Dear travelers,

I hope that everyone is having a fabulous summer break!  Our trip is less than one year away!  The first order of business is for everyone to get passport. **You must have a passport for international travel.  You will not be allowed to get on the plane without your passport.**If you already have a passport, please find it and check the expiration date.  **For our destinations,** a**ll passports must be valid for up to 6 months AFTER the trip**.  Please make sure that it expires ***AFTER December 25, 2015***.  If it expires before December 25, 2015 there could be possible issues at customs when we arrive.

Summer is the perfect time to apply for your passport and have it in *plenty* of time before our trip.  Please educate yourself on the process of obtaining a passport, buy using this website:  <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/passports/new.html>  You can find everything you need to apply for a new passport on this website.  **Group Application Deadline: Everyone who needs a passport, or needs to renew must apply no later than Dec. 31, 2014.**This will give you plenty of time for your application to be processed and for you to receive your passport in the mail.  After you have applied, shoot me an e-mail so I can check you off my list.

Please do not put this off until the last minute.  Currently, the US State Department reports an application process time of 4-6 weeks, but I have had students who said that the process took much longer.  Please read all the rules carefully, especially for minors under age 16 (***both*** parents must appear at the time of application.)

Use the website mentioned above and do a search for the nearest a passport facilities that have onsite photos (which saves time).  You will probably need to make an appointment at most of these locations.  From personal experience, I can tell you that making an appointment might add a few weeks to the process.

Here are four easy steps to obtaining your passport:

Step1:  Use the website to read all the details and print the paperwork

Step 2:  Gather all necessary documents

Step 3:  Make an appointment at a Passport Acceptance Facility

Step 4:  Take the completed paperwork, documents, and correct form of payment to the local Passport Acceptance Facility

Please feel free to e-mail me with any questions that you have about this.  I am looking forward to our trip.  I can’t wait to show you the world!

Jessica Taylor

Group Leader