

1. Medical information

- a. Refer to cdc.gov
- b. Vaccinations needed: Consult with a tropical medicine travel clinic for current advice on vaccinations.
- c. Misc. information regarding injections, vaccinations, pills, etc:
 - i. You should come with any prescription meds you may be taking. You can not assume they will be available here.
 - ii. If you worry about malaria you should start on a malaria prophylaxis before arrival and make sure to continue it for the required number of doses after returning home. Many people find that the possible side effects of malaria medicine is not worth the hassle, compared to the slim risk of contracting malaria, unless visiting the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

2. Passport and Visa information

- a. A visa is necessary to enter Bangladesh. There is an extremely unreliable visa-on-arrival system at the airport. However, it is better to get your Bangladesh visa in your home country where tourist visas are easily available, but take a few weeks to process.
- b. For stopovers or travel in Thailand or Singapore visas are not necessary for Americans or Canadians. Visas are necessary for travel in India. Indian visas can be obtained in Dhaka or from the Indian Embassy in the US or Canada. It takes about a week/3-5 working days and \$100 to process.
- c. Passport photos are only necessary if attempting to get visas to India, in which case they can be obtained from a photo shop here.
- d. General passport protocol: Always travel with a photocopy of your passport (especially the picture/information page) kept in a place other than where you usually carry your passport. Also be sure to leave a copy of your passport and credit cards at home

3. Electricity and Internet

- a. **Electricity format:** The current here is 220VAC 50Hz. Computers, cameras, battery chargers all tend to be multivoltage. (Check the converter box on the cord for a line that says "input 100-240V.") Other electronics need a transformer to 220 VAC. Some electronics, like hair dryers, don't work on converters. Be sure to check your electrical equipment **BEFORE** coming and make sure it will function automatically on any type of electricity or, if not, that you know how to change the settings or that you have a transformer of adequate wattage and output to run what you are running.
- b. **Computer/Email access**

- i. **Bringing laptops:** If you bring a laptop, there is no guarantee that you'll be able to hook up to internet. It's possible, but will require access codes/passwords to access local service providers.
 - ii. **Internet availability**– There are several local service providers. Usually you can get online either at an internet café or through the place where you are staying. Most business offices have dial-up internet access for their own use.
 - c. **Telephone calls:** Cell phones from North America don't work here unless they are specifically designed for international use and "unlocked". Generally, direct-dialing North America is not a problem – **it costs about 20 cents/minute.** The calling code for Bangladesh is 880.
 - d. **Arrival Procedure:** On the plane, fill out the entry card they give you. Be sure to fill in the address blank, even if it is just the office address of the CRWRC office, or someone else you are working with. Follow the crowd to immigration, stand in the line for foreigners (towards the left side as you come off the elevators.) Present your entry card and passport to the immigration officials for an entry stamp. Proceed to the baggage claim to collect your baggage. Sometimes there is a sign after immigration indicating which carousel your luggage is on, according to flight, but sometimes you have to guess. Having collected your luggage, go through customs. Do not wait in the long lines, instead proceed beside them through the green line of "nothing to declare." After customs, ahead out of the airport through the open double doorway. Here is where you will be collected. Look at the mass of men ahead of you (outside the gated enclosure) for someone holding a sign indicating they are waiting for you. Once you recognize them, they will go get the car. Stay where you are until the car comes into the gated enclosure.
 - e. **You might want to change money at the airport at the bureau de change' -- it's usually a pretty good exchange rate.**
4. **Be sure not to forget to take your:**
- a. **US Dollars in cash** -- \$200-500 each. Traveler's Cheques are a pain to use, you get a poor exchange rate, and they aren't universally acceptable. Credit cards have limited usefulness in Dhaka, and are useless outside of Dhaka. Debit cards (With the Plus symbol) are accepted at most ATM's here. I'm not sure about Mastercard, or other cards.
 - b. **Prescription meds**, extra contacts or glasses, Imodium, aspirin...
 - c. Batteries or charging units and plug converters for electrical equipment (cameras, etc.)
 - d. **Earplugs** - Often it is noisy at night, and the early morning call to prayer is at dawn, long before you want to be awake
 - e. Sunscreen, sunglasses, or hat – this is the tropics.
 - f. Any treats/sweets you can't live without.
 - g. Towel and wash cloth – unless you KNOW you are going to be staying in a better guest house/hotel.

- h. Home contact information – not only so you don't forget to call home, but also in case of emergency, somebody in the group will know whom to contact.

5. **Weather:** Weather-wise, winter is the best time of the year for visiting Bangladesh. From November to February, the weather is cool and dry (50-75 F). March-June is hot and dry, during which the temperature ranges between upper 80's to mid-90's F. The monsoon/rainy season is from June to October, during which many roads outside of Dhaka are impassable. During the early monsoon it rains several times almost every day and the temperature stays around 85 F. Late in the monsoon (Sept-Oct) it rains less often and is hotter, around 90 F.

6. Dress

- a. **Men** - Men should wear slacks (what one would wear in the office in North America) and a knit, sport, or dress shirt. Dress shoes and socks. Avoid shorts, T-shirts and sandals unless relaxing at the hotel.
- b. **Women** - Women should wear Shalwar Kameez, which are easily available in Bangladesh, or in Indian neighborhoods of large North American cities. If this is absolutely impossible, women should wear very conservative pants or an ankle length skirt, and a top that comes to her hips. Women should avoid shorts, sleeveless shirts, and transparent dresses. Women can wear sandals, but not flip-flops.
- c. Regardless of what you wear or where you sit, be modest and graceful. As foreigners you are seen and expected to act as ladies and gentleman.

7. Culture

- a. Do's and Don'ts
 - i. Do not think you are in your country. Pay attention to your surroundings and imitate behaviors that seem to be common.
 - ii. Take things with your right hand. Avoid using your left hand while eating, giving something, receiving something or touching someone. Also, do not hold Bibles or other holy books with your left hand.
 - iii. When greeted, nod a little in response to show respect.
 - iv. Wash your hands before eating.
 - v. Men do not shake hands with women unless the woman extends her hand to you first. Women do not shake hands with men, unless the man extends his hand to you first.
 - vi. In villages, men do not show much willingness to talk to women and vice versa, unless the situation demands it.
 - vii. Men and women do not mix freely in the village. Men tend to be around men and women tend to be around women.
 - viii. Men do not give women anything unless the situation demands that you do so.
 - ix. Women should wear Shalwar Kameez, which are easily available in Bangladesh, or in Indian neighborhoods of large North American cities. If this is not possible, women should avoid shorts, sleeveless

shirts, and transparent dresses. Men can wear normal office clothes and shoes, but not shorts.

- x. Do not sit with your legs crossed while a chair, or ever sit with your legs pointed towards another person.
- xi. Take toilet paper to the village.
- xii. If you are offered fruit in the village, you may eat it. If a guide is around, it never hurts to ask if it is ok to eat the fruit. Do not eat food that is prepared on the roadside.
- xiii. To every extent possible, eat what is given to you. Bangladesh has a generous culture. Graciously eating food that which is given allows even poor people the pleasure of giving and building relationships with you. However, it is not offensive to ask if the water has been boiled or otherwise purified.
- xiv. Do not have your picture taken with women. Ask before taking pictures of women.
- xv. Show proper respect to older people.
- xvi. Do not go into a house without permission. Even after permission is granted, women should wait a little while to enter the interior part of the home.
- xvii. If you ever have questions, never hesitate to ask a Bangladeshi or a guide for help.

8. Additional things to know

- a. Time zone: GMT +6 = 11 hours ahead of Eastern Standard time; 10 hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Savings Time
- b. The work week in Bangladesh is Sunday through Thursday. Friday is the Sabbath/ day of rest, when most people go to their house of worship. Many offices are open on Saturday, but not all.