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## The essential adventure travel kit

From the plains of the African Sahara to the peaks of the Himalayas, a traveller must always be prepared. Some precautions should be [taken by every explorer](#). But preparation for an adventure requires more than simply buying a backpack and an all-season sleeping bag. A *real* traveller must prepare for every eventuality ... and that includes taking care of your health whilst you're away.

Whether it's trekking through the jungle or climbing a mountain that excites you, this essential travel kit will provide you with all the necessary materials to keep you safe and healthy while away.

### Anti-malarial tablets

[Malaria](#) prevention should always be a priority. Spread by mosquitoes, the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) reported approximately 212 million worldwide malaria cases in 2015 and an estimated 429,000 malaria deaths. Always check if you are travelling to a high-risk zone by seeking advice from your practice nurse or by checking the NHS site [Fit for Travel](#).

In addition to bite avoidance via mosquito nets and repellent spray, your essential travel kit should contain a course of anti-malarial tablets. These aren't available on the NHS, but since July 2017 you can get advice, and buy any tablets including [malarone](#), from [pharmacists](#). They're also available on a private prescription from your GP or from travel clinics.

# Mountain sickness

[Acute mountain sickness \(AMS\)](#) can affect travellers trekking or climbing to altitudes above 2500 metres. At higher altitudes, the air is thinner and has a lower pressure, so each breath contains less oxygen. If you ascend too quickly, your body can't acclimatise in time and you could be at risk of AMS, which can cause symptoms such as nausea and vomiting and a headache.

The best way to avoid AMS is to climb slowly and allow your body time to adjust. If you are unfortunate enough to develop AMS, take time to rest and drink plenty of fluids. Make sure you pack some [painkillers](#) in your travel kit – such as paracetamol and Ibuprofen. Wait until you're feeling better before you climb any higher and if symptoms don't improve, descend as soon as possible.

You can prevent and treat AMS with a medication called [acetazolamide \(Diamox®\)](#), available on a private prescription from your GP or travel clinic. This helps to speed up the rate of your body's acclimatisation. It isn't recommended for routine use, but might be a good thing to add to your kit if you've experienced AMS before.

# Tackling traveller's diarrhoea

[Diarrhoea abroad](#) is common, affecting as many as half us travelling to developed countries. It's caused by eating food or drinking water contaminated by bugs such as viruses, bacteria and parasites.

Most of the time, the illness is short-lived, lasting three to four days. Most travellers experience mild symptoms including diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting, [abdominal pain](#) and fever. Treatment isn't normally needed but keeping hydrated is really important.

In most cases, you don't need to see a doctor. Medical advice should, however, be sought for the immunocompromised, elderly, young children, in pregnancy and for certain medical conditions.

You may wish to consider taking the following medication in your travel kit:

- **Water purification.** In addition to boiling and filtering water, water purification tablets can be bought from most chemists.

- **Oral rehydration sachets.** Mixed with water, they are a good way to replace salts and sugars lost from the diarrhoea.
- **Anti-diarrhoeal medication.** Not always necessary, but a good idea to pack in case you have limited access to a toilet. [Loperamide](#) is the safest and most effective.
- **Antibiotics.** Most cases of traveller's diarrhoea do not require antibiotics. However, the WHO has suggested that travellers with certain health conditions or those staying in remote places should consider taking 'just in case' antibiotics with them should their symptoms be persistent and severe. [Ciprofloxacin](#), [azithromycin](#) or [rifaximin](#) are the antibiotics normally used.

## Condoms

If you're hoping to fall in love with a fellow traveller on your adventure, it's probably a good idea to pack some condoms. Even if you're not, it's worth taking some anyway. [Sexually transmitted infections \(STIs\)](#) are no laughing matter and you don't want to be worrying about finding a sexual health clinic if you are in a remote area.

Using condoms is the best way to reduce your risk of STIs, including transmission of blood-borne viruses such as [HIV](#) and [hepatitis B and C](#). If accidents do happen, you will need to find a local medical clinic that can provide you with post-exposure prophylaxis or [PrEP](#), a combination of antiviral medication to help limit your risk of becoming infected.

To help prevent unplanned pregnancies, some pharmacies in the UK will help you be prepared by allowing you to purchase an [emergency contraception](#) pill for your travel. There are two available, [Levonelle®](#) (effective for up to three days after unprotected sex) and [EllaOne®](#) (effective for five days).

## Wound care

Make sure your travel kit is well equipped for dealing with any injuries whilst away. Pack antiseptic, gauze, bandages, scissors and sunburn treatment.

# Country-specific advice

For country-specific health and safety advice, including information on what vaccinations you may need before travel, you may find the following sites helpful:

- [GOV.UK: foreign travel advice](#)
- [TravelHealthPro](#) (formerly NaTHNaC)
- [NHS Fit for Travel](#)

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<b>Last updated by:</b> Dr Anna Cantlay, MRCGP 21/12/2017	
<b>Peer reviewed by:</b> Dr Sarah Jarvis MBE, FRCGP 21/12/2017	

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