

Spotlight

Focus Vietnam

October 2025
Issue III

Travel Clinic
University of Zurich



Dear Readers

Few countries have inspired our clients as much as Vietnam over the past year. In 2024, it ranked among the three most popular travel destinations, and in 2025 this Southeast Asian gem remains high on many travellers’ wish lists.

Vietnam captivates with its diversity: from vibrant cities and stunning bays to endless coastlines and rice terraces. It’s no wonder that more and more travellers are falling under its spell.

In this edition, we invite you to join us on a short journey of discovery through Vietnam, with practical tips, cultural insights, and essential information for staying healthy on the road. After all, good preparation is the best travel companion.

We wish you an enjoyable read – and perhaps a touch of wanderlust.

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Travel Guide Vietnam



Vietnam is a long, coastal country in Southeast Asia with over 3,000 kilometers of stunning shoreline. It shares borders with China, Laos, and Cambodia and offers a remarkable variety of landscapes and cultures – from the rice terraces in the north to the tropical beaches in the south. Read here to learn how to start your trip fit and come back home healthy.

General Information

- Capital: Hanoi (Hà Nội)
- Largest city: Ho Chi Minh City (Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh) (formerly Saigon)
- Currency: Vietnamese Dong (VND) (10,000 VND ≈ 0.36 CHF)
- Language: Vietnamese (English is widely spoken in tourist areas)
- Population: approx. 98 million

Climate and Best Time to Travel

Vietnam lies within two climate zones, divided by the so-called Cloud Pass (Hai Van Pass) near Da Nang:

- North: Subtropical, with cooler temperatures from November to April and a hot, humid rainy season from May to October.
- South & Central region: Tropical and warm to hot year-round. The rainy season here usually lasts from May to October.

Best time to travel: March–April and September–November. During these months, the weather is generally mild and dry – ideal for exploring the country.

Entry & Visa

Swiss citizens require the following to enter Vietnam:

- A passport valid for at least 6 months beyond the return date
- A visa, which can be applied for online:
<https://evisa.gov.vn/>
The approved eVisa must be printed out and is valid at all official border crossings (including airports).

Please note: The import and possession of e-cigarettes and similar products is prohibited in Vietnam and punishable by law. Do not carry these items with you.

Popular Travel Route Through Vietnam

From North to South: Hanoi → Ha Long Bay → Ninh Binh → Hue → Hoi An → Da Nang → Ho Chi Minh City → Mekong Delta → Phu Quoc



Start: Hanoi (North)

Ende: Phu Quoc or Ho Chi Minh City (South)

This route takes you through some of the most exciting regions of Vietnam:

Experience the bustling old quarters of Hanoi, cruise between limestone cliffs in Ha Long Bay, and float past rice paddies in Ninh Binh. Dive into Vietnam's imperial history in Hue, then wander through lantern-lit streets and shop for tailor-made clothes in Hoi An. Afterward, relax on the beaches of Da Nang. In Ho Chi Minh City, enjoy big-city vibes and street food tours, while the Mekong Delta offers a glimpse into life on the water. To finish your journey, the tropical island of Phu Quoc invites you to unwind with white sandy beaches and unforgettable sunsets.

Health & Travel First Aid Kit

Recommended Vaccinations

In addition to standard vaccinations, we recommend the Hepatitis A vaccine for travel to Vietnam. Depending on your itinerary and planned activities, vaccinations against typhoid, rabies, and Japanese encephalitis may also be appropriate. The yellow fever vaccine is only required if you are entering from a yellow fever endemic country (not directly from Europe).

Mosquito-Borne Diseases

- Mosquitoes that transmit dengue, Zika, and chikungunya are found throughout Vietnam, so consistent mosquito protection is essential (wear long clothing, use insect repellent, sleep under a mosquito net). There is a dengue vaccine approved in Switzerland, but it is only recommended in specific cases — for travelers aged four and older who have previously had a dengue infection (more than 6 months ago).
- Malaria: Low risk throughout the country (including Phu Quoc island); no risk in major city centers (e.g. Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City).

What Should Be in Your Travel First Aid Kit?

- Insect repellent (look for a DEET content of 30–50%)
- Sunscreen with high SPF
- Medication for traveler's diarrhea & nausea
- Painkillers (e.g. paracetamol)
- Band-aids, disinfectant, and, if needed, bandage material
- Any personal medications you may need

Be Careful in Traffic!

Did you know that traffic accidents are the leading cause of death among tourists? Traffic in Vietnam can be chaotic: poor road conditions, disregard for traffic rules, animals crossing the road... Stay alert at all times!

When choosing tourist boats, also pay attention to safety regulations, as boating accidents occur regularly.

Behavior & Cultural Customs in Vietnam

Cultural Etiquette

- Clothing: When visiting temples or sacred sites, modest clothing is important. Shoulders and knees should be covered.
- Shoes off: It is customary to remove your shoes when entering Vietnamese homes and many temples.
- Head & feet: The head is considered the most sacred part of the body, so avoid touching anyone's head, even that of a child. Never point your feet at people or religious objects.
- Smiling: A smile is often the easiest way to connect with Vietnamese people and open doors – always remain polite and respectful.

Food and Drink

Street food: Vietnamese street food is among the best in the world. Don't miss local specialties like Phở, Bánh Mì, Bún Chả, or Egg Coffee.

However, to avoid traveler's diarrhea, follow the golden rule: "Cook it, boil it, peel it, or leave it!"

Special Traditions

- Tết Festival: Vietnam's Lunar New Year (usually in January or February) is the country's most important holiday. Many Vietnamese travel to visit their families, and the atmosphere is festive yet calm.
- Gifts: When visiting a Vietnamese home, a small gift is often expected — especially during major holidays or as a sign of appreciation.

Check out our shop here:



<https://reisemedizin.uzh.ch/en/products>



Public Behavior Guidelines

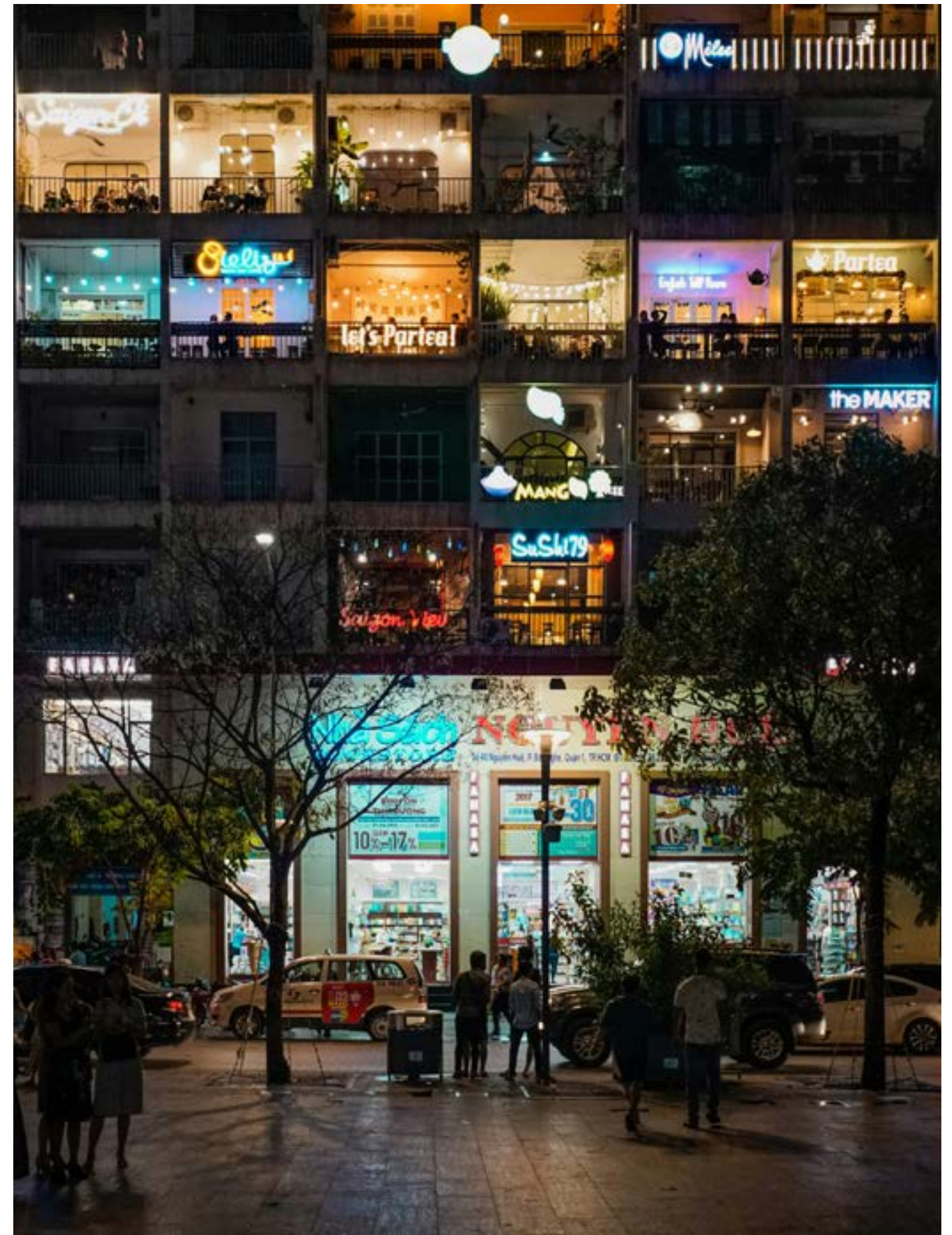
- **Respect for religion:** Quiet and respectful behavior is highly appreciated when visiting temples and religious sites.
- **Everyday clothing:** In both cities and rural areas, people are expected to dress neatly. Clothing that is too revealing may be seen as disrespectful.
- **Photography:** Photographing military facilities or public infrastructure such as airports and bridges is prohibited and punishable by law.

Travel Responsibly

Travel is a privilege – and with privilege comes responsibility. In the spirit of responsible global citizenship, travelers should ensure they are properly vaccinated – not only for their own protection, but also to avoid spreading diseases to areas with lower vaccination coverage.

Equally important is a respectful and mindful attitude toward local people, animals, culture, and the environment. Fair consumption, sustainable behavior, and appreciation help make travel enriching for everyone involved.

Vietnam offers a fascinating blend of breathtaking nature, rich culture, and warm, welcoming people. With a well-prepared travel first aid kit and respect for local customs, travelers can enjoy this beautiful country safely and responsibly. Whether you're wandering through historic cities or relaxing on idyllic beaches – Vietnam is sure to inspire you!



Hepatitis

What is hepatitis?

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver. There are many different causes, and a distinction must be made between infectious and non-infectious causes. Infectious causes are often viruses or bacteria, but parasites and fungi are also possible. Hepatitis A and B are common viral-causing diseases of the liver and can be prevented by getting vaccinated. Hepatitis A and B can manifest as fever, malaise, jaundice and nausea.

Hepatitis A is transmitted primarily through contaminated food and water or through direct contact with an infectious person. Children infected with Hepatitis A do not show any symptoms in most cases. However, adults generally do show symptoms and often have to be hospitalized.

Hepatitis B is transmitted through contact with body fluids (blood, sexual intercourse, etc.). Although symptoms do not necessarily occur with Hepatitis B, chronic progressions are possible, which are difficult to treat. Chronic Hepatitis B often leads to scarring of the liver (cirrhosis).

In which countries does infectious hepatitis occur?

Hepatitis A occurs worldwide, but is more common in countries with poor sanitary conditions. Hepatitis B is also common worldwide, but is most prevalent in countries in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and parts of the Americas.

When and how often should I be vaccinated against hepatitis A and B?

Hepatitis A vaccination is recommended for all persons planning to travel outside of Western Europe and North America. Depending on the vaccine administered, a single vaccination dose may be sufficient for protection during the trip. However, long-lasting protection is acquired only after the 2nd dose.

Hepatitis B is recommended worldwide, including Switzerland. Two to three vaccinations are required for lifelong protection, depending on age.

What else should I know about the Hepatitis A and B vaccines?

- The Hepatitis B vaccination also protects against Hepatitis D. Protection against Hepatitis D exists because the virus that causes it in humans is dependent on the Hepatitis B virus.
- If you have grown up in a Hepatitis A endemic country, you have usually already had jaundice as a child. Once you have had the disease, it protects you for life. If you are not sure whether you have had the disease in childhood or not, you can have your antibodies tested.
- Further information on Hepatitis A and B can be found on the website of the FOPH or at HealthyTravel.

Typhoid

What is typhoid fever?

Typhus abdominalis, or typhoid fever or typhoid for short, is caused by a specific subgroup of Salmonella (*Salmonella enterica ssp. enterica* serovar Typhi). This is not the normal salmonella disease common in Europe (*Salmonella enterica ssp. enterica* serovar Enteritidis). The disease is transmitted through contaminated food or water. Symptoms include a high fever, headache, dry cough, slow pulse, abdominal pain, and there may be a pale, small-spotted rash. Diarrhea and constipation may alternate. The disease can be treated with antibiotics, but in rare cases can be fatal.

In which countries does typhoid abdominalis occur?

Typhoid fever is common worldwide, but is most common in Africa, Asia, and South America. Highly endemic countries are India and adjacent regions.

When and how often should I be vaccinated?

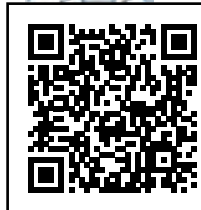
Vaccination is recommended during prolonged stays in endemic areas and when food hygiene is poor. The oral vaccination (Vivotif) consists of 3 capsules taken on days 1, 3 and 5. Protection is provided 10 days after the last capsule is taken and lasts 1-3 years. A 3-year protection is achieved only if one stays in endemic areas during these 3 years. As an alternative to the oral vaccination, one can also receive a normal vaccination (Typhim) with an injection into the upper arm. The level of protection of the injected vaccination is the same as the oral vaccination, however as a booster vaccination it shows less efficacy compared to the oral vaccination.

What else should I know about the typhoid vaccine?

- The injectable vaccination (Typhim) is not licensed in Switzerland, which is why we import it from Germany. We offer this vaccination because the oral vaccine is not recommended for those who are immunocompromised and sometimes the oral vaccination cannot always be logistically given as the pills have to be refrigerated. Health insurance does not cover the cost of Typhim and the vaccine must be paid for out-of-pocket.
- More information is available on the website of the FOPH and at HealthyTravel.

Pre-Travel Medical Consultation

Whether you're preparing to travel abroad with the family, have concerns about visiting a faraway region or are planning a trip around the world, your travel preparations are crucial. That's why our dedicated team delivers scientifically sound advice, vaccinations and information tailored to each country on your itinerary. So you can travel with peace of mind, knowing that you're protected from malaria, yellow fever and a host of other potential risks.



<https://reisemedizin.uzh.ch/en/travel-health-consultation>

Rabies: This Virus Bites



Mosquitos, and the diseases they carry, aren't the only biters to be aware of when traveling; rabies remains one of the most dangerous diseases for those infected by it, but there are steps you can take to protect yourself.

What Is Rabies?

Rabies is a viral disease that is most commonly transmitted through a bite or a scratch from an infected animal. Once the rabies virus finds its way inside the body, it infects the central nervous system, causing disease in the brain and then ultimately death.

There are two forms of rabies: furious rabies and paralytic rabies. These forms differ in what symptoms the animal/individual affected presents.

Furious rabies is characterized by hallucinations and hyperactivity, whereas paralytic rabies causes paralysis or a coma. The first type of rabies, furious rabies, is most common and occurs in 80% of human cases.

Rabies occurs worldwide, separating it from mosquito-borne illnesses, which are mainly present in the warm and humid climates favorable to mosquitos.



A Fear of Water?

Rabies has historically been known as hydrophobia, also known as a fear of water. As we now know, there's a lot more to rabies than just a sudden fear of getting wet, but it is interesting how it manifests in this way.

The rabies infection causes intense spasms in the throat whenever someone tries to swallow. Even just the thought of swallowing water can cause these spasms, making it appear like someone is afraid of water. In reality, rabies causes a fear of swallowing anything, not just water.

This is because rabies thrives in saliva, which is also the best way to spread the infection. However, swallowing reduces the amount of saliva in the mouth and therefore the spread of the virus. Because of this, rabies causes a fear of swallowing, making saliva build up in the mouth and increasing the virus's ability to spread.

How Does Rabies Spread?

Rabies spreads when an animal with rabies, bites or scratches a person. Most rabies cases occur in wild animals, such as raccoons, bats, foxes, and skunks, although any mammal, including humans, can get this virus.

The most common cause of rabies in humans is the bite of an infected dog. Along those same lines, children are at a higher risk of rabies since they are more likely to play with dogs and are thus more likely to receive a bite.

Rabid animals are more likely to bite someone because they often have furious rabies, which makes them more aggressive. Unfortunately, these bites do more than tear the skin; they can also transmit and spread the virus.

Since the rabies virus is in the saliva of infected animals, any bites, which pierce the skin, can introduce the virus with the saliva into the wound. And not only bites, but literally any contact with an infected animal's saliva can potentially transmit rabies. For instance, having infected saliva touch an open wound can also introduce the virus into the body.

How To Prevent Rabies

There is no effective treatment for rabies once clinical signs have appeared, the disease is almost always fatal. But there are important ways to prevent rabies. First and foremost it is important to be aware of the disease and what it may look like in animals. However, not all infected animals display symptoms, which is why it is best to avoid unknown animals. Otherwise, if you have a pet, the best way to prevent rabies is by vaccinating them against it and keeping these vaccines up to date.

I've Been Bitten, Now What?

There are five distinct stages of rabies:

1. Incubation
2. Prodrome
3. Acute Neurologic Period
4. Coma
5. Death

Incubation is the time before symptoms appear and usually lasts between 2-3 months. This is when you can intervene in rabies development before symptoms begin appearing in prodrome.

If you've been bitten or scratched by an animal, wash the bite site immediately with soap and water. Through this intervention, the potential viral load in the bite wound can be decreased. Then contact a healthcare provider about postexposure prophylaxis, which is a series of rabies vaccines. Important is to be able to start the postexposure vaccinations within 24 hours of the bite or scratch.

By taking action as soon as the bite occurs, you can disrupt the infection of rabies in your body and save your life. In this case, time truly is of the essence.

Those with rabies who enter prodrome may experience the following signs and symptoms:

- pain, discomfort, itching, or prickling at the bite site
- intolerance of bright light, noise, or drafts
- fear of water
- difficulty swallowing, vomiting, nausea
- neurological dysfunction that progresses within days (e.g., confusion, anxiety, agitation)
- localized weakness
- coma

Death from rabies results from cardiac or respiratory failure and generally occurs within 7-10 days of the first signs if no intensive care and supportive measures are begun.

Protect Yourself from Rabies

When it comes to rabies, the most important tool you have for protection is remaining aware. By this, we mean staying aware of the animals around you and if they are exhibiting off behavior.

For instance, if you are traveling and see a dog, it's best to avoid petting it, no matter how cute it may be. If the dog is snarling and looks agitated, it's even more important to steer clear entirely to ensure you don't get bitten. Even if the dog does not have rabies, a bite can easily send you to the hospital for stitches, tetanus shot or bacterial wound infection if you aren't careful.

Above all else, if you get bitten by an animal, quickly clean the cut and head to the doctor as fast as possible. This way, if you are exposed to rabies, you can quickly get a vaccine and interfere with the virus before the infections spreads in your body.

To keep yourself safe when traveling, make sure that you and your kids adopt a "look, don't touch" policy when it comes to animals, and leave them be. Rabies can be a severe disease if you get it, but remaining aware can go a long way in keeping this "biting" virus away.

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Find out more about Rabies here:



https://reisemedizin.uzh.ch/en/pre-travel_advice/rabies

Japanese Encephalitis

What is Japanese encephalitis?

Japanese encephalitis is a disease caused by flaviviruses and transmitted by *Culex* mosquitoes. Most people who become infected develop no or very mild symptoms. However, a small proportion (up to 1%) may develop encephalitis which presents with a rapid onset of headache, high fever, disorientation and convulsions. Up to 30% of symptomatic cases can be fatal.

In which countries does Japanese encephalitis occur?

Japanese encephalitis occurs in rural areas in Southeast Asia. The distribution extends from Japan, eastern China and India to Indonesia and Papua New Guinea in the south.

When and how often should I be vaccinated against Japanese encephalitis?

Vaccination is only recommended for travelers who are going to Southeast Asia for an extended period of time and are staying in rural areas. The risk of infection increases when staying near rice fields or pig farms. If vaccination is recommended, at least 2 doses are needed before departure, ideally with an interval of 4 weeks. If there is a renewed risk, a booster vaccination can be given after one year.

What else should I know about the Japanese encephalitis vaccine?

- There are live but also inactivated vaccines against Japanese encephalitis. In Switzerland, only the inactivated vaccine (Ixiaro) is approved.
- The virus that triggers Japanese encephalitis is closely related to tick-borne encephalitis (TBE), which is transmitted in Switzerland.
- For more information on Japanese encephalitis, visit [HealthyTravel](#).



Mosquito and Tick Protection



Everyone can agree that becoming a meal for a mosquito or tick is not pleasant. When traveling, it is vital to be aware of the potential risk you may be in so you can prepare accordingly. Be sure to wear the proper clothing, bring repellent, and sleep in an enclosed space or with a mosquito net to keep yourself bite-free.

Travelling is often an exciting time full of endless possibilities. There are many things on our minds when we set off including how we're getting there, where we will be staying, and what we are going to do when there. However, another critical aspect of preparing for a trip is being aware of any diseases that you will be at risk of, e.g. those transmitted by mosquitos and ticks.

Especially with ticks, it is important to remember that they can also pose a health risk independently of a trip, i.e. at home in Switzerland. Tick-borne meningitis (TBE) can be effectively vaccinated against.

Diseases Transmitted by Mosquitos

There are three common mosquito-borne diseases that can impact travelers and cause complications, putting a dent in what should be an enjoyable vacation. These three diseases are malaria, dengue fever, and yellow fever.

Malaria

Malaria results from a parasite transmitted by the female Anopheles mosquito, which is only active from dusk to dawn.



While the Anopheles mosquitos get a bad rap for transmitting malaria, the truth is that they must first contract malaria themselves from a human host. So, if the Anopheles mosquito bites an infected person, they then become infected and can infect someone else when they grab their next meal.

The symptoms of malaria can come on fast, and you'll feel very bad very quickly if you become infected.

Symptoms include:

- high fever
- vomiting
- aching limbs
- feeling weak

However, this does not mean that you will show symptoms right away. Some people have a pathogen that remains dormant at first, sometimes for several months, before breaking out. Just when you think you're in the clear!

If you experience any of the above mentioned symptoms after traveling to a malaria risk area, whether immediately or months after your trip, you should see a doctor at once. It is crucial to make the diagnosis quickly with a blood test so that the necessary treatment can be started immediately to prevent complications.

Find out more about malaria here:



https://reisemedizin.uzh.ch/en/pre-travel_advice/malaria

Dengue fever

Dengue fever is due to a virus transmitted by the tiger mosquito, which is most commonly found in cities but also in rural regions.

Dengue fever has main symptoms of fever and a skin rash. For tourists who have their first case of dengue fever, these symptoms typically subside on their own. However, those who undergo repeated infection can develop dangerous symptoms.

There is no specific treatment for dengue fever. Since it can cause blood clotting problems, we do not recommend to carry painkillers with you that inhibit blood platelets (e.g. aspirin). Instead, we suggest paracetamol as a painkiller for your first aid kit on travels.

Dengue fever has some of the same symptoms as malaria, which can cause a dangerous scenario. If someone thinks they have dengue fever, they will likely wait for the virus to run its course. However, if they actually have malaria, they could be endangering themselves by not receiving treatment right away. The visit to the doctor and a correct diagnosis is, therefore, very important.

Find out more about dengue here:



https://reisemedizin.uzh.ch/en/pre-travel_advice/dengue

Yellow fever

Of the three mentioned mosquito-borne diseases, yellow fever belongs to the most dangerous ones with fatal outcomes in 50% of severe cases. Like dengue fever, it is caused by a virus.

Previously, yellow fever was seen most often in rural areas in east-west Africa and South America (especially Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador). However, recently it has been seen to move closer and closer to cities.

Important to know: There is a very effective vaccine against yellow fever and many countries affected by yellow fever require this vaccination in order to enter.

Find out more about yellow fever here:



https://reisemedizin.uzh.ch/en/pre-travel_advice/yellowfever

Zika

The Zika virus is primarily transmitted by the Aedes mosquitoes, which mainly bite during the day. People who become infected are often asymptomatic. If symptoms occur, they are typically mild and include fever, rash, muscle and joint pain, conjunctivitis, headache, and malaise.

So far there is no vaccine and no specific treatment for Zika available — management of the disease is primarily supportive, i.e. focusing on symptom relief.

Zika poses a considerable risk for pregnant women respectively their unborn child as an infection can lead to malformations. Pregnant women, as well as people and couples planning a pregnancy, are advised not to travel to areas with an increased risk for Zika transmission.

Find out more about Zika here:



https://reisemedizin.uzh.ch/en/pre-travel_advice/zika

Chikungunya

Chikungunya is a viral disease that is most commonly spread by Aedes aegypti and Aedes albopictus, that is the same mosquitos that also spread the Zika and dengue virus.

The first symptoms of chikungunya typically appear 4-8 days after the bite and include a sudden onset of fever that is frequently accompanied by severe joint pain. Treatment includes managing the fever and joint pain—there is no specific anti-viral treatment for chikungunya. A chikungunya vaccine is licensed in Switzerland under the name Vimkungya®.

Find out more about chikungunya here:



https://reisemedizin.uzh.ch/en/pre-travel_advice/chikungunya



Tick Borne Diseases

Fun fact: Ticks aren't actually insects, they're arachnids (like spiders). However, just like mosquitos, they bite and suck blood. In the process, infected ticks can transmit diseases that include Lyme disease, tick-borne encephalitis, or tick-bite fevers.

Lyme disease

Lyme disease is caused by a bacterial infection that passes to humans when bitten by an infected black-legged tick.

Lyme diseases causes symptoms that include fever, headache, and fatigue. The most prominent sign of Lyme disease is a skin rash that appears as a ringed circle.

Most cases of Lyme disease can be treated with a few weeks of antibiotics.

TBE (Tick-borne encephalitis)

Unlike Lyme disease, tick-borne encephalitis is caused by a virus that impacts the central nervous system.

There are typically two phases of the infection. During the first stage, symptoms such as fever, headache, fatigue, nausea, and muscle aches appear. However, during the second phase, more severe symptoms involving the nervous system can arise, including encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) and meningitis (inflammation of the membrane surrounding the brain and spinal cord).

There is no treatment for tick-borne encephalitis. However, there is a vaccine which is recommended for those who live or temporarily stay in areas with reported transmission of tick-borne encephalitis.

Find out more about TBE here:



<https://reisemedizin.uzh.ch/en/just-a-shot/tbe>

Tick-Bite Fever

Tick-Bite fever is caused by bacterial infection, and symptoms often appear within two weeks of the bite. Symptoms include fever, headache, swollen lymph nodes, muscle soreness, and a rash.

Protecting Against Bites

When traveling to an area at high risk of mosquito or tick-borne diseases, it is crucial to take the proper precautions to protect yourself from infection. Check the Healthy Travel website to see what your travel location is at risk of, and structure your prevention accordingly.

While some of these bite-transmitted diseases have vaccinations, for many illnesses the only protection available is avoiding the bite in the first place.

Cover Up

If there is no exposed skin, the mosquitos and ticks have a hard time to bite you. Because of this, it is recommended to cover up your skin as much as you can (i.e., wear long pants and shirts). Additionally, wear shoes and high socks to keep the ankles and feet from being exposed. This is especially important for protecting against ticks since some repellents are not as effective against ticks.

Mosquito Nets

The Anopheles mosquito that transmits malaria is a night owl that only bites between dusk and dawn. Because of this, mosquito nets that go over your bed can keep you safe while sleeping.

Bug Repellants

One good thing about bug repellants is that they are effective until they are washed off, so you only have to reapply when it has been rinsed away. However, since sweating can also reduce the bug protection, it is recommended to reapply the repellent after 4-5 hours. It is important to ensure that

bug sprays for the skin do not have a high concentration of DEET, as it can attack human nerves, which can be dangerous.

Besides spraying mosquito repellents directly onto the skin, there are also sprays for clothing and mosquito nets that effectively repel mosquitoes and should be used in addition to skin sprays.

Protecting Yourself from Mosquito and Tick Bites

Everyone can agree that becoming a meal for a mosquito or tick is not pleasant. Despite the itching that a mosquito causes or the need to remove a tick from where it is embedded in the skin, there are extra things to worry about, including the diseases they can potentially carry and transmit.

When traveling, it is vital to be aware of the potential risk you may be in so you can prepare accordingly. Be sure to wear the proper clothing, bring repellent, and sleep in an enclosed space or with a mosquito net to keep yourself bite-free.

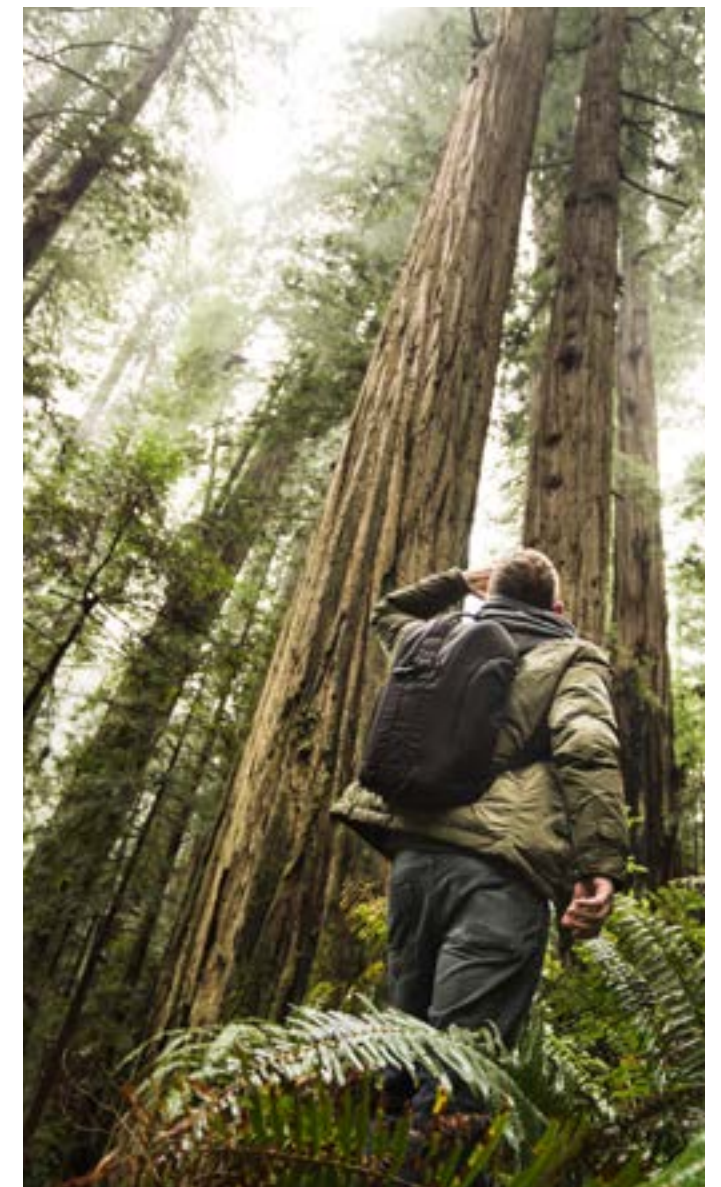
For most mosquito and tick-borne diseases, preventing bites is the best way to prevent disease, so stay vigilant!

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Unpleasant Souvenirs: Bed Bugs and Accidents



Up to date on vaccines. Check. Packed all medications. Check. Brought bug repellent and long-sleeved shirts. Check. Sometimes, we've done all we can to protect ourselves while traveling, yet accidents still occur. And you may even come home with more than you bargained for, be it a tiny hitchhiker or an injury. Both are unpleasant souvenirs from your travels. Being aware of their occurrence can help you reducing the likelihood of them happening to you.

Bed Bugs: Invisible Hitchhikers

Does the mere mention of bedbugs make your skin itch? These hidden creatures that thrive in the nighttime may not only leave signs of their presence, they can also wiggle their way into your suitcases—and once they invite themselves into your home, they're incredibly difficult to get rid of.

Not interested in having these hitchhikers? Make sure you do the following.

Inspect Your Room

Upon arriving at your holiday destination, take a moment to thoroughly inspect your room for any signs of bed bugs before unpacking. Look for small black dots on the bed frame, as these can indicate bed bug feces. If you spot any, immediately request a different room at the reception. Meanwhile, keep your luggage either outside the room or in the bathtub. To further protect your belongings, consider wrapping your suitcase in a large plastic bag to prevent any bed bugs from hitching a ride.

Sadly, spraying your luggage with bug spray won't help as it's not effective against bed bugs.

Upon Coming Home

Back home from your trip, unpack your luggage on your balcony or in your bathroom against a light-colored surface. This way you can better see whether you have any unwanted hitchhikers. Shake out all clothing in a shower or bathtub. If you suspect bed bugs, wash all your clothing immediately at 60°C. For clothing, where that is not possible, put them in the dryer at 50°C for at least 30 minutes—this will kill the hitchhikers before they can make themselves at home in your place. Alternatively small items can be put into a freezer for several days.

Should an infestation occur despite all precautionary measures, it is important to recognize and act quickly. Control usually cannot be carried out without the assistance of a professional pest control company.

Travel Accidents

Did you know that traffic accidents are the most common cause of death amongst tourists? 90% of them happen in Asia, Latin America and Africa. When you're traveling abroad, your risk of getting injured or even killed in a traffic accident is up to 100 times higher than in Switzerland. Pedestrians, cyclists and passengers in overcrowded vehicles are particularly at risk.

Make sure to stick to the following points to avoid accidents on your travels:

- Familiarize yourself with the traffic rules at your destination (be careful when driving on the left!) and watch out for traffic accidents; wear a seatbelt and, if on a two-wheeler, be sure to wear a helmet and other protective gear (long pants, boots, gloves, jacket).
- Ride carefully, defensively and in daylight. Make sure to take a break every 2-3 hours.
- When renting a car or motorcycle: take a short test drive and check the correct settings (brakes, lights, seat belt) and tire tread. A large car is usually safer than a small one.
- Choose safe transportation and avoid risky shared cabs (tuk-tuk, matatu, daladala, etc.).
- Never travel in the back of a truck.
- Inform your family and friends if you are traveling to a remote or risky area.
- Carry emergency numbers, a copy of your passport, health insurance card and important travel documents with you.
- Never drive, dive or swim while under the influence of alcohol, drugs or when tired.
- When flying to a country and renting a car locally, be mindful of the child seats. Pay attention to the right size, good quality or whether they are available at all.

Any injury sustained while traveling, whether it's a twisted ankle, broken wrist or cut, can spoil your fun. If you get injured while traveling, prioritize medical treatment—you don't want your injury to become even worse. If it's severe, don't be afraid to visit the nearest hospital. Many travel destinations feature medical facilities catering to tourists.

Afterward, make sure to stick to your treatment plan, also upon returning home. Staying proactive in your recovery helps to avoid long-term effects that might stand in the way of your future travels.

As for preventing accidents, the greatest tip is to be aware of your limits and don't push past them. However, even then, not all accidents can be prevented—hence the name “accident”—so it's better to know what you should do if an accident occurs; having guidance in an emergency is the best way to keep a level head and make the right decisions.

Remember, while you cannot prevent all accidents and unwanted souvenirs, by properly preparing for your trip and meeting with a travel consultant, you can significantly reduce your risk of harm. Now, the only thing left for you to do is be careful while traveling, diligently check your room for bed bugs, and, most importantly, have fun.

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IMPRINT

Spotlight - 3rd Issue - October 2025 - www.reisemedizin.uzh.ch

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The magazine „Public & Global Health Spotlight“ can be downloaded free of charge on: www.reisemedizin.uzh.ch/en/
Address: University of Zurich, Travel Clinic UZH, Hirschengraben 84, 8001 Zürich
Edition: 40 copies; is published several times a year. --- All rights reserved.

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