



FIRST AID KIT CHECKLIST

A resource for travellers from www.deanstarnes.com and *Roam: the Art of Travel*

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What makes up a practical medical kit varies from traveller to traveller and to where you are travelling.

In many Third World countries prescription medicines are readily available over the counter at a fraction of the price you'll pay back home, but you will need to know what medicine is right for you. Obviously medicine should be taken under medical supervision but sometimes an illness may strike when you are a long way from a hospital or clinic so it's worthwhile quizzing your doctor about broad spectrum antibiotics and what to ask for should you need to buy some while on the road. In such circumstances it's great to be able to crawl from your sleeping bag, dragging your snotty nose to a medical kit filled with hard-hitting drugs fresh from the research facilities of Switzerland.

The only fly in the Voltarin ointment, so to speak, that in some places (like China, Vietnam and Cambodia) the market is awash with fake drugs that are little more than aspirin and crushed up chalk. Sure the packaging is convincing and the foil looks authentic but in this day and age this is no guarantee to the quality of the drugs contained within.

Listed below are what I take in my emergency stash. At this point bear in mind that I am not a doctor and before anyone sues me let me strongly say you really should seek a professional opinion about what medicines (if any) you should carry.

Diarrhoea treatments

Diarrhoea is the most common ailment to affect travellers, but usually clears within a day or two if left untreated.

- Imodium – think of this as a plug for your arse. It's not helping the problem and you're not cured. It's great for an unavoidable bus trip and little else.
- Antibiotic – used to treat bacterial diarrhoea.
- Giardia or amoebic dysentery medication (usually Fasigyn or Flagyl will clear these up).
- Antispasmodic tablets (e.g. Buscopan) – for treatment of abdominal cramps.

Other medications

- Broad-range antibiotic (such as Roxithromycin) – for the treatment of chest, sinus and skin infections.
- Cold and flu medication.
- Panadol.
- Iodine solution – great for cleaning cuts and treating water prior to drinking.
- Location-specific treatments and prophylactics such as malaria tablets.
- Motion sickness pills, if you require them.
- Antibiotic eye drops – conjunctivitis is surprisingly common.
- Fungicide to treat athlete's foot and the like.

Medical equipment

- Thermometer.
- Syringes and needles – a letter from a doctor stating they are for medical reasons will stop an over-zealous customs officer spending the afternoon ransacking your bag and orifices looking for your stash.
- Bandage.