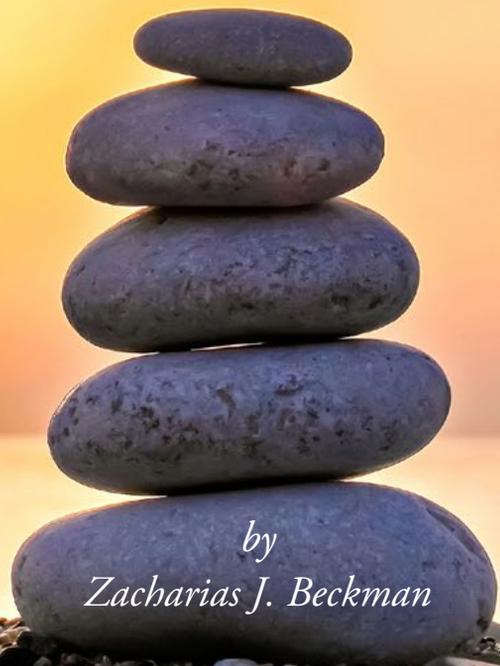

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INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS SERIES

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**10 Tips For
Stress-Free
International Travel**



*by
Zacharias J. Beckman*

10 TIPS FOR
STRESS-FREE
INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

“10 Tips For Stress Free International Travel”

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First Edition

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Your Future Is GlobalSM

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS SERIES

10 Tips For Stress-Free International Travel

Tip # 1

“Time Off” Is Very Different

“Be sure to take into account the hours and days of the work week, not just local vacation cycles. In much of the West, the work week is Monday through Friday, but this preconception gets thrown out the window in many countries. Throughout the Middle East, the work week could be from Saturday through Wednesday, or Sunday through Thursday. — Zacharias Beckman, *Successfully Building Multinational Business Relationships*”

Americans work more than just about anyone else in the world. In fact, Americans prioritize work above just about everything else: Family, friends, sometimes even holidays. It’s not unusual to ask employees to accommodate work activities, even if it impinges on a holiday.

It’s a stark contrast to many other country cultures. The typical American gets two or three weeks of vacation, compared to six, eight, and sometimes more in other countries. These cultures place family and *experiencing life* above work in their priorities, and quite often their approach to work reflects this different attitude.

For example, across much of Europe, extended vacations are commonplace during summer months. Often, companies seem to shut down during August as Europeans take advantage of the warm weather to travel. And, unlike Americans, Europeans prefer to be totally disconnected from work while on vacation.

Other countries will have different practices, both locally and nationally. Across India there are more than a few major holidays. Diwali comes close to the end of the year and is usually accompanied by two weeks of vacation. Throughout the year, there are at least ten (if not more) holidays that, together, add up to as much as eight weeks of time away from work.

Get an International calendar and be sure to coordinate around foreign holidays. If you don’t know what a holiday is, find out. Some might just mean a few people won’t come in to work, but others could call for a two-week long shutdown!

Tip # 2

Phoning Home... Might Not Be Easy

“I found out the hard way that unlocking a U.S. phone contract is a tricky process. After working with my Verizon office for a few hours, we thought it was a done deal – but, once I arrived in India, the phone wouldn’t work. It was still locked, and couldn’t be unlocked while abroad. I had to buy another phone for the duration of the trip! — James Middleton, *3i Infotech India*

In many countries, setting up with a cell phone is not easy. This can be quite a surprise when coming from a country where it takes 15 minutes and a credit card to sign up for a cell phone contract.

The steps to purchase a cell phone contract can be very involved. India makes it intentionally difficult in order to impede potential terrorist activity. Be prepared to bring proof of a physical address, copies of your passport, a family member or business sponsor to vouch for you, and don’t be surprised if it takes several days before everything is done.

Look into cell phone requirements a few week’s ahead of time. You may need to rent a tri-band phone, or get a disposable phone on arrival. It might not be easy. It took an entire afternoon to set up an account on my last India trip. And I have Indian residency!

Finally, be aware that in some countries, privacy is not an individual right. The privacy rights Westerners are accustomed to don’t exist in many countries across Asia and the Middle East, so assume your data and your conversations are subject to snooping.

Tip # 3

Take Your Time

“Silence is a form of speech, so don't interrupt it!” — Richard Lewis, *When Cultures Collide*

If you live in the United States, you'll likely be surprised at how long it takes to get things done elsewhere.

Americans are very focused on getting things done quickly. The phrase “time is money” almost uniquely resonates with Americans – but it offends people from many other cultures.

In part, it's a cultural phenomenon. Taking the time to get to know each other and enjoy life is a priority in most cultures. This is especially true in most of Asia, the Middle East, South America, and quite a few European countries. This approach to life spills over into business too. Business happens after you get to know each other. After all, who would want to be in business with someone they don't know?

Rushing in with a focus on the agenda sends the wrong message and can lead to a very short trip indeed. It's perceived as short-sighted and opportunistic, and leaves behind a very bad feeling with your host.

Instead, plan to take more time than you think you will need. Most countries, especially Eastern cultures, won't feel the same time pressure as Americans, Swiss, or Germans. You'll want to build relationships, get to know people, enjoy the sights, and accommodate a different pace at the office. You can't have the mentality that it's a quick “get in and out” visit.

For Asians and Middle Easterners visiting the West, you'll probably be put off by how fast things move in the U.S. It's important to keep in mind that it's the culture, not a lack of interest. The brusque pace of the West is a reflection of its overriding fascination with time, and getting things done. It's why America is one of the lowest ranked countries when it comes to vacation time.

Tip # 4

Cash, Card, or Credit?

“When you arrive to a new country always make sure you bring a few dollars with you, I suggest the equivalent to \$100.00 USD in local currency. Don't count on your foreign bankcard, it may not work or be accepted.

Also, carry an extra wallet in your back pocket that contains a few dollars, and fill the rest with fake credit cards (the ones you get in the mail that say “your name here”). A thief will never know the difference, whether it's a pick pocket or actual mugging

And when you leave the country, donate your left over change to someone in need. It's good karma. — Rachael McArdle, Corporate Traveler USA (corporatetraveler.us)

Find out if your credit card will work while abroad, and take plenty of cash (in a well protected place). Depending on where you visit, credit cards may not be widely accepted – and even if they are, you may be disappointed to learn that your bank card is not accepted.

On one of my first trips abroad I learned that my Bank of America debit card wouldn't work, a surprise given that it's the U.S.'s largest bank (although it hadn't earned that distinction at the time).

The other problem was the rarity of ATM machines. In many parts of Asia, international ATMs are pretty scarce. On this particular trip, I ended up using a Western Union office to transfer funds from the U.S.

Most cultures are not as dependent on credit cards as the United States (and, incidentally, nor are they so dependent on *credit*). Many restaurants, stores, and kiosks will not take cards, so be prepared to handle cash instead. If you are staying at an international hotel, they'll be happy to advance cash and convert funds to local currency for you. But, if you're staying in a flat or a more rustic inn, don't count on it.

Also, it's probably worth upgrading to that Platinum American Express or getting a Capital One business card, just to save the 2.7% foreign currency conversion rates (there are no conversion fees on either card).

Tip # 5

Get A Trusted Traveler Card

“Dress comfortably for a long flight. If you are a woman and wearing sandals make sure you pack a pair of socks as it gets cold on the airplane. Make sure you carry extra clothes in your carry on, as sometimes luggage gets lost or delayed. No one likes to be without a fresh set of knickers. — Rachael McArdle, Corporate Traveler USA (corporatetraveler.us)

While it may seem like a lot of trouble to be interviewed by Homeland Security, getting a Global Entry pass really makes travel go more smoothly in most international airports. Having the card helps with TSA pre-screening, and getting you through security lines.

Depending on the airport, having a Trusted Traveler card (or “GOES” card) will let you zip right through customs lines as well. Look for automated kiosks that will scan your card, and keep you out of the long lines that sometimes greet you on the way home.

You can learn more about the U.S. Trusted Traveler programs on the U.S. Customs and Border Protection web site: <http://www.cbp.gov/travel/trusted-traveler-programs>.

Travel throughout Europe is, generally speaking, a bit easier than entering and leaving the United States. Probably for this reason, there is no European equivalent to the U.S. Trusted Traveler program. There are a few regional programs that may be worth looking into, including IRIS in the United Kingdom and Privium in the Netherlands.

Tip # 6

Send Your Bags Ahead

“On my last trip, I had to buy all new clothes because the airline had sent my bags somewhere else. They showed up about a month later, once I was home. I wish I had sent them ahead! It would have saved a huge headache.
— Fred Hayes, Infosys Consultant

Let your bags travel on their own. Consider sending them ahead, and confirming their arrival at the hotel *before* you depart. This can save you a huge headache, and makes the trip a little bit less stressful.

Hotels will be more than happy to receive and hold your bags for you. In fact, at one hotel, I never brought my clothes home. At the end of the week, I would pack up and ask the concierge to store my bag. It would be waiting for me a week or two later when I returned!

It also makes the trip more enjoyable. If all you have to bring with you is a small carry on, you can skip the ordeal of checking and retrieving bags. You also won't have to worry about overweight bags or having the TSA dig through your personal effects.

Checkout out LuggageFree.com, LuggageForward.com, SendMyBag.com, and of course, FedEx.com among others. FedEx can actually be among the better priced options, while LuggageFree.com is a more expensive, higher-end service.

I usually like to travel light, and leave a bit of empty room in my bags. I've taken the opportunity to have exquisite European suits tailored, beautiful sherwanis (Indian formal attire) custom made to my somewhat large size, and fine Italian shoes fitted. In most towns, you can find an elegant tailor, pick out a couple of items, and have them ready for you by the end of the week.

It's a great way to build your wardrobe, take advantage of local styles, and travel light, all at the same time.

Tip # 7

Ask For Help

“It was fortunate I had visited our Indian partner first. When the tables were turned, we made sure his hotel was close to the office, so he could walk, but more important, we scheduled more office dinners that week than in the previous six months! His first night here, I invited him to our home for dinner, too. We even had a team movie night. It was different from our usual business culture – but it was exactly how I had been treated in India. We had a good time, and built a great relationship. And the movie nights are still happening. — Josh Lawler, RightMove Inc.

Most cultures throughout the world put a lot of thought and effort into caring for their guests. Rely on your international partner to extend this hospitality.

Americans are often surprised – and sometimes a bit uncomfortable – at how far their overseas business partner goes to make sure they are comfortable. It’s part of the culture. In fact, not being given the responsibility for making sure your stay is enjoyable could be taken the wrong way.

Throughout India, Asia, and parts of South America and Europe, your hosts will treat you like a visiting family member. They’ll help coordinate where you stay, might offer a car and driver, and will expect to take you to dinner more than a few times. I’ve even been invited to stay at my overseas client’s home, something a Westerner wouldn’t dream of offering!

Knowing that you will be taken care of while visiting takes a lot off your mind. Rely on your International partner to help you find good accommodations, set up your travel itinerary, and provide you with a car, but also be sure to explain what you are looking for. “Good” accommodations in one country may not be what you’re expecting!

The converse is often true for visitors from the East, coming West. Many Western cultures are much less open and less accommodating. For the Eastern visitor, keep in mind, the hospitality you are accustomed to is not typical in the Western world. For the Western host, put some extra effort into making your guest feel at home.

Tip # 8

Get International Insurance

“Don't forget about travel protection and bag replacement policies included with your credit card! My Platinum American Express has it, and so do most travel-oriented reward cards. Sometimes the small annual cost of these programs is considerably less than paying the airlines for the same insurance... Just once! — Mohamed Keir, International Business Consultant

Most likely, the insurance you rely on at home won't work while abroad. Don't assume that it will, and be sure to find out what the limitations are.

Check with your medical coverage to see if they provide services and coverage where you're going. Many countries are excluded from most domestic insurance policies (in part because of higher risk, but also logistics problems when it comes to getting you treatment). For example, Blue Cross Blue Shield states in their policy that I'm "assured of receiving care from licensed health care professionals no matter where" I need health care. And, they do have quite a few affiliated hospitals throughout Asia.

But a quick call to customer service makes it clear that I *might not* be covered. I asked what happens if I end up at an out of network hospital, for instance because of a language issue or an emergency? It turns out the claim would be denied. Also look at medical evacuation clauses. If I had to be evacuated to a distant land, the bill would come to about \$30,000 USD.

If you aren't covered, look into a short term travelers medical policy from a provider that covers the region you'll be entering.

Also check the CDC site before you go, and make sure you have appropriate medication and shots (such as anti-malaria tablets when visiting Asia, and remember most inoculations are taken 3 weeks before travel, so get them early).

For more information on international medical insurance plans, check out HTH Travel Insurance, Medex International, Worldwide Assistance, World Nomads, and Insure My Trip.

Tip # 9

Recover From Jet Lag

“Finally – give yourself time to rest. Travel can be overwhelming so make sure you take care of yourself first. Don’t push yourself because of a tight time line. It’s OK to just stay in the hotel room and order room service.
— Rachael McArdle, Corporate Traveler USA (corporatetraveler.us)

Plan a day after arrival to recover from jet lag, and don’t forget it happens coming home too. You won’t do anyone any good if you keep falling asleep at the office.

Jet lag is a temporary sleep disorder, and it sets in whenever you travel across two or more time zones. The more time zones you cross, the more likely you are to be sleepy and sluggish – and the longer and more intense the symptoms are likely to be.

Here’s an example: If you fly from California to Italy for a ten day trip, you may not fully adjust until you’re home! This is because it can take your body up to a day per time zone travelled to adjust. And, when you fly home it can take just as long to readjust! (Jet lag is generally worse when you travel west to east and “lose time.”)

Jet lag occurs because our circadian rhythm doesn’t adjust instantly to a new locale. Our bodies expect the day to be a constant, that’s actually the whole point of our circadian rhythm.

You can minimize the effects of jet lag by following a few simple steps. First, simulate your new schedule before you leave, by adjusting your bedtime a few days before departure. Also, adapt to your new schedule when you get to the airport – change your watch, and behave accordingly based on your destination time zone. Also, if you need to perform at your best when you arrive, plan to get there a couple of days early.

Also, be sure to stay well hydrated. If adjusting is difficult for you, consider taking about 3 milligrams of melatonin on your first night abroad and plan to sleep for a solid 10 hours the first night. (Of course, check with your doctor too).

Tip # 10

Loosen Up Your Schedule

“When I go home to India, it takes time to adjust. I’m still accustomed to the pace of America. I find myself standing on a corner, wondering, “Why isn’t the taxi here? What’s taking so long?” It takes a conscious effort and some time to get used to the culture. It’s culture shock, just in reverse!”
— Karthik Mahadevan, Symphony Software India

In India, when you call a taxi, it’s always “5 or 10 minutes away.” Even if it’s 2 minutes away, or if there’s absolutely no way it could arrive in less than an hour, the driver will say “5 or 10 minutes.”

It’s all about risk aversion and it relates to *synchronous* cultures. Most countries, but especially less developed countries, are *synchronous* in dealing with time. This basically means they view time as flexible, and accordingly plan to do multiple things at once. It may seem chaotic, but the underlying plan is practical. The best way I like to describe it is this: You won’t find people standing on a corner waiting for each other. There’s an acknowledgement that things are unpredictable. Power, traffic, political unrest, blocked roads – you can’t predict when these things will delay you. So, things happen when they happen, and in the meantime, everyone plans to stay busy and won’t stand around waiting.

For the traveler from a *sequential* culture, where everything runs like clockwork, this can be infuriating (by and large, this means “Westerners.”) But keep in mind, your business partner doesn’t really *expect* you to be on time, either!

Build a lot of contingency time into your schedule. Don’t plan too many meetings in one day (my rule of thumb is one meeting in the morning and one in the afternoon, no more). It will always take longer to get there, and you’ll spend more time than your agenda predicted.

People visiting those modernized, sequential countries (the ones with a fascination for being on time) will find the inverse stressful. Everyone is expected to arrive a little early, and conform strictly to the agenda. It’s a tough adjustment, and one that many visitors have a very hard time adjusting to.

Bonus Tip # 11

Cyber Security, Don't Leave Home Without It

— *A bonus tip by Dr. Stan Stahl*

“*Dr. Stahl is President of Citadel Information Group, an information security management services firm Delivering Information Peace of Mind® to Business and the Not-for-Profit Community. He is a pioneer in the field of information security, having entered the field in 1980. Earlier in his career he secured teleconferencing at the White House, databases inside Cheyenne Mountain and the communications network controlling our nuclear weapons arsenal.*

Readers can sign up for Citadel's newsletter at the company's website, <http://www.citadel-information.com>.

Don't neglect cyber security when you're traveling. Traveling exposes you to higher than normal cyber risk, whether you're planning to surf the web, check email, or Skype with family and friends.

It's particularly true if you plan to conduct sensitive corporate business online, especially in certain Asian and Eastern European countries with a reputation for cybercrime. Any device used to store or process information is at risk: Laptops, netbooks, tablets, iPads, iPhones, smartphones, USB-drives.

Here's a baker's dozen of basic travel tips. They apply whether you're traveling to China or just going down the street to your neighborhood Starbucks.

1. Minimize sensitive information. If it's sensitive and you don't need to carry it with you, then don't.
2. Password protect devices. A not-to-be-neglected basic line of defense. Citadel recommends a minimum of 12 characters, including three of the four basic character groups: Upper-case, lower-case, numbers and special characters.
3. Encrypt drives. Both Windows and Mac OS X have encryption built in. Axcrypt is a free file encryption tool. Be sure to set a very long pass phrase, 15 or more characters, including upper-case, lower-case, numbers and special characters. When you can, set the encryption to erase all data after 10 failed attempts at entering the pass phrase.
4. Set your User Type in the Windows Control Panel to Standard. This will add a layer of protection against rogue programs.

5. Keep all programs updated to the most recent versions. Use our Weekend Patch and Vulnerability Report to stay current with updates for common programs.
6. Install and use antivirus programs. Antivirus programs are far from sufficient but they do add a necessary layer of protection.
7. Be wary of connecting to unknown networks. That internet café in a hip part of downtown? It may not only be compromised, it could be actively distributing malware. So could the “supposedly secure” hotel network. Unknown Wireless Access Points are particularly dangerous.
8. Keep Wi-Fi turned *off* except when you need to use it. Don't let your Wi-Fi automatically connect. If you connect to an access point, set your Wi-Fi to forget the access point when you leave.
9. Keep Bluetooth turned *off* except when needed. Too few people are aware that cellphones and even laptops can be compromised by exploiting Bluetooth vulnerabilities.
10. Turn on “Remote Wipe” for mobile devices. This lets you erase all the data off your device if it is lost or stolen. iPads, iPhones and Macs use a program called Find My iPhone to do this. They can even help you find your lost device.
11. Be careful using public computers. I wouldn't use a computer at an internet café for anything but checking the news. I'll print my boarding pass on the hotel's computers. Online banking, e-commerce, checking my email – places where I have to enter a password – *no way!*
12. Use a virtual private network (VPN) for sensitive connections. Use a VPN to connect to your office network, cloud storage, your bank or potentially sensitive email.
13. Physically protect devices. Don't leave computing devices in cars or hotel rooms. And don't leave your laptop on a restaurant table while you take that quick trip to the rest room.

A recent article in The New York Times – Traveling Light in a Time of Digital Thievery – describes the precautions a China expert at the Brookings Institute, Kenneth G. Lieberthal, takes when he travels to China.

According to the story, Lieberthal “follows a routine that seems straight from a spy film... He leaves his cellphone and laptop at home and instead brings ‘loaner’ devices, which he erases before he leaves the United States and wipes clean the minute he returns. In China, he disables Bluetooth and Wi-Fi, never lets his phone out of his sight and, in meetings, not only turns off his phone but also removes the battery, for fear his microphone could be turned on remotely. He connects to the Internet only through an encrypted, password-protected channel, and copies and pastes his password from a USB thumb drive. He never types in a password directly, because, he said, ‘the Chinese are very good at installing key-logging software on your laptop.’”

Whether you feel the need to be as careful as Lieberthal or you're willing to tolerate a greater degree of risk, all travelers should assume:

- Their conversations are being eavesdropped on,
- Their telephones are tapped,
- Their Internet usage is monitored and logged,
- If they give their computing device to anyone, it will come back with a key-logger and other malware on it.

China has import restrictions on encrypted devices that adds yet another element to the information security challenge. Before an encrypted device can be brought into the country, China requires the traveler to get a permit issued by the *Beijing Office of State Encryption Administrative Bureau*.

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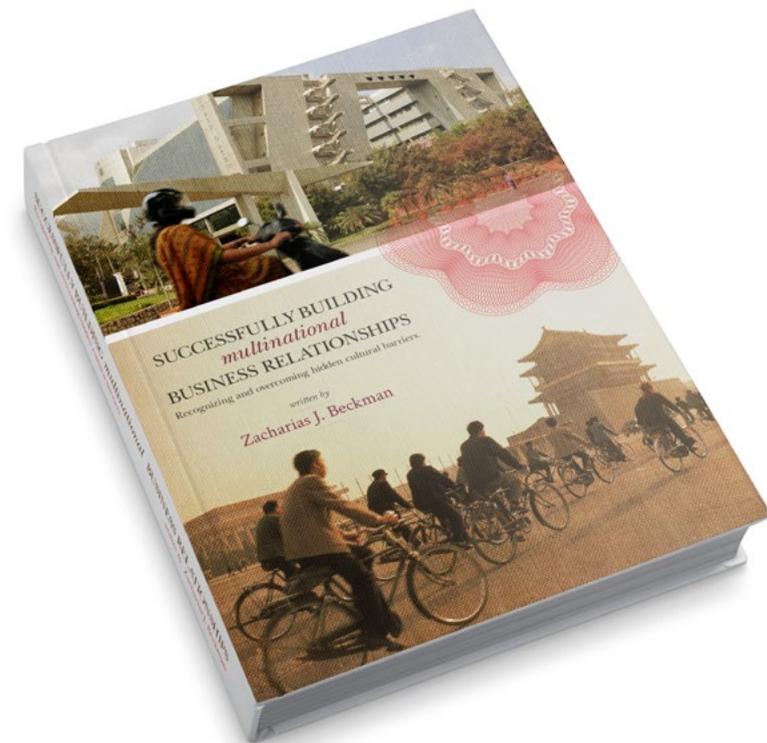
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10 Tips For Stress-Free International Travel is a concise companion for international executives, expats, and frequent travelers. Not only loaded with 10 fantastic tips for making sure your next overseas trip goes smoothly, it also features a bonus chapter on device security. Be sure to travel both safely, and in comfort. Look for our other guides, including:

10 Tips For International Business Success
10 Tips For Managing International Teams
10 Tips For Communicating Globally

About The Author

Zacharias Beckman specializes in advising companies on global project management, and executing international strategy with a focus on both operational success and cultural consciousness. At a time when little management theory was known about international teams, he started working on projects in India, South America, and Eastern Europe. While abroad, he began to understand other cultures in a way that few Americans did and, as a result, developed curriculum for companies that bridged the gap between Western management theory and their failure to translate internationally.



About Hyrax International

Hyrax International LLC (Hyrax) is a global team of technical and behavioral experts who gracefully address and eliminate the operational and cultural issues that are unavoidable when expanding your company overseas. Hyrax has been exceedingly successful in raising the collective competence of global businesses. The company delivers essential management services and allows businesses to thrive in an ever-expanding global economy. In an ever-shrinking global economy, fluency in worldwide business culture can mean the difference between seamless integration, and expensive failure and embarrassment.

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