

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, all 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