

# Travel Notes

## A to Z

*Music heard so deeply that it is not heard (but felt)...  
You are the music while the music lasts.*  
-TS Eliot



Music Celebrations International welcomes you to what will be an artistic and cultural experience of a lifetime. A Music Celebrations International Tour Manager will accompany your group during the land portion of your trip. The Tour Manager is an intermediary between your group and suppliers such as hotels, concert venues, coach companies, restaurants, etc. Typical duties of a Tour Manager include checking into hotels, reconfirming all scheduled appointments, and handling financial details associated with the tour. While the Tour Manager will interface with vendors and try to resolve any problems which your group may encounter, his or her function is not that of a tour guide. Professional licensed guides are required by law in most cities and are retained to provide guide service to your group.

### **BAGGAGE ALLOWANCE**

In order to allow sufficient space aboard the motor coach, each group member is limited to one suitcase. Weight restrictions vary according to airline. Because of the constant change in airline industry checked bag standards, please refer to the airline’s website for current baggage restrictions prior to travel.

Generally, each passenger is allowed one carry-on piece of luggage and one personal item (not including purses and cameras). Small instruments count as a carry-on item. Weight restrictions for carry-on baggage vary according to airline.

PLEASE NOTE: Music Celebrations does not include baggage fees in the cost of our tours. Please refer to the airline’s website for current baggage fee assessments. Also note that all flights inter-China (in between Chinese locations) implement a baggage weight limit of 44 lbs.

### **BEFORE YOU GO**

1. Your exact flight itinerary and hotel lists, flight bags and baggage tags will be sent to you along with any last-minute information approximately 15-30 days prior to departure. Be advised that airline schedules are subject to change. Should there be any changes, you will be notified immediately.
2. Make photocopies of your travel documents and pertinent identification including ticket numbers, passport identification page, itinerary, driver’s license, and credit cards. Leave one set of copies at home and keep another with you.
3. Advise your bank/financial institution of your upcoming travel.

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## CURRENCY EXCHANGE

International travelers can choose from several different currency options:

1. **Credit Cards and ATM Cards:** One advantage of credit card purchases is that they are exchanged at the interbank rate, which is usually more favorable. It is best to use credit cards for large purchases. A disadvantage of credit card purchases is that if a dispute arises over charges on your card, you do not have much protection overseas. With credit cards and ATM cards, keep the following in mind:
  - a. If your ATM is linked to Cirrus or Plus systems, you can use your ATM card to obtain cash while traveling. Your bank should be able to give you a listing of all ATMs available on your network; and
  - b. Notify your bank that you will be using your card out of the country; ask that they document it in the system or your account may be placed on hold or blocked for security purposes.
2. **Traveler's Checks (not recommended by Music Celebrations International):** The only advantage of using traveler's checks is that they are replaceable if lost or stolen however; most vendors will not accept them.
  - a. **Prepaid Debit Cards (not recommended by Music Celebrations International):** Most pre-paid cards do not have chips in them, which is required by most vendors. Also, pre-paid cards generally have a limit of \$500.



## CUSTOMS & IMMIGRATION

When entering a foreign country, all non-citizens must go through customs and immigration. Upon arrival at a foreign airport, you will:

1. Need to show your passport (and visa, if applicable);
2. Proceed to your connecting flight or collect your luggage and proceed through the “nothing to declare” line; and
3. Meet your Music Celebrations International Tour Manager outside of the baggage claim area.

Non-U.S. passport holders must verify travel documents needed in advance with embassy of country they wish to visit or are connecting through. All travel documents are the responsibility of the individual traveler.

When returning to the U.S., all U.S. citizens are generally allowed up to \$800.00 worth of purchases duty-free. Duty will be charged on purchases exceeding \$800.00. There are few exceptions to this, but for the purposes of your concert tour it is unlikely you will encounter these exceptions.

A few important ones to note, however, are limits on the amount of alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, cigars, and other tobacco products you may include in your duty-free personal exemption.

Carry receipts to prove ownership of all items of significant value which were previously purchased or purchased while traveling.

## DEVIATIONS

Music Celebrations International can arrange airline deviations for tour participants on a limited basis. Student deviations will only be allowed if approved by the director or tour coordinator. Each airline has different rules regarding individuals deviating from a group booking and usually only the return date can be extended, and that for a limited amount of days. Every request must be submitted in writing to Music Celebrations International and a service fee will be charged to each individual deviating. Additional airline fees may also be assessed according to flight plans and airline regulations.

## ELECTRICITY

While most of North and South America (including the U.S.), the Caribbean, and Japan use 110 voltage electricity, most European countries use 220 voltage. For your convenience, see the following description of plug types and a chart listing plugs used by various countries. Keep in mind that you can buy voltage converters and adapter plugs at most travel and luggage stores or at many department and electronics stores.

### Plug Types:

A = This plug type is used in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Japan

B = This plug type is used in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Japan

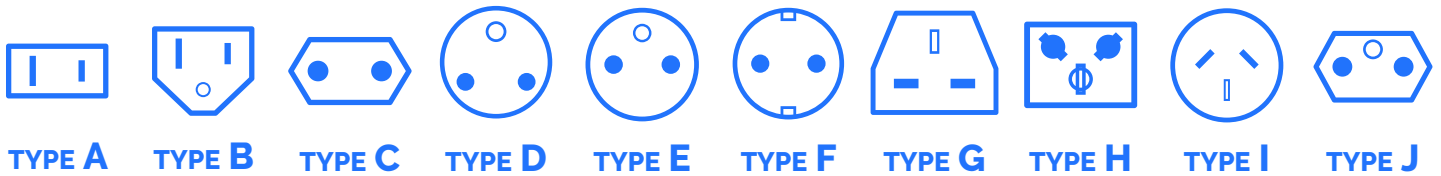
C = This plug has two round pins and is used in Europe, with the exception of the UK, Ireland, Cyprus and Malta

D = This plug has 3 large round pins in a triangular pattern and is used in India, Sri Lanka and Nepal

E = Similar to plug C and is used in France, Belgium, Slovakia and more

F = Similar to plug C and is used in Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and more

G = This plug has three rectangular blades in a triangular pattern and is used in the UK, Cyprus, Malta and more



COUNTRY	VOLTAGE	PLUG TYPE
Australia	230	I
Austria	230	C / F
Belgium	230	C / E
Czech Republic	230	C / E
Egypt	220	C / F
France	230	C / E
Germany	230	C / F
Great Britain	230	G
Hungary	230	C / F

COUNTRY	VOLTAGE	PLUG TYPE
Ireland	230	G
Israel	230	C / H
Italy	230	C / F
The Netherlands	230	C / F
Portugal	230	C / F
Slovakia	230	C / E
Spain	230	C / E
Sweden	230	C / F
Switzerland	230	C / J

## INSURANCE

Several types of travel insurance policies are available, from Trip Cancellation / Interruption Insurance to Emergency Medical Insurance. Music Celebrations International provides applications for travel insurance to all tour directors or tour coordinators to distribute to individual participants.

Trip Cancellation / Interruption Insurance provides coverage for cancellation or interruption of your trip due to reasons such as injury, illness or death suffered by the insured or a member of the insured's immediate family. Because most airline tickets issued for group travel are non-refundable, purchasing travel insurance to protect oneself against unforeseeable events that may impact your travel plans is highly recommended.

Emergency Medical Insurance will cover reasonable medical costs if you require emergency medical treatment while on your trip. Check your current health insurance to see if it covers international travel. Many European countries will provide emergency medical services.

Baggage Insurance provides coverage for loss, damage or theft of baggage and personal belongings.

## PACKING

When packing for your trip, bring clothes that can be color coordinated and layered according to the weather.

**Also keep in mind these tried-and-true tips:**



- **Bring comfortable walking shoes** as your tour will include CONSIDERABLE walking (up to 5-8 miles per day). Negotiating cobblestone streets, hill-climbing, and touring old castles (with no elevators) are all common activities. New shoes can cause blisters and pain!
- **Dress appropriately for tours of churches and cathedrals.** Although many of the great cathedrals and churches in Europe are top tourist attractions, they are still used as houses of worship, and many require that visitors wear proper clothing, especially in Italy and Spain where one's knees and arms should be covered when entering a church. Avoid shorts and immodest outfits. You may be asked to leave by a church official if your clothing is considered inappropriate.
- **Discourage purse snatchers and pickpockets** by bringing small money/passport holders or handbags with long straps that you can sling across your body, bandoleer-style, and with a zippered compartment for money and other valuables.
- **Bring an extra pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses.**
- **Bring rainwear.** Plastic rain ponchos, which often come in a small square package, are easy to pack and can be purchased very inexpensively. Umbrellas are another good option for being lightweight and storing easily.
- **Your luggage should be light but sturdy.** Because you are responsible for your own luggage, the less you have, the happier you'll be. Also keep in mind that most European elevators are small.
- **Sample-size toiletries in leak-proof containers which are organized in a waterproof plastic bag work best.** Due to security issues, liquids and gels may not be permitted in your carry-on luggage. Since these restrictions are subject to change, you may want to check for specific restrictions 24 to 48 hours prior to your departure.
- **Most medications should be carried in your carry-on bag and kept in their original pharmacy containers.** Due to security issues, some medications may not be permitted in your carry-on luggage. These restrictions are subject to change per airline and per destination. Some countries may require written documentation for prescribed medications. You may want to check for specific restrictions 24 to 48 hours prior to your departure.

## MOTOR COACH DRIVERS

Drivers are governed by strict regulations which may affect your tour. During a 12-hour window (key on to key off), a driver is allowed to drive a maximum of 9 hours and must have a minimum of 12 hours of uninterrupted rest. After 4.5 hours of driving, a driver must take a break of minimum 45 minutes. Thus, if your tour has a late-night arrival, the next day's departure may be delayed to accommodate these rules. Each coach is equipped with a meter which records the amount of time each coach is in use; this information can be demanded by the police and border officials at any time. The driver and motorcoach company are subject to severe fines if the driver does not comply with the law. Because the driver is also required to drive only according to the final itinerary, the coach will not be used for taxi-service during independent time.

## PASSPORT (OBTAINING)

**Please start this process early! *Music Celebrations International* will need a passport copy 120 days prior to departure.**

1. Obtain a passport application from your nearest U.S. Post Office or on the internet at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).
2. Request a certified copy of your birth certificate (an original copy with a raised seal) from the County Clerk in your place of birth.
3. Obtain two color “passport photos” which are no more than six months old and which measure 2x2 inches.
4. Take the completed passport application to the passport office at a U.S. Post Office or Passport Agency together with the following items:
  - a. Certified copy of your birth certificate;
  - b. ONE (1) of the following: Driver’s License, Voter’s Registration Card, or Naturalization Certificate;
  - c. Two (2) passport photos; and
  - d. A check or money order as payment for the passport (remember that debit/credit cards will not be accepted and the amount due is listed on the passport application.).
  - e. It may take up to eight (8) weeks to receive your passport. When it arrives, sign it and carry it with you at all times when traveling abroad.

## PASSPORT (RENEWING)

If you already have a passport, it must be valid up to six months after the return of your trip. **BE SURE TO CHECK THE EXPIRATION DATE!**

1. Pick up the application form at the nearest passport office or on the internet at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).
2. Complete the form and mail it to the nearest passport issuing office together with: 1) your old passport 2) two (2) new passport photos; and 3) your check for renewal fees (indicated on the application). It will cost extra for the passport office to submit the renewal application for you.

## ADDITIONAL PASSPORT INFORMATION

If you already have a passport, it must be valid up to six months after the return of your trip. **BE SURE TO CHECK THE EXPIRATION DATE!**

- If you need your passport immediately, please ask your local passport office for further information.
- Passports are valid for ten (10) years, unless issued to persons under 16 years of age.
- If you wish to have your passport sent to you by Express Mail, check with the passport office.
- If your passport becomes lost or stolen, you must report it immediately:
  - a. Inside the U.S. to the nearest passport office; or
  - b. Outside the U.S. to the nearest U.S. Embassy.



## VISAS

### **PLEASE RESEARCH THIS EARLY SO YOU ARE AWARE OF THE PROCESS AND TIME REQUIREMENTS NEEDED TO OBTAIN THE APPROPRIATE VISA!**

U.S. citizens do not need a visa when traveling to many countries; however, Australia, China and Brazil are examples of countries where a visa is required for U.S. citizens.

Non-U.S. citizens must contact the Consulate for the country they plan to visit for information regarding visa requirements.

1. MCI will provide application support documents needed for your visa application including flight details, hotel information, tour itinerary, etc.
2. The traveler must contact the nearest Consulate or Embassy Office of the destination you are visiting to make an appointment.

ETIAS is a new travel authorization that is required for all visa-exempt visitors, that will begin mid-2025 (including visitors from the USA) traveling to the European Union or Schengen Area. This must be applied for and all details handled by you/your respective traveler. For more information on the application process, please visit **etiavisa.com**.

## TIPPING

Your tour price includes all tips, taxes and service charges at the hotels and restaurants listed in your itinerary. When paying for independent meals in European restaurants, travelers should determine if the tip has already been included on the bill. If not, 10% - 15% is a reasonable amount for the tip depending on the quality of the service.

It is customary to tip the local, professional sightseeing guides 1.00 - 3.00 EUR/GBP or local currency per participant per day upon completion of the tour. The guides, who are very knowledgeable and who are required to pass a thorough exam in order to become licensed, rely upon gratuities to supplement their income.

It is also customary to tip the driver and the Tour Manager 4 – 5 EUR/GBP or local currency per participant per day upon completion of the tour. These individuals work very hard to ensure that your tour runs as smoothly as possible.

While it is possible to pre-pay these tips to MCI and MCI will distribute on your behalf during the tour, drivers and Tour Managers prefer tips in cash (untaxed) at the conclusion of the tour.

**For China tourists**, all gratuities are included in the tour price.

## VALUE ADDED TAX REFUND (V.A.T.)

In Europe, a local value-added tax is included in most retail prices. If you spend more than a certain amount of money in one store, you are entitled to a refund of the V.A.T. which can range from 9% to 20% of the retail price. You can apply for this refund when you leave the country (or European Union).

When you shop at stores displaying a tax-free-shopping-for-tourists sign and you spend more than the required minimum, obtain the Value Added Tax voucher from the sales representative. Your passport will be required.

The V.A.T. refund will take place at your final departure from the European Union or non-EU country. For example, you must apply for the refund at the airport where you board your transatlantic flight. Alternatively, if you make purchases in Switzerland or another non-EU country, your tax free voucher must be stamped by a customs official when leaving that country. In both cases you must be able to present the purchased goods, the receipts and the V.A.T. voucher to the customs official for verification. Cash refunds can often be made immediately at the airport, or you can receive your money via charge card credit or check.

**Please note: you must apply for the V.A.T. card online, prior to your departure.**

## WHAT IF?

### At the Airport

**Q: What if our flight has been delayed for more than an hour?**

A: Always keep Music Celebrations International informed about delays so your Tour Manager at the arrival city can be notified.

**Q: What if our flight has been canceled?**

A: Inform Music Celebrations International. Work directly with the airline at the airport to rebook your group. Don't leave the airport until you have been rebooked on the next available flight. Once your group has checked in, the airline has full control of the booking, and the airline staff is in the best position to assist you. Remember that when this happens, the airline staff is overwhelmed with upset travelers. Maintaining composure will go a long way in getting the matter resolved as quickly as possible. If applicable, request hotel, meal, and transportation vouchers.



**Q: What if we missed our flight?**

A: Work with the airline to rebook then contact Music Celebrations International. Don't leave the airport until you have been rebooked on the next available flight. Once your group has checked in, the airline has full control of the booking, and the airline staff is in the best position to assist you. Maintaining composure will go a long way in getting the matter resolved as quickly as possible.

**Q: What if a suitcase is lost or damaged?**

Inform the airline prior to leaving the airport and fill out the necessary claim form. If the affected group member has purchased Travel Insurance, they can submit a claim upon their return.

### On Tour

**Q: What if one of the group members becomes ill or injured?**

A: Inform your Tour Manager who will help you find a physician or proper emergency care. If the affected group member has purchased Travel Insurance, they have access to medical assistance via a 24-hour hotline.

**Q: What if luggage is lost or damaged while not in the custody of the airline?**

A: Inform your Tour Manager who will assist you in contacting the local authorities. Fill out a police report detailing all items missing. Passengers with Travel Insurance may file a claim upon returning home.

**Q: What if a passenger loses his or her passport?**

A: Inform your Tour Manager, Director and contact the local U.S. embassy or consulate.



# The Art of Traveling

When you pack your bags to explore the beauties of your own country or to travel around the world, consider these keys for a happy journey:

- **Travel lightly.** You are not traveling for people to see you.
- **Travel expectantly.** Every place you visit is like a surprise package to be opened. Untie the strings with an expectation of high adventure.
- **Travel hopefully.** “To travel hopefully,” wrote Robert Louis Stevenson, “is better than to arrive.”
- **Travel humbly.** Visit people and places with reverence and respect for their traditions and ways of life.
- **Travel courteously.** Consideration for your fellow travelers and your hosts will smooth the way through the most difficult days.
- **Travel gratefully.** Show appreciation for the many things that are being done by others for your enjoyment and comfort.
- **Travel with an open mind.** Leave your prejudices at home.
- **Travel with curiosity.** It is not how far you go, but how deeply you go that mines the gold of experience. Thoreau wrote a big book about tiny Walden Pond.
- **Travel with imagination.** As the old Spanish proverb puts it, “He who would bring home the wealth of the Indies, must carry the wealth of the Indies with him.”
- **Travel fearlessly.** Banish worry and timidity; the world and its people belong to you just as you belong to the world.
- **Travel relaxed.** Make up your mind to have a good time.
- **Travel patiently.** It takes time to understand others, especially when there are barriers of language and custom; keep flexible and adaptable to all situations.
- **Travel with the spirit of a world citizen.** You will discover that people are basically much the same the world around. Be an ambassador of good will to all people.