



Travelling in Health across South America



General

Many tourists are now including a trip across South America within their 'round the world' plans. This is a huge continent and the health risks vary greatly from north to south and even from east to west. In many cases this is linked to the changes in climate which are experienced from the northern hot and humid Amazon jungle to the almost Antarctic expanses of Patagonia. This brief leaflet only seeks to give an overview of some of the issues and every individual traveller will need to consider carefully their specific itinerary.

Long Haul Flights

Those flying from Western Europe to South America will certainly experience some degree of 'jet-lag' but usually not as severe for those returning back home. However on arrival after the long-haul flight it is important that travellers take time to adjust to their new surroundings. One particular issue is that frequently travellers who arrive tired early in the day, unpack their bags and then sit beside the swimming pool to 'rest'. Falling asleep at this stage is unwise as it is only too easy to become sunburnt and this will ruin the next few days

Arriving in South America

Many travellers will aim to arrive into Rio or Sao Paulo or perhaps Buenos Aires and then, after settling, head towards the Iguassu Falls. Both Rio and Sao Paulo are major capital cities but each can suffer with outbreaks of Dengue Fever. This mosquito borne disease causes significant flu-like symptoms and the associated lethargy can last for many months. Recently it has been reported around the Iguassu Falls region. It is uncommon in Uruguay and Argentina - especially as you travel further south.

Food & Water protection

No matter where you travel away from home to a hotter climate there is always a risk from food and water borne disease. In South America travellers are encouraged to eat hot freshly cooked meals, to avoid cold meals of lettuce and salads and never to eat the undercooked bivalve shellfish (mussels, oysters, clams etc) which are commonly found in these regions. Drinking sealed bottle water bought in a good quality hotel or supermarket is a very wise precaution. Fruit that is then peeled is much safer than if someone else has already done this for you.

Animal contact

Remember Rabies is a problem throughout South America so avoid all contact with animals and a bite, lick or scratch should be treated very seriously. This means you would need to wash out the wound, apply an antiseptic and then attend for medical attention. Not the best way to spend a holiday!

Dehydration & Salt replacement

In the hotter regions of South America, or when trekking, it is essential to drink significantly more water than usual to replace what is lost through perspiration. Replacing lost salt will also be important to reduce the level of tiredness and muscular cramps associated with low salt levels. Crisps and salted peanuts will be a useful dietary supplement - except for those with heart problems and blood pressure which this will need careful consideration.

Iguassu Falls

These major waterfalls are a very common attraction for tourists situated on the border of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay. The climate here is hot and humid and mosquitoes can abound. Good quality insect repellents are essential. The risk of malaria around the Falls is minimal and prophylaxis is not currently recommended. However there is a concern about the possibility of Yellow Fever and Dengue Fever transmission (both also by mosquitoes) so it is essential that adequate repellents (containing diethyltoluamide) are used at all times.

Angel Falls

These are less frequently visited than their Iguassu relatives but still quite spectacular. It is situated in Bolivar province and the river eventually flows into the great Orinoco which opens into the Atlantic. This is regarded as both a Malaria and Yellow Fever area and so protection against both these diseases is recommended.

Manaus

This town is situated in the depths of the Amazon Jungle even though it is quite developed. Many tourists plan to visit and to go on river excursions etc. Both Yellow Fever vaccination and tablets to help protect against Malaria are recommended.

Patagonia

Trekkers, hill walkers and the more adventurous will head south to this region in southern Argentina. It is well away from the regions which have Yellow Fever and Malaria so protection is not required against either of these serious diseases. Sandflies can be a problem so repellent is recommended. Good walking shoes are essential and a small first aid kit.

Inca Trail

There is a separate TMB leaflet covering issues relating to the Inca Trail including information on altitude sickness, Coca tea etc.

Healthcare

All travellers to South America will need to be seen for a detailed medical consultation to ensure that they have appropriate advice and protection for their individual trip. Further information and all the latest travel news reports are available at www.tmb.ie

National Travel Vaccine Appointment Tel 1-850-48 76 74

Web Address: www.tmb.ie

This leaflet has been prepared using information supplied from W.H.O. Center for Disease Control (US) and other International sources.

- ✓ Travel Accessories
- ✓ Tropical Diagnostic Laboratory
- ✓ Tropical Disease Screening Centre
- ✓ W.H.O. registered Yellow Fever Vaccination Centre
- ✓ International Vaccination and Malaria Advice Centres

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