

TIPS FOR VOLUNTEERS

1. TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

1.1. PASSPORT

A current passport means a passport which does not expire prior to your planned return flight home: always allow a period of grace and confirm requirements of the countries to be visited. Some require a passport to be valid for up to six months on arrival. Take a photocopy of your passport and a spare passport photo with you in case you lose or have your passport stolen.

1.2. VISA

Please ensure that you check with Visa requirements for the countries to be visited well ahead of travel.

1.3. AIR BOOKINGS

Departure Tax is included in your airfare costs in New Zealand but you may have to pay Departure Tax at the airport when departing some overseas countries.

2. HEALTH

Please observe the warnings about your continuing good health in an environment which may be different to that in which you are living. Much of this advice comes from discussions with Health Professionals in tropical areas, official Health Department statements, as well as the experiences of pastvolunteers. PLEASE, at least, read the information and discuss it with your Health Professional.

2.1. PERSONAL MEDICATION

A doctor may not be readily available, so remember to take with you:-

Anti malarial tablets Prickly heat powder Anti diarrhoea medicine
Band-aids Tweezers (for splinters) Panadol
Betadine antiseptic (or similar) Cicatrin powder (invaluable for cuts)
Other personal medication.

2.2. MALARIA (see also 20 below)

Remember to take your anti-malarial tablets prior to your departure if you are visiting malaria endemic countries, while you are out of the country and after your return if advised to do so by your Health Professional.

2.3. WATER

A safe potable water supply is something we, here in most parts of New Zealand, take for granted. In developing countries, for good health, it is essential not to take water supplies for granted, particularly out in the bush. BOIL OR STERILISE.

2.4. FEVER

Fever is a warning!! If you develop fever (high temperature) medical advice should be sought immediately.

3. INSURANCE

Take adequate Travel Insurance once overseas travel is booked. Travel policies generally exclude all cover arising out of work either paid or as a volunteer. The RNZWCS Limited travel policy has that exclusion removed.

4. INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Use terms such as "NATIONALS" or "LOCALS"; other terms may offend the local people.

5. FAMILY CONTACT

If you thought that mail in New Zealand was slow, in parts of the world mail moves at a veritable crawl, if at all. Please advise your family and friends that they should not be concerned if they do not receive any mail from you. You most likely can arrange access to a cell phone or email for urgent contact.

6. READING MATTER

It is suggested that you take some reading matter with you. New Zealand newspapers and magazines are always welcomed by people already at the site. A pack of playing cards is a great standby.

7. CLOTHING

Have worn old clothing and footwear at the work site, give to the locals, when leaving the site. People with experience in the tropics advise that ladies should be dressed modestly at ALL times.

8. SECURITY

Any large town or city in any part of the world can be a dangerous place; particularly if you are foolish enough to wander around after dark. The old rule of common sense applies.

9. LIQUOR

Two words: RESTRAINT and DISCRETION.

On some occasions alcohol is strictly forbidden and you are expected to respect local customs. It may be best, if you cannot go without alcohol (other than in the privacy of your room), to reconsider whether you should volunteer. If you are staying overnight at any Church, Missionary or other guest house please remember these places are NOT hotels and PLEASE DO NOT consume alcoholic liquor or use offensive language while you are staying there.

10. DRIVING

Driving conditions are considerably more hazardous than they look, not so much from speeding traffic, but the unexpected nature of peculiar hazards on the road, people appearing out of nowhere, flying pigs, dogs and chooks. It is recommended, therefore, that you do NOT drive a vehicle. It is not difficult, particularly in the provincial towns, to hire a vehicle and driver. In the bush, if there is a road, the village has a truck, if not, people walk. DRIVE WITH EXTREME CARE

11. PRESENTS

Take quantities of sweets (preferably individually wrapped varieties eg. Minties: chocolates definitely a NO-NO), balloons etc. to take to give to children at the work site, but you do not really have to bribe people to win friends amongst the kids. The friendliness and delightful curiosity of the village children is one of the great rewards for having joined a Volunteer Team. Frisbees are great fun, take along a few. Primary level children's books (such as Little Golden Books) if you are going to a primary school area, and books suitable for secondary school students are always very much appreciated by the secondary schools.

12. PERSONAL GIFTS

Maybe you would like to take a few small personal gifts that you may wish to give to some of the Nationals that have helped you, not only on the job but personally. The following are some suggestions: beads, bangles, combs, stick pins, sandpaper, rulers, pencils, biros, tennis balls etc.

13. MONEY

As the value of the New Zealand Dollar is floating it is difficult to forecast exchange rates. You can obtain this information from your bank before you depart. Take some local currency with you if you can purchase it in New Zealand; ask at your local bank, they may be able to get some for you. You will need sufficient ready cash if you are staying overnight in the point of arrival for such things as taxis, meals, sightseeing etc. It is also suggested that you wear a money belt; this is much safer than having money in your hip pocket.

14. HOSPITALITY

Please do not expect personal assistance from Rotary Clubs in the recipient countries. These clubs are small in numbers and see many volunteers passing through. However, please MAKE UP at any, and in particular the sponsoring Rotary Club meetings, if you are able to get to their meetings, this may not be always possible. You will be made most welcome at the regular meetings and this includes non-Rotarian volunteers.

15. EMERGENCIES

Please make sure your family knows who to contact, both here in New Zealand and in the recipient country.

16. FRUSTRATIONS

This is a difficult subject, but it is one which is ever present in third world countries. Supply and transport of materials is a difficult problem. Remember the people that you will be coming into contact with are constantly living with this problem. If you think that your time is being wasted, just remember that somebody else's time is being wasted too. DO NOT GET IMPATIENT!!! IMPATIENCE SOLVES ABSOLUTELY NOTHING. BE TOLERANT.

17. LANGUAGE

Wherever you go in the islands you will find that English is spoken by most people. The locals will probably try to teach you some of their language. If you listen carefully you can pick it up quite easily.

18. HARD PHYSICAL EXERCISE

This may be the biggest cause for you to worry about, particularly for those not used to working in the tropics. Do not try to outpace the youngest or fittest member of the team or any of the locals, who are used to the climate. A higher than usual intake of sugar and salt (Glucodin) can assist in reducing heat exhaustion. Drink plenty of fluids

19. HOME AGAIN

If there are any signs of fever during the first weeks after you return home, you must contact your Health Professional. Please advise your other team members, as one of them may also need medical treatment.

19.1. CUTS AND ABRASIONS

All cuts require treatment in the tropics. Do NOT scratch mosquito bites, if you are unlucky enough to get them, they will fester. If you treat with an antiseptic, wash the cut and cover it. If you treat with Cicatrin Powder (or similar), do not wash the cut, simply apply the powder, and cover the cut. If it does not heal within a day or two seek medical advice.

19.2. SUNBURN

Always use a sunscreen when out of doors. In the tropics you can burn very quickly even on an overcast day.

19.3. TYPHOID AND POLIO

Immunisation is recommended.

19.4. CHOLERA AND SMALL POX

Discuss this with your Health Professional as to whether immunisation is recommended.

19.5. TETANUS

Immunisation is recommended...booster if due.

19.6. TRAVELLER'S DIARRHOEA

Lomotil is one useful treatment. Keep up with plenty of fluids. It is useful to discuss this subject with your Health Professional as individual cases require individual treatment.

19.7. HEPATITIS

Two distinct strains of virus cause this problem. HEPATITIS A enters the body by ingestion of contaminated food such as shellfish, milk and other dairy products, raw vegetables or contaminated water. There is no vaccine for HEPATITIS A although Gammaglobulin immunisation is generally effective. Good personal hygiene, careful food preparation, and safe water supply help to prevent the occurrence of this disease. HEPATITIS B enters the body by transfer of infected blood. Whilst other methods of transmission are suspected, this virus can be arrested in its unpleasant course by immunisation with a vaccine. This vaccine is quite costly and really only necessary for those at high risk eg. persons who self inject with Insulin (diabetics) or others who come into contact with and handle blood or its by-products.

19.8. PERSONAL HYGIENE

A most important subject, particularly in the tropics. Drink only pure rain water (remember to check the storage medium), boiled or sterilised water (chlorine tablets are readily available at chemists). Remember always that you do not know who may be polluting a stream higher up (just simply expect that it is polluted). Eat only cooked vegetables and peel fresh fruit just before eating. Always wash your hands before eating.

20. MALARIA

Don't take a blasé attitude about MALARIA, it is a disease that is causing great concern and it is up to you to follow the guidelines and take all precautions.

IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT YOU TAKE THE PRESCRIBED MEDICATION FOR MALARIA. TAKE YOUR ANTI-MALARIAL MEDICATION REGULARLY, BEFORE YOU LEAVE, WHILE YOU ARE AWAY AND ALSO AFTER YOU RETURN HOME. DO NOT IGNORE THE RECOMMENDED PROCEDURE.

Make sure you read the sections concerning the prevention of this disease. The best preventative is not to get bitten by the Anopheles Mosquito. Use protective clothing at night...long sleeves, long trousers. Apply insect repellent and if rooms are not mosquito proof (check this yourself) use a mosquito net. They are cheap to buy, readily available and effective if used correctly. Take the recommended preventative medication against malaria. Discuss this with your Health Professional. In the light of the attached information. The following recommendations apply for volunteers in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu and are equally valid for many South and East Asian and African countries. No regime can guarantee 100% that you will not contract the disease. Therefore the following precautions should be used in conjunction with medication.

20.1. SELF HELP PHYSICAL MEANS

- If you do NOT get bitten by mosquitoes, you will NOT get malaria.
- Do NOT go outside between dusk and dawn.
- If you must go outside, wear long sleeves and long trousers and cover exposed areas with repellent.
- Use repellents containing DEET (Diethyl toluamide) such as RID or MUSKOL.
- Sleep behind screened doors and windows. If there are no screens fitted close doors and windows OR use insecticide impregnated bed nets.
- Wear light colours as dark clothing attracts mosquitoes.
- Do NOT use perfumes and this includes perfumed deodorants.
- Aerosol sprays, usually pyrethrins, mosquito coils and sleeping next to a fan can be helpful.

.Any fever should be regarded as suspect Malaria and treated accordingly. Under these circumstances, a blood film should be taken and microscopically examined. If this is not possible then treat for Malaria.

20.2. AFTER LEAVING A MALARIOUS AREA

If you get an illness after you return, within a year, but particularly within the first two (2) months, regard it as Malaria until proven otherwise. Seek medical attention and insist that you have blood films examined for Malaria. Remember, Malaria is the great MIMIC, and can easily be mistaken for the FLU or one of the DIARRHOEAL diseases.

21. DENGUE FEVER

This is another fever which can cause problems. It is also called BREAK-BONE FEVER, DANDY FEVER and THREE DAY FEVER. It is a disease caused by an arbovirus (qv) transmitted to humans by the mosquito *Aedes aegypti*. It is a sudden and short infectious fever, characterised mainly by swelling

and pains in the joints, and by skin eruptions. It usually begins suddenly with pain in a joint and fever. Next appears redness of the face, spreading later over the body, very much like the rash of measles and these itches intensely. There is also sore throat and running eyes, and the muscles and joints generally become very painful. These symptoms endure for about three days and then gradually pass off leaving the person very weak. After two or three days a relapse generally takes place, very similar to the first attack. There may be a third or fourth relapse and recovery from the weakness and pains in the joints is often slow and can last several months. DEATH HARDLY EVER OCCURS

21.1. TREATMENT

Aspirin, with or without codeine, usually relieves the pains and reduces the temperature though in more severe cases pethidine may be needed to bring relief. Calamine lotion eases the itching of the rash.

21.2 PREVENTION

There are no drugs to prevent contracting this fever. You must take all precautions to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. These are set out in detail under the section regarding malaria.

22 CLOTHING AND PERSONAL REQUIREMENTS (All clothing should be drip dry type.)

22.1 MEN: Suggestions

- Three sets of work clothes, with a preference for shorts and long sleeved shirts; long socks, some may prefer long trousers
- One pair of long trousers for evening wear
- One jumper (nights can get cold).
- Handkerchiefs
- Three sets of underwear
- Pyjamas
- Boots -- it becomes very wet and muddy at times
- Lightweight socks
- One lightweight nylon or plastic raincoat
- Canvas hat
- Shaving gear

22.2 LADIES: Suggestions

- Three sets of underwear
- Four or five cotton frocks
- Long sleeved blouse and trousers
- Jumper or cardigan for evening wear
- Shoes and sandals
- Plastic raincoat
- Canvas or towelling hat
- Shorts and bikinis are not recommended

22.3 EVERYONE:

Some of these items may be provided by the recipient organisation. However, to be sure, be adequately prepared for any contingency.

- Two towels
- Two single sheets or one double sheet
- Two pillowcases
- Two tea towels
- Knife, fork, spoon, teaspoon
- Small frypan, plate, bowl, cup
- Simple medical requirements
- Insect repellent
- Sunburn cream and sun screen
- Camera, films and spare batteries
- Tape recorder, tapes and spare batteries (Country and Western tapes are popular with the locals)
- Good quality torch and spare batteries