TRAVEL BASICS AFRICA
Agenda

- COVID-19 Updates
- Basics about region
- Before you go
- Trip planning
- While you’re abroad
- Q & A
COVID-19 Updates

- On March 11, President Schlissel announced that all U-M international nonessential travel is suspended until at least April 21.
- In addition, all Winter and Spring term U-M education abroad programs have been altered or suspended (Summer term study abroad programs are TBD).
- Many non-UM affiliated programs are also being altered/suspended and are pulling students out on an individual basis.
- President Schlissel’s announcement does not apply to independent/personal travel, but we strongly discourage international travel until the travel suspension is lifted.
- On March 19, the U.S. State Department issued a Global Level 4 Health Advisor -- Do Not Travel.
COVID-19 Resources

Here are several University and federal resources that will be useful if you are still planning to travel:

- Visit here for COVID-19 updates from U-M
- UM Travel Registry (Register your travel with the University)
- Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (Register your travel with the US)
- UM Travel Abroad Health Insurance
- UHS COVID-19 Information (Includes Travel Information)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) COVID-19 Travel Information
- Johns Hopkins COVID-19 Dashboard

If you need to cancel a flight, check with your airline to see if it is possible to get a refund. Many airlines are offering refunds and flexible rebooking options that could help minimize your financial loss.

- If you purchase a flight, consider Cancel for Any Reason Travel Insurance
Before You Go
Passports/Visas

- Apply at least 6-8 weeks in advance
- Check with the embassy/consulate of the country/countries you will be visiting
  - International students - make sure you also have all the necessary documents to re-enter back into the U.S.
- Visa Processing Services
  - Travisa, A Briggs
- Some countries require a visa before leaving the US or entering the country, while others offer visa-on-arrival
- Check requirements with US State Department: https://travel.state.gov
- Make multiple copies of your passport to take with you and leave with family (if that’s an option)
Finances

- Make sure your cards can be used overseas
- Call your bank to notify them of your trip
- Visa/Mastercard are accepted at most ATMs
- Be aware of ATM and foreign exchange fees
- Africa is almost exclusively cash-based outside of large cities
- Look up exchange rates to estimate your budget
Phones & Communication

- **Cell phones**
  - Make sure your phone is unlocked and can be used internationally
  - SIM cards are cheap
  - Cheap phones can also be bought in-country
  - Voucher systems to buy internet bundles

- **International Calling / Messaging Applications**
  - WhatsApp, Line, Telegram, Groupme, Viber, Skype, Wechat, KakaoTalk

- **Accessing WiFi**
  - Internet cafes, coffee shops, hostels, hotels, etc.
Travel Health

- **UHS Travel Health Clinic** ([https://uhs.umich.edu/travelhealth](https://uhs.umich.edu/travelhealth))
  - Get immunizations necessary for travel
  - Make an appointment ASAP since they are very busy

- **Health Insurance**
  - UM Travel Abroad Health Insurance: [http://uhs.umich.edu/tai](http://uhs.umich.edu/tai)
  - $1.19/day and available for any person affiliated with U-M, even if you are just traveling

- **Prescription Meds**
  - Do you have enough to last the duration of your trip?
  - If you have a medical condition, be sure to talk to your doctor about handling situations abroad
  - Carry in your carry-on and bring prescription documentation
Travel Health, Cont.

- Country-specific health & safety advice
  - https://travel.state.gov
- Pack a simple first-aid kit
  - Band-aids, gauze pads, medical/cloth tape
  - Neosporin, antiseptic wipes
  - Burn ointment
  - Medication - Imodium, Pepto-Bismol tablets, Tylenol/Advil, etc.
  - Rehydration salts
  - Many things are accessible in country!
- Condoms, birth control
- Contact solution
- Iodine tablets
- Malaria medication- ask your doctor about best options
Personal Safety

- Petty theft (pickpocketing, bag-snatching, etc.)
- Money belts - pros and cons
- Illegal/private cabs
- Motorbike transportation
- Drugs and alcohol
- Scams
- Harassment
- Be especially careful at ATMs, bus stations, known tourist spots (or, crowded areas in general!)
- Mitigate your vulnerability to decrease crimes of opportunity
- Be aware of country’s gender roles
- Dress culturally appropriate
Feminine Hygiene

- Pads are widely available
- Tampons can be difficult to find, especially those with applicators
- Menstrual cup! Know how to use it properly beforehand
- Birth control and Plan B availability depending on the country
- Condoms available most places
- Ask trusted local women what they do with used tampons or pads, many countries do not even flush tp, prepare accordingly
LGBTQ+

- Equaldex.com - great resource!
  - “Collaborative LGBT Rights Knowledge Base”
- Check with the U-M Spectrum Center
- Views and practices differ in each country
  - Be culturally aware
  - Be mindful of all public displays of affection regardless of sexual orientation
- African countries tend to have more conservative views
  - It may be a risk to personal safety to disclose your sexuality if you are not heterosexual
Trip Planning
Packing

● Depending on your trip length...
  ○ Suitcase vs. Hiking backpack

● Pack light
  ○ Quick-dry towel
  ○ Most toiletries can be purchased when you’re there

● Plug adaptors

● Be careful about shavers, hair straighteners, and hair dryers since the voltage is different

● Deodorant can be hard to find

● Sunscreen (environmentally friendly options)

● First-aid kit, medication, prescriptions

● Earplugs and sleep masks

● Water filter/ steripen
Packing

- **Clothing**
  - Appropriate
    - Cultural, weather, type of fabric
  - Sometimes easier, cheaper, and fun activity to buy clothes in country
  - Don’t overpack- leave some room!

- **Comfortable shoes**
  - Rubber flip flops/sandals for hostels, bathrooms
  - Hiking boots or hiking sandals for rainy season

- **1-2 dressy outfits**

- **Limited shoe and clothing sizes in-country**

- **Electronics, extra memory cards**

- **Copies of important documents**
Airfare

- STA Travel and Student Universe
  - Offer student and youth (<26 years old) discounts
- Flight aggregators
  - Skyscanner, Momondo, and Kayak
- Scott’s Cheap Flights
  - Sends you emails with great deals
- Official airline websites sometimes have deals that aren’t available on other websites
When You’re There
Cultural Norms to Be Aware of

**Africa is a huge continent with thousands of unique cultures... these norms apply to some cultures, but not all**

- Dress/act conservatively/appropriately
- Collectivist culture over individualism
- Gender roles may be more pronounced
- Be aware of religious observances/holidays
- May be more blunt and offer different perspectives about topics we may consider personal: physical appearance, relationship status, income, etc.
- Concept of time
- Let go of judgements
Finances Abroad

- Cash; credit/debit cards
- Currency exchange
- Call your bank and credit card company to advise them of your travel plans!
- Make sure the ATM can take your card
- Budgeting
- Be aware of culture around tipping
Accommodation

- Hostels: Hostelworld, Hostels.com
  - Great place to meet others if you’re traveling solo
- Local hotels - quality may vary
- Plan ahead for holidays and festivals
- AirBnB and Couchsurfing
Transportation

- Many modes of transport available; flying is the easiest but most expensive
  - Flying may also be the safest form of traveling over some borders
- Buses and minivans are popular for overland and cross-border travel
  - Be aware of possible delays/road closures during rainy season
- Motorcycles and tuk-tuks (use very cautiously)
- Donkey and horse carts
Health Abroad

- Health-care quality differs in countries and locations
- Clinics in large cities are usually more Western style than in rural areas
- Be mindful of food, since sanitation differs
- Don’t drink or brush your teeth with the tap water. ONLY use bottled water, boiled water, or chlorinated water
- Post-Exposure Prophylaxis for potential HIV exposure may be available
- Condoms are available in most places
- Malaria medicine consistently (where advised)
- Mosquito
- Bed bugs, fleas, etc., are common
- Hydrate
Many different parts of the animal are eaten
Cheese and other dairy products may be difficult to find or expensive
Make sure raw fruits and vegetables are washed and handled properly (using chlorinated or filtered water)
Eat what the locals eat
Practice gratitude
Sanitation differs
  ○ Street Food
Water and Power Outages

- Be aware that these can happen at anytime, may be frequent depending on country and city
- Carry a portable power charger, if possible
- Unplug electronics during storms
- Access to running water will vary depending on location (if you’re in an urban area, you’d likely have access to running water but not necessarily hot)
The Bathroom Situation...

- Bring tissues or toilet paper with you
- Wet wipes are your friend
- Be mindful and practice as locals do when discarding items
- Toilets may range from a shallow hole in the ground to a flush toilet
Shopping

- Bargaining/haggling is typical and usually expected in open-air markets
- Use it as an opportunity to invest in local economy
- Get to know the merchants! Practice language skills
- You may be charged higher prices if you don’t look like a local
- Large supermarkets or stores selling foreign products typically only in large cities
Ethical Photography

- Take time to get to know the community first
- Pause
- Ask for consent
- Embrace the moment first and foremost
- Credit those in the picture when sharing (know their names)
- Ask yourself what kind of message this propagates when outsiders see it
- Be a mindful ambassador, knowing your responsibility to share others’ stories
- Share pictures of your home, family, and friends with those you connect with in country
- Be mindful of your camera and equipment, this can draw attention to you and create issues you might not be aware of
- Take opportunities to teach others how to use camera when appropriate
Farewells

- Prepare for re-entry, (reverse) culture shock
  - Letters to self, journal reflections, video and pictures that represent your time, goals moving forward
- Do not assume locals want what you leave behind
  - Make sure it is good quality, and ask first
- Create ways and plans to keep up communications without promising too much
- Prepare to share your experience with folks back home in a meaningful and culturally sensitive way
- Do not generalize
- Practice gratitude, create new ways you might want to show up in the world now
Questions?

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