the crew loaded and unloaded. The northern towns were workmanlike and utilitarian to manage the brutal climate. As we travelled south the towns and scenery became prettier, greener and coloured with spring flowers. We disembarked at the university city of Tronso at 11.30 PM one night with the sun still shining brightly. From the quay we were taken by bus to the triangular, white Tronso Cathedral where we were treated to a concert of classical music. When we returned to the "Nordgorge" at 2AM the sky was still light. We had witnessed the Midnight Sun.

Our cruise visited the many picturesque fjords for which the Norwegian coastline is famous. At that time of the year the fjords were backgrounded by snow-daubed mountains so the waterfalls plunged busily to the sea from the steep sides of the fjords. The shoreline was green and the emerging spring flowers dotted the landscape with colour. Daily the passing scenery was awe inspiring. We could view it from our cabin porthole, or from the glassed-in dining room where we indulged in three gastronomic delights per day. However, most of our time was spent ogling the amazing scenery from the Panorama Lounge with its 180 degree views, or walking around the decks to catch every nuance.

As we sailed down the Norwegian coast we learnt with listening eyes of the ancient Viking history, the Nazi occupation in WW2, and the pivotal part played in the Cold War. The Russian border is only thirty-five kilometers from Kirkenes and signs in the town are in both Norwegian and Russian.

Returning to the Real World at Trondheim wasn't easy but the city is so attractive and has such a long history we were easily distracted.

John & Sue Halberstater



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