



Spotlight

December 2023

Dear Readers

Welcome to another issue of Spotlight, our spin-off magazine to our renowned magazine "Public & Global Health Spotlight". In this last issue of 2023, we are pleased to once again present you with a wealth of interesting articles and travel reports.

In this second issue, we focus on traveling at different stages of life. Retirement, for example, offers a wonderful opportunity to break out of familiar surroundings and discover new horizons. In an exciting interview with Dr. med. Christa Relly, we find out everything there is to consider when traveling with children. But we also take a look into the past. The clinic founder of the Travel Clinic UZH, Prof. em. Robert Steffen, takes us on a journey to the origins of travel medicine and shows us how this multifaceted field has developed since then.

Of course, this issue also includes further episodes from our popular "Wanderlust Chronicles" series. Katharina Burri and Annmarie Haerry take us on a journey through India and Jamaica respectively and share their fascination for these countries with us.

Enjoy the reading!

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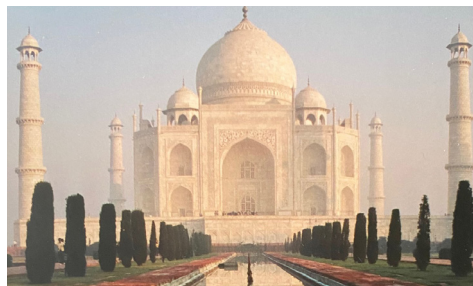
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In Jamaica, you are sure to find your tempo and perhaps regain your groove, whether at an all-inclusive beach resort or while backpacking through the mountains and countryside. There is something for everyone. Annmarie Haerry will share the best of her Jamaica with you, and maybe you'll discover your new favorite vacation destination as well.

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Traveling with Children

Dr. med. Christa Relly is an infectiologist and pediatrician. She has been treating children and adolescents at the Children's Hospital Zurich for 20 years and has also been advising clients at the Travel Clinic UZH for several years. In this article, she bridges the gap between infectiology and pediatrics and tells us what to look out for when traveling with children.



Dr. med. Christa Relly

Travel Clinic UZH /
Children's Hospital Zurich

Dear Christa, thank you very much for this interview! Could you briefly tell us what your professional background and your current focus are?

I am a pediatrician and infectiologist and have been working at the Children's Hospital Zurich for 20 years, the last 15 of them in infectiology. There, together with my colleagues, I am responsible for all areas of pediatric infectiology. We care for outpatient and inpatient children with a wide variety of infectious diseases. For five years, there has been a successful collaboration between the Travel Clinic at the EBPI and the Children's Hospital. One afternoon a week, I work at the ZRM and am allowed to contribute my pediatric expertise to travel medicine consultations. At the same time, this job gives me a wonderful view into travel medicine and allows me to learn a lot.

The topic of "traveling with children" is very comprehensive. I think it's worth organizing it a bit thematically.

Before the trip: From a medical perspective, what preparations do parents need to make to best prepare their children for a trip? Are there health risks that apply only to children, if so which ones?

That is certainly a crucial question. It seems very important to me to start planning early, to take enough time and to inform oneself sufficiently. Spontaneous actions can bring unforeseen difficulties. It is also important to choose the destination according to the needs of the children, and not necessarily those of the adults. These needs can be quite far apart.

Regarding health risks, there are some aspects that should be considered. It can be said as a general rule that many tropical diseases are more dangerous for young children than for older children or adults. We therefore generally recommend not traveling to the tropics with infants (children under 12 months). Caution is still advised with older infants as well. Parents should be aware that a sick

child on a trip is not an exception, but the rule, since small children also often get sick at home. In a bad phase, a child may have an infection every few weeks. If you're used to simply dropping your child off at the pediatrician's office quickly, this can become a challenge on a trip - even if it's for non-travel-related, or perhaps even trivial illnesses. Depending on the travel destination, a competent contact person may not be found quickly. You may have to go to a hospital where other treatment methods are practiced, where there are no pediatricians available, or where there may be different hygiene practices than you are used to. So you have to take into account that children can get sick while traveling just like they get sick at home. However, harmless illnesses can be more difficult to treat when traveling, such as when a child has diarrhea, loses a lot of fluids, and is hot. That's when it can be difficult to maintain fluid balance. In summary, plan your trip early enough, consider the needs of your children when choosing a destination, and avoid high-risk areas (such as the tropics) when traveling with very young children. There are many nice alternatives.

That kind of ties into my next question, too, when you bring up the accessibility of health care facilities: are there things to consider when planning lodging or programming?

Children need and tolerate much less program than adults. An overloaded travel program can overwhelm and tire children - which can lead to bad moods. That's why the principle for children is: less is more. For small children, it makes no difference at all whether they play on Lake Maggiore or on the beach in Thailand. They just want to "sändele". So you have to ask yourself whether you're really doing yourself a favor by flying to Thailand as a family to the beach and putting up with the heat, the unfamiliar food and the jet lag, or whether Lake Maggiore is not enough. But if you are planning a long-distance trip with small children, it is important to allow enough time for acclimatization. Acclimatization means different aspects: not only jet lag, but also time to get used to the new environment, the temperature, the food. You should allow enough unscheduled time for this. Older children are also quite happy to spend a day playing on the beach instead of visiting the sights. The choice of suitable accommodation depends on the habits of the family. It is possible to go camping with small children as well as to stay in a 5-star hotel. However, if a child is not accustomed to sitting quietly in a stylish restaurant for an evening, the camp-

ground may be the more relaxing alternative. Regardless of the type of accommodation, I recommend not changing it every day, but also staying in one place for a while once in a while. Routine and familiar routines are important for children, even on vacation. Too many changes can be exhausting, which in turn can have a negative effect on the mood in the family.

Do you have any tips and tricks on how parents can best address the topic of health with their children while traveling?

Some things that are important for children's health while traveling can already be practiced at home in everyday life, such as normal hygiene behavior. I am not a fan of excessive hygiene measures. A child should be able to play in the dirt from time to time; that is healthy and beneficial for development. Nevertheless, it makes sense to teach small children some hygiene measures. A child should learn to wash his or her hands with soap and water, for example, before eating, after going to the toilet, and after traveling on public transportation. If children learn this early, they will take it for granted when traveling. Of course, this is not yet possible for very young children, but a lot of support is needed here anyway. In addition, I recommend all parents to teach children not to pet unknown animals. Because of the risk of rabies, this is even more important when traveling. But actually it is also quite useful, even in this country, to ask dog owners first if you can pet their dog. For journeys into areas where rabies is prevalent it is better to found petting animals at all. This saves a lot of trouble and effort.

Are there any documents that travelers with children must remember?

These are not very different from those of adults. I recommend taking a copy of the vaccination card with you so that you can show it if necessary. In addition, certainly the health insurance card with emergency numbers, which you can also dial from abroad and perhaps the phone number of the pediatrician - that is, of someone who knows the child and their medical history.

During the journey: Are there things you recommend all parents have with them on the trip? And what belongs in the first-aid kit?

What to have in the hand luggage is not so much and can also vary depending on the child. It is certainly advisable to have something against pain or fever - and perhaps

nasal drops for a blocked nose.

But for long plane trips, it's important to think about more than just medications. It is advisable, especially for small children, to have something with you that they know well and that gives them a sense of security and safety, such as a cuddly toy, a pillow or a "Nuscheli". In addition, a few snacks in small portions belong in the hand luggage. Eating and drinking distracts and makes the time go by faster. Of course, age-appropriate toys should not be missing from the hand luggage. It's best to bring something that doesn't require electricity or Wi-Fi and, at best, doesn't make any noise - for the sake of the people sitting next to you.

Are there any health risks for children associated with the various means of transportation (planes, cars, trains, etc.)? I'm thinking specifically of airplane travel...

I don't think train travel is problematic. These also have the advantage of allowing children to run around, which is exciting for them and they usually like to do. If you travel in your own car, you are set up as you know it. When flying to a country and renting a car locally, you have to be mindful of the child seats. These are not always the right size, good quality or even available at all. If you are planning to travel for a longer period of time and make a lot of car trips, you can consider taking your own child seat with you. Otherwise, you should clarify in advance whether you can get one locally. Here you should not make any compromises. It makes no sense to use a tailor-made seat in Switzerland and then do without an adequate child seat at the vacation destination, where the traffic is perhaps more dangerous than at home.

Short air journeys are not very different from car journeys in terms of potential problems for children. But long air journeys can pose problems. As already mentioned, patience is required here. It can be annoying for children not to be able to move, especially if there is turbulence and you have to remain seated with your seat belt fastened. This is where parents need a bit of imagination to keep the kids well occupied so that the trip doesn't turn into torture for the whole family (and their surroundings!). Ear pressure is always an unpleasant topic. We adults are good at compensating for ear pressure, but young children can't do that very well yet. You can help them with this by giving them a nuggi or something to drink during takeoff and landing, depending on their age. For older children, chewing gum can help.

During the stay:

Keyword accidents with children - Are there risks here, which you hear about again and again and which one should pay attention to?

Of course, accidents happen on trips just as they do at home. Everything that is dangerous at home is also dangerous at the destination. In addition, there is the unfamiliar environment. Parents and children alike may not recognize a lurking danger at first glance. This applies not only to toddlers, but also to schoolchildren who can already move around relatively independently at home. For example, they may not realize that they have to look to the other side when driving on the left. This means that in terms of independence in traffic, you may have to take a step back and look at the new situation with them. A twelve-year-old may not be able to cross the street on his own without problems, which he may do every day at home without difficulty.

In addition to road traffic, the issue of water safety is also very important. You should always watch your children and really never leave them alone near a body of water. A child who can swim well in the pool may not necessarily be able to do so in the sea, depending on the waves and currents. A special degree of caution is needed here. Depending on the accommodation, dangers may lurk in unsecured electrical outlets or cables hanging freely. Things standing around that look similar to an object from home can also pose a danger. For example, a bottle of cleaning supplies may be mistaken for a drink the child knows from home. Care must be taken to avoid exposing the child to a substance that could cause him or her to become poisoned.

Are there any special precautions for children in terms of food to protect them from food poisoning, for example, or is it "cook it, boil it, peel it or leave it" for the little ones as well?

Absolutely! This sentence can be transferred 1:1 to children. For infants who are still breastfed, the food thing is easiest. For children who drink from the bottle, it is clear that you prepare the bottle with boiled or purchased water. For all other children, the rules are exactly the same as for adults.

What is there to consider in terms of sleep and jet lag?

Children are not as good at classifying jet lag through their minds as we adults are. We know what it is and can actively adjust to it. A young child can't. You have to expect that children are therefore still a bit "off their feet" during the first few days after the trip. It makes sense, when traveling across multiple time zones, to include several days spent in the same place after arrival. This is also part of acclimatization, which we have already discussed. This allows the child to find a new rhythm before you travel further and do many activities.

Depending on the age, or sleeping habits of the child, you can shift the bedtime in stages. However, this is often difficult because the rhythm in the new place is determined by external circumstances. There is really not much you can do against jet lag. So I suggest to plan enough time, to know that it might be a somewhat tedious time and not to despair, but to be prepared for the fact that the children are a bit carried away during the first two to three days. Maybe it's only after that that the vacations really start. This is certainly an argument to think carefully about whether it is worth flying far away for only two weeks or whether it might make more sense to either travel a little longer or choose nearby destinations for short vacations.

After the return trip and back home, are there any health checks or precautions parents should take with their children after they return?

As long as the children are well and have no symptoms of illness, nothing special is needed. Just as with adults, if children have a fever after returning from a malaria area, malaria must be ruled out. It is important to mention the recent trip when visiting the doctor, so that the right tests can be carried out, if necessary.

What are the contact points parents can turn to if health complications arise after the trip? Or child-specific emergency numbers, if necessary?

Basically, the procedure is the same as if the child had not traveled. That is, the contact person is primarily the pediatrician. At night or on weekends, an emergency ward should be consulted if the child is unwell. In case of special questions, a referral to a tropical physician or to our infectious disease clinic at the Children's Hospital may be useful.

Last month we focused on the topic of "Responsible Global Citizenship". How can families ensure that when traveling to countries with different cultural norms and health practices, they understand and respect the health practices there while prioritizing the well-being of their family? Do such aspects also have a place in medical consultations or are there ways to raise children's awareness from an early age?

This is crucially related to the attitude and mindset of the parents. If the parents themselves treat the destination country and the local population with respect, and if they are sensitized to the fact that you don't just go somewhere and behave as if you were at home - then they are a good role model for their children. They model this attitude to their children, and in doing so, teach them how to behave respectfully in a new culture and toward local people. However, if parents lack a sense of this, it could be a difficult task to teach them these points in a travel medicine consultation. Respectful behavior is ultimately a way of life, even quite independent of travel. It's nice when parents can exemplify this to their children in everyday life and while traveling.

RESPONSIBLE GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

It is about how decisions and actions in one part of the planet can affect people living in a different part, and about how we all share a common humanity and are of equal worth. It means being open to engaging positively with other identities and cultures and being able to recognise and challenge stereotypes.

Interview: Sofia Ricar

Traveling At an Older Age: Risks and Tips

Traveling is often a time of great excitement as it allows you to get away from your everyday life, explore new cultures, try new activities, and see a little bit of the world. Seniors, in particular, often have more free time, which equates to more time to travel. There are some key things to keep in mind when traveling at an older age though.



Most importantly, traveling at an older age might require more planning than trips taken in our youth. For example, seniors need to have medications on hand and check out the healthcare available in their travel location - just in case.

For those unsure where to start, we have compiled 6 tips for traveling when older so that you can set off on your trip safer and more assured than you otherwise would.

Top Tips for Traveling When Older

When traveling, it is always important to be aware of the potential risks before you travel. Some of these apply to all travelers, such as the risk of illness from insect bites or food poisoning from contamination. However, depending on the activities completed, there is also a risk of injury. This risk may be higher for older people with certain conditions.

It is important to emphasize that age alone is not a barrier to exciting travel adventures. Getting sick can happen to anyone, young or old. However, proactive and conscious

preparation can help ensure that your trip is calm and manageable. What medication should you take with you for your specific destination? Do you have any personal medications that you need to take with you? How many days of travel can you expect? And do you know who to contact if any health problems occur? All these questions should be taken into account when preparing for a trip. Let's take a look at 6 tips for traveling when older so that you can minimize and be prepared for these risks.

Keep Medication Close

Some of those who are older can have a multitude of pills to take each day, whether to manage a disease or keep your symptoms at bay. These medications are important to take, which is why it is essential for seniors to always keep their medications close.

Keeping medication close allows you to take it when needed throughout the day, adhering to your schedule. It also ensures that, should your flight be delayed, or your bag lost, your medication is still with you.

For those traveling by air, this means keeping at least a part of your medication in your carry-on. In case your carry on gets stolen, also keep some of your supply in your suitcase.

Liquid medication may appear as a hurdle, as some airport securities don't allow liquids above a particular volume in a carry-on. However, you can work with your physician to obtain paperwork that allows for the medication to join you on the flight by stating the necessity of it. As such, preparing for your trip ahead of time ensures you have the documentation you need to keep your medication with you, and removes concerns that you'll have to go without it. Furthermore, when packing your medicine, always be sure to pack enough for a few extra days. You never know when you might be delayed, and this way, you'll be prepared.

Get Up and Move

Traveling can often involve hours of sitting in a single position, which can put seniors at serious risk of deep vein thrombosis, or the formation of a blood clot, typically in the legs. If these blood clots break loose, they can travel through your blood to the lungs, blocking blood flow. This is a serious condition, which is why seniors must do all they can to prevent it.

When on a flight, train, or car ride, get up every few hours to stretch and walk around. If on a train or plane, getting an aisle seat can make this easier. Also, drink plenty of water and put on light compression socks.

Don't Push Yourself

It goes without saying that you have high expectations for your upcoming trip and a list of activities you would like to experience. However, it is important that your own health is always at the forefront of your planning. Take a moment to consider whether the activities you have in mind are realistic and in line with your well-being.

Know the Medical Facilities

While no one wishes to consider this possibility, being prepared is essential. Should a health emergency occur, you will want to know where to go.

Before your trip, find medical facilities in the area you will be visiting and ensure that they can handle your potential needs. Make a note of these locations and keep it on hand so that, should you need to see a physician, you know where to go.

Consider Travel Insurance

Tacking on to the previous tip, it is often worthwhile for seniors to look into travel insurance. It can be expensive, but many may find it a worthwhile investment because it can help in the case of a medical emergency if your standard medical insurance is not accepted at your travel destination.

In particular, when considering travel insurance, you may want to look into evacuation insurance, which allows you to reach adequate medical care in an emergency. If you look into the nearby medical clinics and are concerned that they may not be able to handle emergencies, this insurance may offer you some peace of mind.

Book A Travel Consultation Before Traveling

Traveling can sometimes be stressful, especially if you don't travel often or are visiting an unfamiliar country. There are many aspects to consider, such as possible illnesses, health conditions and the safety of the itinerary. All of these things can be a challenge, but with the right preparation and planning, you can enjoy your trip stress-free and safely. This includes comprehensive medical travel advice.

Your travel consultant will review all the health and safety elements you need to focus on before and during your trip. Using your specific case, they will look at your travel destination to see if there are any vaccinations you need or precautions to take (such as wearing long clothing and using bug spray when out). They will also analyze your health history and itinerary to give advice on how to minimize your risk of injury or illness.

If you want to make fun and enjoyment (not concern, injury, or illness) the focus of your trip, book a travel consultation with the University of Zurich Travel Clinic.

The Pioneer

Prof. em. Robert Steffen is known as the "father of travel medicine". He not only initiated the first international conference on travel medicine and founded our Travel Clinic, he even named this entire field of medicine. Find out how he, who didn't actually want to become a doctor, created a completely new branch of medicine here in Switzerland.



Prof. Dr. med. Robert Steffen

University of Zurich

You are a doctor of internal medicine, epidemiologist and professor of travel medicine. However, you originally trained as a flight surgeon in the Swiss Air Force. Did you always want to be a doctor, and what made you change direction?

No, I didn't always want to be a doctor. At first I thought I wanted a quiet profession. I found chemistry interesting. Then I thought about becoming a dentist because I thought I would be able to master this limited field of knowledge intellectually. During the second propaedeutic exam, however, the examiner persuaded me to become a doctor. After a week at the dental institute, where I had to shape a plaster tooth, I finally realized that I was not at all gifted in manual skills. So after a week, I switched to medicine.

So you wouldn't have become a surgeon either.

No, not at all (laughs).

And how did you come to join the aeromedical service?

I have always been fascinated by flying and traveling. I have been interested in the whole world since I was a child and I was enthusiastic about studying abroad as an exchange student. In the medical student organizations, I first became responsible for student exchanges in Zurich, then for Switzerland and finally for the whole world. In the end, I was president of the international medical student associations. That meant I had to visit the member countries. As a junior doctor at the Aeromedical Institute, I was able to negotiate a deal with the chief physician: if I stayed for two years instead of just one, I was allowed to go on longer trips abroad in between.

So you had already traveled quite a bit around the world. How did you get into travel medicine afterwards?

For the many trips to South America, Africa and Asia, there were still no guidelines as to how to protect oneself.

The books on tropical medicine at the time contained different and contradictory vaccination recommendations. I was also vaccinated against the plague back then. That's why it remained in the back of my mind that this should actually be scientifically investigated in order to obtain evidence about what was really necessary and what priorities should be set. So I started to take an interest in travel medicine. However, it was only at the beginning of the 1970s that I started to set up "hand-knitted" epidemiological studies with a few colleagues.

Today you are regarded worldwide as the "father of travel medicine". One of the reasons for this is that you set up the first international conference on travel medicine in 1988, here in Zurich at ETH. Can you tell us how it came about? Who was there?

That was many encounters and years later. To explain this, I need to expand a little. First of all, travel medicine had to be established here.

In the mid-1970s - I was the first senior physician in internal medicine at Zollikerberg Hospital at the time - I was offered a position as chief physician at a smaller hospital and I asked myself "Is that it?". I decided to turn it down and accept a fellowship at the University of California in San Francisco instead.

When I returned to Switzerland, nobody was really interested in travel medicine. I had knocked on the door of Meinrad Schär¹, the head of the Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine at the time, and he said it wasn't really necessary. And so, somewhat frustrated, I opened my own practice in Küsnacht in 1978.

Almost 3 years later, I received a call from Prof. Schär, who offered me a 50% position as head of the vaccination center (as it was called at the time). Of course, I gratefully accepted and built up the travel medicine department over the following years.

And you organized the first international conference on travel medicine with this team?

No, there was an incident that you may be aware of. In the past, other drugs were used for malaria prophylaxis, including FANSIDAR®, which contains a sulphonamide (sulphadoxine) and this occasionally led to very severe skin side effects. Roche contacted me to participate in a hearing to discuss this problem. A Dutch malariologist from the CDC² Dr. Hans Lobel³ was present. We quickly found out that we were both interested in keeping

travelers healthy, and so we started doing malaria research together. At the same time, I was speaking at a gastroenterology congress in Stockholm on the subject of traveler's diarrhea. An American approached me and said he would like to work with me as we were the first to have data on this. That was Herbert DuPont⁴, who we later awarded an honorary doctorate here in Zurich for the collaboration and his pioneering research in the field of gastrointestinal infections. These were my two main partners. Of course, I also collaborated with many other colleagues, including the WHO⁵ early on.

Hans Lobel suggested one day that it would be useful to organize a congress on travel medicine in order to achieve a global assessment of the situation and that Switzerland would be an attractive venue. And so I organized the first international congress for travel medicine.

Initially, we didn't even have a name for "this child". We wondered whether it should be called "Tourism Medicine" because there was a booklet with that title from Germany. In France, the term "emporiatry" was floating around. It came from the Greek and referred to the rear part of the ship where the passengers were located. But we found that nobody understood this elitist term. At some point, we decided on the term "travel medicine", which could also be easily translated into other languages.

So you gave this medical field its name?

Exactly. We didn't even know how many people would come to this congress.

How many people did come?

We hoped to be able to welcome at least a few dozen people, but in the end there were around 500 participants. There was a very good atmosphere because we were finally able to exchange ideas. Other countries had also started to conduct travel medicine research with limited resources, but we were the first to systematically and broadly record health problems. This was based on a study of over 10,000 tropical tourists and a control group of travelers returning from North America. It was finally decided that there should be a next conference. This was organized by Dr. Hans Lobel and Prof. Phyllis Kozarsky⁶ in Atlanta, took place in 1991 and was attended by around 800-900 people. The International Society for Travel Medicine⁷ was founded there.

Who spoke at the first congress?

The keynote speech was presented by Prof. David Bradley⁸. He described the necessity of travel medicine based on a historical comparison. His great-grandparents were still traveling in horse-drawn carriages in the north of London, while he was an eminent malaria researcher and traveled around the world. He showed that travel medicine is needed because more and more people are traveling further and more often than ever before.

There were also various speakers from the WHO, although the WHO was somewhat divided, as travel medicine was considered "luxury medicine" in this environment, and the WHO saw itself more as serving the "needier" population groups in low and middle income countries⁹. Nevertheless, the WHO showed interest from the outset.

Luxury medicine? Is it?

No, certainly not only, we also advise backpackers. The square circle here is that a particularly large number of measures, such as vaccinations, would be indicated for them if the budget is tight. In addition, the longer we work with migrants, the more we deal with them. Thanks to the GeoSentinel network, travelers are also so-called "sentinels" and thanks to this international cooperation, we may even be able to find out more quickly if an epidemiological problem occurs in a developing country because the health authorities there often lack diagnostic capabilities.

If you compare travel medicine today and in the past, what has fundamentally changed?

As I have already described, as a student I was almost flying blind when it came to health, as there were only contradictory recommendations. A little later, three main areas of travel medicine emerged, which we also actively researched in Zurich. The first focus was on vaccinations, particularly with regard to the question of priorities. Secondly, malaria was very important, as we realized that we were losing many lives here. There were one or two deaths from malaria in Switzerland almost every year. The third accent that particularly interested me was traveler's diarrhea.

Gradually, we realized that in terms of mortality, other risks are much more relevant abroad. It is accidents in particular that cost the most lives among travelers. These include not only traffic accidents, but also sports accidents, such as mountaineering or swimming. It quickly became clear that we needed to educate and warn travelers about this.

Another topic that interested me early on was sexually transmitted diseases. There was hardly any talk about it at the beginning, but that was at a time when there were an increasing number of HIV cases with a high mortality rate. Today you can live well with it under therapy. We have also conducted several studies on this.

There were of course many other interesting topics. I once made myself particularly popular with the staff when I carried out a whale safari study in Norway. Many of the institute's employees were allowed to go to Norway for two weeks to recruit volunteers who had booked a whale safari. They were given various medications for seasickness to determine which was the most suitable. We knew from the captain that without prophylaxis, 80% of the passengers fell ill.

This led to more and more fields being researched, which were ultimately also addressed in travel advice. An important keyword here is certainly acute mountain sickness and high-altitude medicine. We worked with an expert from Triemli Hospital on this: Professor Oswald Oelz¹⁰. The NZZ has just conducted an interview with him¹¹.

Thanks to digitalization, the current generation of researchers has opportunities that I somewhat envy. I am particularly fascinated by how the state of mind of our customers can now be recorded on the move. Apparently, a variety of problems that we have neglected so far are causing difficulties. These often seem trivial, but they are very important for the quality of life abroad.

You have studied and worked in many countries. What does travel medicine look like in other parts of the world?

Initially, there were discussions around the world as to where travel medicine belonged. Does it belong in tropical medicine? Is it part of infectiology? Is it independent? I have always emphasized that travel medicine is interdisciplinary. Think, for example, of advice for pregnant women, infants, the chronically ill and immunosuppressed. When it comes to high-altitude medicine or diving, we are back in the domain of general internal medicine, physiology and ENT. That's why I found that travel medicine is a separate but very interdisciplinary medical field.

The longer the travel period, the more congruent the recommendations for travelers in industrialized nations, based on evidence from epidemiological studies. Differences are often due to the fact that the same range of vaccines or drugs for prophylaxis and therapy are not available on the market everywhere. However, there are still differen-

ces: in the USA, for example, the vaccine against abdominal typhus is the one that is administered most frequently. In Japan, it will take a few more years before preventive measures are as important as they are here.

So tropical medicine is part of travel medicine and not the other way around?

It goes without saying that tropical and travel medicine should work together, but they should be on an equal footing. Travel medicine should not have to sail under the umbrella of tropical medicine.

All right, and with all this experience and knowledge under your belt, did you create the Travel Clinic UZH from the "vaccination center" that Mr. Schär appointed you to head?

Exactly. At that time, the vaccination center primarily carried out smallpox vaccinations, which were still necessary for all trips to the USA and many other destinations. When I started there in 1981, things slowly changed. We were increasingly consulted by travelers who had previously received a smallpox vaccination from us and wanted to find out about vaccinations for a new trip.

When I started work, the doctors gave vaccinations and the administrative staff carried out the consultations and decided which vaccinations should be given. Within two weeks, I turned that around by making the doctors do the intellectual work of reading up and being informed. We had a "nurse" (DE: "Krankenschwester"), as they were still called back then, and a secretary who we trained and who could also vaccinate. These two vaccinated.

In the beginning, we had two offices at Gloriosastrasse 30 and people queued up on the stairs, which was not at all customer-friendly. That's why we looked around for another location. Around 1984, we moved to Sumatrastrasse 30 and we moved to Hirschengraben 84 around the year 2000, because together with the director of the institute at the time, Prof. Felix Gutzwiller¹², I thought this was the ideal address for us.

In fact, our location is very much appreciated. Before the pandemic, we only had walk-ins. Has it always been like this? Why were no appointments made here?

Yes, the decision to use a walk-in clinic was purely pragmatic. We never had staff to make appointments by telephone. There were no electronic options yet. The waiting times were often up to 2 hours, which was unpleasant.

I would have liked to hire more nursing and medical staff, among other things to be able to offer consultations on Saturdays, but unfortunately this was not approved.

They weren't open all day back then either, but sometimes only half days. Tuesdays were completely closed.

Yes, Tuesday was always the day for our internal conferences, for discussing research projects and, of course, the annual institute excursion (smiles). Today, of course, you have a lot more staff, so it's possible to work all day. When I started at the Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine, we had a total of 14 employees.

That's right, today around 150 people work for the clinic alone, so a lot has happened. But the ZRM is your baby. When you look at it today, what goes through your mind?

Beautiful. I really enjoy what has come out of the last renovation. I find it inspiring every time I come in. Just reading the room names: ABCD - Accra, Baku, Capri, Dubai, that's the scent of the wide world. I think they've done an excellent job here and I only hear good things.

We are naturally delighted. Thank you very much for this excellent feedback and the interesting conversation.

Interview: Cécile Rasi

¹ Meinrad Schär: first social and preventive physician in Switzerland

² CDC: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Agency of the US Department of Health and Human Services

³ Hans Otto Lobel: Dutch malarialogist

⁴ Herbert L. DuPont: US-American infectiologist

⁵ WHO: World Health Organization

⁶ Phyllis Kozarsky: Professor of Medicine in the Division of Infectious Diseases at Emory University School of Medicine

⁷ International Society of Travel Medicine (ISTM): ISTM now has more than 4,000 members in 96 countries and is the largest organization of professionals dedicated to advancing the field of travel medicine.

⁸ David Bradley: Ross Professor of Tropical Hygiene Emeritus, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

⁹ Low and middle-income countries

¹⁰ Oswald Oelz: internist and high-altitude physician, head physician at Triemli City Hospital from 1991 to 2006

¹¹ «Es kam gut, abgesehen von den Hirnschäden und den verlorenen Zehen»: Oswald Oelz, der Höhenarzt von Reinhold Messner, über sein Leben in den Bergen, NZZ. (01.11.2023)

¹² Felix Gutzwiller: Swiss social and preventive physician and politician

Wanderlust Chronicles - Episode 3: India

India is one of the most fascinating countries I have ever visited. Because India is different. India is loud, colorful, mysterious and endlessly diverse.



Katharina Burri

Travel Clinic UZH

From the snow-capped Himalayan peaks to the palm-fringed beaches of the tropical south. The landscapes are as diverse as the cultural, religious, architectural and culinary traditions.

India touched my soul and heart and surpassed anything I ever dared to dream.

Despite all the wonders, India has also overwhelmed me at certain moments. There is appalling poverty, the bureaucracy can be quite nerve wracking and the confusing chaos and the crowds can be quite overwhelming and frustrating.

One should always be ready to accept surprises and discover the unexpected.

It takes a great deal of serenity to engage with this opulent mix of traditions, spirituality, landscapes and contrasts.



Due to the infinite variety, it is not so easy to limit oneself to the most important and beautiful things. Each region of India offers many beautiful places that want to be visited and discovered.

In this blog I would like to present some of my highlights and a few insider tips.

Before the trip

Health:

Have a great journey! Have a great consultation at the Travel Clinic at the University of Zurich. Your entire vaccination history should be checked and refreshed, if necessary. In addition, there are travel-specific vaccinations for India, such as the typhoid oral vaccination or the rabies vaccination. In addition, other health aspects such as mosquito-borne diseases or altitude sickness, depending on the type of trip, can be addressed in the consultation.

Practical tips:

- Dress respectfully, no tight or see-through clothing. Instead wear long, loose clothing.
- Use hand sanitizer.
- Do not drink tap water.
- Greetings: with hands in prayer position and the words: Namaste.
- Use only the right hand for eating and shaking hands. The left hand is considered unclean.
- Make an itinerary, but always leave time and space for changes.
- Get involved with the crowds, the noise, the dirt, take your time. Book an oasis such as a nice, pretty, clean hotel/hostel where you can always retreat if it gets too much.
- Be open, treat people respectfully. For example, ask before photographing people and sacred sites.
- Travel light: Don't take too much with you, traveling with heavy, big luggage can be quite exhausting in India.
- For simple accommodations, I recommend taking a thin cotton or silk sleeping bag.

Highlights (a handful)

Traveling through India by train

Traveling by train is, for me, the most beautiful and memorable way to travel and explore India. Trains snake throughout India and run at almost any time. Almost every destination can be reached by train or in combination with train and bus.

A train ride in India is an attraction in itself and just as breathtaking as the Taj- Mahal - just in a different way.... There are several ways to buy train tickets or make reservations. In general, it is recommended to book tickets as early as possible.

Online booking:

There are several online providers, so you can book the ticket in advance at home. However, the process is not always easy. I have heard a lot of good things about the provider 12Go.asia. But I have never used this platform myself.



Booking on the spot

I have always made my bookings locally at the train station or through a local travel agency. Buying tickets at the train station can turn into a hurdle race and take a whole day. It is an advantage to know the train number of the chosen route in advance. The Internet site "Trains at a Glance" of the Indian National Railway Company (IRCTC) can be helpful here. Certain travel guides (Lonely Planet) also list the most important train routes and their numbers.

Classes

There are different classes. For long distances, where you often travel at night, I recommend the Air-Conditioned 3-Tier (3AC) class. These are three-tier bunks in groups of six. There are no partitioned compartments and no curtains. For me, this was the perfect blend of comfort and intensity of experience typical of an Indian train journey. For those who want more comfort, there is still 1AC or 2AC. Each with more space and more privacy. Sleeper Class is the most basic class. There is no air conditioning, open windows and often the compartments are overcrowded. On short trips it is a wonderful experience, but not recommended for night travel if you can afford it.

Rajasthan

This is the fabulous land of the Maharajas with unique forts and palaces. Nowhere else can you find such wonderful buildings as here. Fabulous, enchanting palaces and forts, glittering jewels, colorful saris, vast desert landscapes, vibrant culture. All this and much more can be found in Rajasthan.

Jaipur

Jaipur is the capital of Rajasthan. It is the gateway to this extravagant state. Jaipur is also called "Pink City". The majority of the houses in the old city are painted rust red or built of red sandstone. Depending on the light, everything glows wonderfully pink. Jaipur is a lively city, a mixture of old and new. Here you can lose yourself in the chaos of the various bazaars between honking rickshaws and swaying camels. Here you can find everything that makes your Indian heart beat faster. Fabric stores filled to the ceiling with colorful, glittering fabrics, numerous jewelry stores lined up next to each other, or a whole street with fragrant perfumes.



The most beautiful sights:

City Palace:

Impressive palace in the center of the old town. Be sure to visit the beautiful Pitam Niwas Chowk, an enchanting courtyard.

Hawa Mahal (Palace of the Winds):

Fairy-tale, five-story palace made of pink sandstone. Built in 1799, it is the landmark of Jaipur and is truly marvelous. The facade is dotted with small balconies and from the top there is a breathtaking view over the city. There is also a small museum.

Jantar Mantar:

This observatory built in 1728 served to measure the sky. Even if you don't understand exactly how these measuring instruments work, this arrangement of huge bizarre sculptures is unique.

Nahargarh:

This small fort rises north of the city. Smaller but no less pretty than Amber Fort.

Amber Fort:

11km outside of Jaipur lies this magnificent fort. Very spacious and well preserved considering that construction began around 1592.

Raj Mandir Cinema:

The cinema looks like a huge pink wedding cake. Pastel colors, glitter and walls curved like meringue as far as the eye can see. Very nice to look at, even without a Hindi movie.

Hotel tip:

Jas Vilas:

Very pretty, clean and nice.

Pushkar

Pushkar is a charming town with pastel colored buildings. It is an important Hindu pilgrimage site and is situated around a sacred lake. Everywhere you go you hear and see pujas (prayers), religious chanting and drumming. The city is also very popular with travelers. A fun mix of devout Hindus and travelers gives this city a special charm.



The most beautiful sights:

Pushkar camel market:

In October/November, the spectacular camel market takes place. Pushkar turns into a huge, colorful fair at this time. Besides the trade with the animals (cows, camels, horses) there are also numerous musicians, snake charmers, acrobats etc. to see. A colorful spectacle, mystical and unique.

Walk by the lake and through the **main bazaar**, visit the numerous Hindu temples.

Hotel tip:

Inn Seventh Heaven: I loved it and yes, you feel like you are in seventh heaven. Lovingly converted traditional home (Haveli). Beautiful courtyard, great restaurant on the roof.

Jodhpur

Jodhpur is the blue city of Rajasthan. Many houses in the old city are painted blue. The color keeps cool when it is very hot in summer.

Blue houses, narrow winding streets and pretty little markets. Jodhpur is beautiful.



The most beautiful sights:

City walk: You can walk for hours through the narrow streets here and lose yourself in the clutter. Be sure to allow enough time to stroll through this enchanting city and soak up all the impressions. It is wild, colorful India at its best.

Mehrangarh Fort: It is said to be one of the most impressive forts in all of India. The Mehrangarh Fort is huge and towers mightily above the sea of blue houses.

Culinary Tip:

Shri Mishrilal Hotel: A sort of snack bar that serves the best lassi (yogurt drink) in all of Rajasthan. Definitely try it.

Agra: Taj Mahal

The Taj Mahal: wonder of the world, landmark and masterpiece of architecture. The Taj Mahal rises majestically into the sky. The Great Mogul Shah Jahan built this fantastic structure in memory of his beloved (third) wife Mumtaz Mahal, who died giving birth to their 14th child. The mausoleum is made of white marble, which shines at you even in hazy weather. The harmony of proportions seems perfect: the enormous dome is surrounded by four minarets - probably one of the most famous silhouettes. Even the crowds can't harm the magic of this building.

Undoubtedly, the best time to visit is sunrise. The first sight of the golden shimmering **Taj Mahal at dawn** will remain unforgettable for a lifetime. It doesn't get any more beautiful than this.

Hotel tip:

The Coral Court Homestay

Varanasi

Varanasi is one of the holiest cities of Hinduism. Pilgrims come here to the Ganges to wash away their sins, to burn their deceased relatives or to die here.

Varanasi is a magical place, but it can also be very challenging and sometimes difficult. Various rituals take place in public. Life and death are very close to each other. Lots of people, lots of traffic in the streets, lots of noise. So far nothing new. However, somehow everything seems more intense here than in other cities. The many impressions of the labyrinth-like old city and the colorful hustle and bustle on the banks of the Ganges can sometimes overwhelm the senses. Nevertheless, or just because of this, Varanasi is for me one of the most fascinating places in all of India.



Boat trip on the Ganges: During a boat trip (best at sunrise) you are right in the middle of the hustle and bustle on the river and can also observe the shore. A nice addition to the walk.

Hotel Tip:

Hotel Ganges View at the Assi Ghat. Clean, has a nice terrace.

Culinary Tip:

Open Hand Café at the Assi Ghat.

The most beautiful sights:

Walk through the Ghats:

Ghats are the steps leading down to the river Ganges. About 80 ghats line the river Ganges in Varanasi. The best place to start is at the Assi ghat. Most of the ghats are used for bathing. But there are also some that are only for cremating the dead. For example, the Manikarnika ghat. Often one sees funeral processions in the side streets making their way to the cremation ghats.

There is much to see on the banks of the Ganges at any time of day. But especially early in the morning, the atmosphere is unique. There are people taking their ritual bath, people performing their puja (prayers), people washing their clothes, or doing yoga. Others are selling flowers or making offerings. A colorful, unforgettable spectacle.

At sunset, at the Dashashwamedh Ghat, there is the ganga aarti, an impressive ceremony that serves to pay homage to the holy river Ganges.





Pondicherry/Puducherry: Pretty little town south of Chennai in the state of Tamil Nadu. It is also affectionately known as Pondy. The city was under French colonial power until 1954. The older, French part of town is characterized by European architecture (colonial townhouses), there are quiet, clean streets, fancy restaurants and pretty shopping.

The newer part shows the typical hustle and bustle of India. All in all, an exciting mixture of colonial flair and lively Indian life, as you know and love it. Here churches stand next to Hindu temples and from somewhere you can hear the muezzin calling for morning prayers.

It is especially nice to stroll through the streets and admire the kolams made of rice flour. These are beautiful mandala-like works of art that are drawn on the floor in front of the entrances of the houses in South India. They are made exclusively by women. Every morning they sprinkle the rice flour and use it to decorate the entrances with unique works of art. The kolam has a blessing, protective and auspicious function.

Sri Minakschi Tempel in Madurai: Imposing, colorful Hindu temple in the state of Tamil Nadu.

Other beautiful places and insider tips - briefly summarized

Ladakh

High in the north, the air becomes fresher and the landscape more rugged and barren.

Culturally, scenically and culinary Ladakh is closer to Buddhist Tibet than to Hindu India. Centuries-old monasteries lie in the midst of the impressive valleys. It is worth spending several weeks here to discover the numerous monasteries in and around Leh, the capital. The nature is indescribably beautiful and it is a unique experience to explore this breathtaking landscape and the many small, very original villages, on a trekking tour of several days. It is recommended to go with a local guide.

The main season is summer/early autumn. In winter there is snow.

The South

Along the palm-lined streets and beaches, India shows a different side in the tropical south.

There is an infinite amount to discover: The luminous backwaters in Kerala, impressive tea plantations, dreamlike beaches.

The most beautiful sights:

Backwaters of Kerala: A network of rivers, lakes, canals and lagoons, lined with palm trees and picturesque villages. The area is especially beautiful to explore by canoe or public ferry. The trip with the **backwater ferry** from Alleppey to Kollam is especially beautiful and highly recommended.

Very relaxing is the trip through the backwaters by canoe. You can book these tours in every hostel, homestay or hotel.

The tea plantations of Munnar: Here lies South India's largest tea growing area. Here you can walk through the green, seemingly endless tea plantations. It is best to do this with a local guide.



Kumari Amman temple. The crowd of tourists is rather small. It is a pretty, unspoiled place by the sea and walking along the seafront you can feel and experience the real India.

Amritsar

The Golden Temple of Amritsar is the holiest Sikh shrine. In the middle of a pond stands this gold-clad chapel. The structure is very impressive and one gets an insight into the Sikh religion here.



About this fantastic region one could write an own travel blog - no, a whole book. It is another world, another India. The endless expanses, the snow-capped mountains, the imposing Köster and the beauty of this Buddhist culture have touched me deeply. The numerous encounters with the extremely kind people remain unforgettable.

Bundi

If you are in Rajasthan and have enough time, you should definitely visit this pretty town. It is much less touristy than the well-known cities of Rajasthan. But it is also more authentic. When I visited the place, there were hardly any tourists. Maybe this has changed in the meantime. Narrow streets full of blue and white houses, temples on every corner, colorful bazaars and a fantastic palace decorated with many small onion domes that rises in the hills behind the city. Worth seeing.

Orchha

Small Orchha in the state of Madhya Pradesh has more to offer than many cities many times larger. There are numerous palaces and temples from the time of the Rajputs and Mughals. One truly feels transported back to another time here. The surrounding area is also beautiful for hiking or biking. Orchha is a place away from the main tourist attractions and that is exactly why this place radiates something very special.

Hotel Tip: Hotel Sheesh Mahal

Kanyakumari

Kanyakumari in the state of Tamil Nadu is the southernmost point of India. Three seas meet here: the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. Kanyakumari is a place of pilgrimage where devout Hindus visit the

Incredible India

The confusion, the cows on the street, the colorful saris, the spicy food, the magnificent buildings, the explosion of colors, sounds, smells and feelings...

India surprised and enchanted me again and again.

Wanderlust Chronicles - Episode 4: Jamaica

Jamaica (JA) is not only my favorite vacation destination but also my first home. Having lived in the USA for most of my life, now whenever I visit JA, I enjoy exploring the nooks and crannies like a tourist. In Jamaica, you are sure to find your tempo and perhaps regain your groove, whether at an all-inclusive beach resort or while backpacking through the mountains and countryside. There is something for everyone. I will share the best of my Jamaica with you, and maybe you'll discover your new favorite vacation destination as well.



Anmarie Haerry

Travel Clinic UZH

Jamaica is the third largest island in the Western Caribbean and is globally renowned for Reggae music and its fastest male and female runners. As a travel destination, the island offers much more than just sea and sun. From its lush hills and valleys, white sand beaches, to rugged offbeat trails that only the lion-hearted dare to venture. The culture, the music, the people, and the warm ocean breeze will embrace you, lull you, and make you lose track of time. You will experience what the locals call "feeling irie" which is a calm, pleasant mellow state of mind. But what should you know before you go?

The First Jamaicans

The name "Jamaica" originated from the Arawak language of the indigenous Taino Indians, who were the first inhabitants. The name means "land of wood and water." The first Europeans to arrive were the Spanish during Christopher Columbus' second visit to the Americas. However, the island has had a very turbulent history and changed hands between Spanish, French, and English governance. African slaves were initially introduced by the Spanish in small numbers as house helpers and later in larger groups by the British rulers to cultivate sugarcane and cocoa plantations.

The landmass covers only 235 kilometers in length and is 35 to 86 kilometers wide, making it possible to traverse the entire island in one or two days. The 14 parish subdivisions offer travelers diverse opportunities to experience the different vibes of Jamaica. There are three airports on the island, providing convenient access for visitors to reach their preferred locations on the north, east, or west coast.



The Language

Jamaica, like all of the other Caribbean islands, has its unique local dialect called Patois (Patwa). The official language in schools and business is English, but Patois is the first language learned by children. This dialect reflects the history of the people who have inhabited the island and is a colorful mixture of African phrases, French, Spanish, and English terminologies. The vocabulary and accents vary from the city folks to those from the rural areas. Visitors can pleasantly surprise the locals by greeting them using Patois, and you will be welcomed like a Yardie (local).

- How are you? - Waa ah guan
- I am doing well - Feeling irie. Mi deh ya
- I can help you - No problem, mon

The People and Culture

The Jamaican customs and belief systems reflect the diversity of the cultural backgrounds. Naturally, the influence from being a former English colony is strong and is evident in the educational and judicial systems. In addition to the African heritage, there are also contributions from the Indian and Chinese immigrants who arrived on the island after slavery was abolished.

The belief system is also closely tied to Christianity and Sunday is regarded as the Lord's day and so commerce is not conducted on this day. Attending the Sunday church

service is a family event and is worth experiencing as a tourist. The Rastafarianism is a religion from a small but influential group in the musical and political life. World famous Rastas (as members are called) includes musicians such as Bob Marley, Jiffy Cliff und Peter Tosh.



Climate

Think tropics: Endless beach weather. The average daytime temperature ranges between 33 to 38 degrees Celsius all year round. The surrounding ocean waters are always comfortable for swimming and sunbathing. The rainy season in Jamaica is from May to July and November. Hurricanes and thunderstorms can also occur during these months. The driest and coolest Months are in December to March and are also the peak of the travel and tourist seasons.

Healthwise

You can find useful information about Jamaica travel on the CDC website:

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/jamaica/traveler/packing-list>

Each parish has a public hospital and community clinics that can be accessed by both locals and visitors in case of emergencies. There are also ample private facilities and pharmacies in vacation locations. It is not uncommon for locals to seek help from Obeah women or natural healers for herbal baths when they experience vague maladies. While short stays in Jamaica don't require specific vaccinations, it's recommended to have a travel consultation, review, and update of your basic vaccination status before traveling. Mosquito-borne illnesses, such as Dengue fever, pose a nationwide, year-round risk. Emphasizing optimal protection against mosquito bites is crucial. Also sun protection for adults and children.

Money

Tourists can enjoy a stronger purchasing power with the CH Franc or US dollar due to favorable exchange rates. Hotels and large commercial stores accept credit cards, but small independent vendors prefer the local currency.

Visum

American, Swiss and European Union citizens can stay in Jamaica for up to 90 days without a visa. All visitors must have a valid passport, a return or onward ticket, and sufficient funds to support themselves during their stay. Regardless of nationality, all travelers must obtain a C5 card, which is equivalent to an Immigration Declaration Form and is issued by the airline.



Transportation

For those planning to explore the island, hiring a private taxi chauffeur/guide is highly recommended. It offers a safer, easier, and more comfortable experience. The roadways still follow the English system of driving on the left side of the roadways. Additionally, the traffic rules may not be very clear to first-time visitors. Defensive driving skills are a must in order to navigate the narrow, winding rural roads. The public transportation system consists of buses and limited train services that connect to rural towns.

Safe Travel

Travelers must always observe good personal safety precautions while traveling around the island. Stay aware of your surroundings and avoid displaying money and valuables in public. Contrary to popular belief, marijuana (Ganja) is not legal on the island, and possession can result in fines or imprisonment.

Exploring Every Direction for a Unique Experience: 10 Must-Dos While in Jamaica

1. Spend a Day in Kingston

Kingston is the capital city and business center located on the southern coast of the island. The city was designated a UNESCO Creative City of Music in 2015 because of the significant role of music genres like reggae, ska, rocksteady, and dancehall in its culture. Kingston is also the birthplace of Bob Marley, the king of reggae music, and it houses the Tuff Gong Marley Museum, a must-visit for reggae fans.

2. Take the Ferry to Port Royal

Located off the coast of Kingston Harbor is a lesser-known gem known as Port Royal. Port Royal is accessible by both motor vehicle and ferry. A catamaran ferry departs from Kingston Harbor every hour. Port Royal used to be a notorious haven for pirates in the Caribbean. Legends even suggest that the infamous Blackbeard frequented Port Royal. A part of this attached island was submerged during the earthquakes of 1845 and 1907. The archaeological sites from the colonial era are well worth a visit. Although the era of pirates roaming Port Royal has long passed, locals from Kingston often find the 30-minute ferry ride to Port Royal a relaxing escape, where they can enjoy fresh fish, rum, and play dominoes.

3. Hiking the Blue Mountain Peaks

Not far from Kingston lies the Blue Mountain range in St. Andrew. The highest peak reaches 4,000 meters above sea level. The high altitude, moderate temperatures, and rich volcanic soil provide the perfect conditions for cultivating exquisite Blue Mountain coffee beans. Rumors suggest that these same conditions also favor the cultivation of natural herbal plants.



4. Dip into a Mineral Spring

There are approximately eight mineral springs located across the island. The Milk River Bath in Clarendon evokes fond memories of summer school trips to the hot spring. The healing water was believed to be a good way to start the school year. The water temperature remains a toasty 32 to 35 degrees Celsius all year round. The spring water originates from deep within the Earth and is enriched with magnesium, calcium, sulfate, and naturally occurring chloride. Its radioactivity level is the highest among all mineral springs worldwide. It's no wonder that there are stories from the days of slavery and even today among the locals that recount healing of wounds, rheumatism, arthritis, and nerve ailments after a visit.

5. Dunn's River Falls in Saint Ann

Climbing Dunn's River Falls is one of the most touristy activities on the island. This 600-foot-high waterfall is a beloved adventure and was featured in the James Bond movie, "Dr. No," where the famous Swiss actress Ursula Andress also appeared. The 0.8-mile climb is generally considered a moderately challenging route. For the best experience, climb with a local guide who will escort the group while playing reggae music and leading a tandem climbing party. The area surrounding the falls is also a popular spot for birdwatching, hiking, swimming, and walking.



7. Visit the North Coast: Montego Bay and Negril

As the name implies, in the northern tip of the island, lies the mecca of tropical island vacations. The beautiful azure waters and seven-mile-long white sandy beaches are world-famous. For many visitors, the North Coast is enough to have an unforgettable vacation. The pristine waters of the Caribbean Sea are ideal for fishing, diving, and snorkeling excursions. On land, golf and tennis are included in many travel packages.

The accommodations are designed to meet the needs of demanding and sophisticated travelers with a taste for luxury. The couples-only and family-oriented hotels are mainly all-inclusive, and for a price, one can truly enjoy the best of what Jamaica has to offer without worries. The music, entertainment, food, drinks, air-conditioned bus day trips around the island, or just hanging out at the resort and enjoying the diverse amenities: the choice is left to the imagination. Your enjoyment and pleasure are guaranteed.

8. Witness a Sunset on the North Coast

While on the North Coast, be sure to wake up early to witness the sunrise over the Caribbean Sea. In the evening, sit on a beach lounge with a cold Red Stripe beer (the local beer) and watch the sunset. These experiences are priceless and are sure to evoke that "irie" feeling once more.



6. Bamboo Rafting on the Martha Brae River

The clear, gently flowing waters of the Martha Brae allow for a relaxing drift down the river. There are no heavy waves, only ripples of water passing over pebbles and small rocks. As you float on a bamboo raft, you can feel the cares of the world drifting away over the glassy water. The sounds of birds and croaking toads create that elusive "irie" feeling. The serenity will be intermittently interrupted by the voice of the raft guide as they point out interesting sightings, such as hummingbirds or indigenous plants.

9. Try Authentic Jamaican Cuisine: Jerk, Ackee and Codfish, Cow Cod Soup, Chicken Feet Soup

Ackee and salted codfish are the national dish of Jamaica. Interestingly, the ackee fruit is known as one of the most poisonous plants, but only in its unripe state. When the fruit is ripe, it opens fully, and the pods can be easily removed, boiled, seasoned, and served with salted codfish (bacalao). For parties, jerk chicken or pork is a must.

The jerk sauce is made from a variety of local herbs and peppers, which is then added to smoked and grilled meats to create a unique flavor. Cow cod soup is a favorite on the wedding menu. The secret ingredient is the gonads from freshly slaughtered goats, as the animal meat is used for making curried goat. The soup is considered an aphrodisiac and is recommended for the groom.

10. Enjoy a Dancehall-Style Reggae Party

Last but not least, music rocks the soul and heart of Jamaica. Swaying your hips to the sounds of a steel calypso band or a dancehall DJ will rejuvenate the soul and bring back your groove. Throughout the year, there are several music festivals. The most popular ones are the Jamaican Carnival in April and Reggae Sumfest in July.

"Come to Jamaica and feel alright" is the slogan of the Jamaican Tourist Board. It's an invitation to visit the island paradise to relax and rejuvenate your mind and body.

Have a great journey!

IMPRESSUM

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