



South America

The following information must be viewed as a guide only. It is not intended, nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Specific travel health advice is recommended on an individual basis taking into account:

- the personal health of the traveller including past medical & vaccination history;
- intended activities;
- precise itinerary;
- style of travel;
- type of accommodation;
- time of year;
- altitude; and
- length of stay.

In addition, some vaccines eg rabies & tuberculosis are very much influenced by local risk & length of stay. Specific face-to-face advice is particularly important when recommending antimalarial medications & vaccines.

We strongly recommend travellers seek an appointment with a doctor trained in travel health prior to departure.

Medical & nursing staff at The Travel Doctor-TMVC are trained in international public health issues with a focus on immunisations & preventive medicine. Many have travelled extensively & a number have worked in less developed areas of the world for

extended periods. Travellers should undergo individual risk assessments whether they are short term holiday makers, business people or the long term expatriate worker. In Australia the local centre may be contacted on 1300 658 844, or by visiting www.traveldoctor.com.au.

Healthy Travelling in South America

South America is a very diverse collection of destinations & as such presents a diverse range of travel health considerations.

Pre-travel preparation will help protect your health while you are away. To assist you in recognising & understanding some of the major travel health risks you may face while travelling in South America, the Travel Doctor-TMVC has prepared a summary of some of these issues in the following pages.

Table 1 provides a brief description of some of the major travel health issues & vaccinations that should be considered for travel to South America.

Table 2 provides a summary of these major travel health issues & preventative measures that should be considered.

We hope you find this information useful in preparing for your trip. Remember it is advisable to consult a travel health specialist prior to departure.

Major Travel Health Issues & Considerations for South America

Hepatitis A	This is a viral disease of the liver which is transmitted through eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water. It is the most common vaccine preventable disease that occurs in travellers to less developed areas of the world. It is strongly recommended for travel to South America.
Hepatitis B	This is a viral disease of the liver that is transmitted via blood, blood products or bodily fluids. It is vaccine preventable. Hepatitis B immunisation is now part of the childhood immunisation schedule. Many adult travellers have missed this very important immunisation & travel may be a good reason for vaccination. It is particularly recommended if you are frequent traveller or on an extended trip.
Typhoid	Typhoid Fever is caused by a bacteria found in contaminated food & water. It is endemic in the developing world & vaccination is recommended for travellers to areas where environmental sanitation & personal hygiene may be poor. The adventurous eater venturing 'off the beaten' path should certainly consider vaccination.
Tetanus , Pertussis & Diphtheria	Tetanus is caused by a toxin released by a common dust or soil bacteria, which enters the body through a wound. Diphtheria is a bacterial infection of the throat & occasionally of the skin. It is found world wide & is transmitted from person-to-person by coughing & sneezing. Pertussis (Whooping cough) is a highly infectious respiratory infection responsible for 300,000 deaths annually, mainly in children. Diphtheria & pertussis vaccines can be added to the tetanus vaccine. Because many adults no longer have immunity from childhood immunisation it is advised that travellers to less developed countries have a tetanus, diphtheria & pertussis booster.
Measles, Mumps & Rubella	Childhood immunisation coverage in many developing countries is not good. As such, travellers under the age of 40 years should have their measles, mumps & rubella immunisation complete. Those over the age of 40 years are most likely to have long term immunity from previous exposure as a child.
Chickenpox	This very common infectious disease can now be prevented through immunisation. Many people miss the disease in childhood only to have a significant illness as an adult. Travel puts one at higher exposure & if one cannot elicit a history of having had the illness a test can show whether at risk.
Influenza	Individuals intending to travel out of an Australian winter might consider the current flu vaccine at the beginning of the season. Exposure to illness in airports & commuter transport is common & exposure may ruin a much needed break.



Malaria	Malaria is transmitted by a night biting mosquito. In South America the greatest risks are in the Amazon Basin. Although travel may involve countries with malaria, it is common for travel not to involve places where malaria is a real risk – as such the Travel Doctor finds many people taking medications unnecessarily. This has both cost & side effect issues. Always check with a travel health professional to assess the actual malaria risk & the need for appropriate anti-malarial medications.
Dengue Fever	Dengue (pronounced den-gee) Fever is a viral disease with flu like symptoms that is transmitted by mosquitoes that bite during the daytime & in urban regions. There is no vaccine for dengue fever & prevention is based upon insect avoidance via repellents, nets & insecticides.
Yellow Fever	Yellow Fever is a serious & frequently fatal viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes. A number of countries in South America are classified as endemic zone for Yellow Fever. Vaccination against Yellow Fever may be compulsory for travelling to some countries.
Rabies	Rabies is a deadly viral infection of the brain transmitted to humans. The disease itself is rare in travellers, but the risk increases with extended travel & the likelihood of animal contact. The best way to avoid rabies is to avoid all contact with animals. Dogs are the main carriers, however monkeys, bats, cats & other animals may also transmit the disease. Pre-exposure vaccination is recommended for extended travel & those who work with, or are likely to come in contact with animals.
Traveller's Diarrhoea	Up to 40% of tourists may develop 3 or more loose bowel motions a day within the first week of travel. A variety of germs can be responsible for this infection & a Traveller's Medical Kit containing appropriate therapy can rapidly improve the symptoms. It is also important to follow the rules of healthy eating & drinking to minimise risks. The new oral cholera vaccine has been shown to provide limited protection against some forms of traveller's diarrhoea.


Table 2. Summary of travel health issues for South America & preventative options available

	Vaccine Available	Healthy Eating & Drinking	Insect Avoidance	Animal Avoidance
Hepatitis A	✓	✓		
Hepatitis B	✓			
Typhoid	✓	✓		
Tetanus, Pertussis & Diphtheria	✓			
Measles, Mumps & Rubella	✓			
Chickenpox	✓			
Influenza	✓			
Malaria			✓	
Dengue Fever			✓	
Yellow Fever	✓		✓	
Rabies	✓			✓
Traveller's Diarrhoea	+/-	✓		

+/- The new oral cholera vaccine has been shown to provide limited protection against some forms of traveller's diarrhoea. You should discuss this with your travel health specialist
 ✓ indicates preventative considerations

Altitude Sickness – or Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) is a consideration for travel to South America. Many recreational trips to South America involve travel at altitude eg Cuzco, Macchu Piccu, Lake Titicaca & La Paz. It is important to plan the itinerary carefully to minimise rapid ascent.

Additional fact sheets can be found at the Travel Doctor-TMVC website www.traveldoctor.com.au.



Remember to check the DFAT 'Smartraveller' website www.smartraveller.gov.au prior to departure



Travel Health Fact Sheet **South America**
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Clinics Australia Wide. To find your nearest clinic call
1300 658 844 or visit www.traveldoctor.com.au