

## Scheduling your time

*One of the most critical factors contributing to the success of your first overseas trip is how effectively you organize your time. Here are some time-planning DOs and DON'Ts to keep in mind.*

### **DOs**

**Do** leave yourself time at the start to get over your jet lag. Use that time to check in with the trade commissioner and to wander about, looking, listening and generally getting a feel for the country.

**Do** plan to spend at least three days (or a week if it is a major market) in each place you visit. You'll learn as much about the country, its people and the market by osmosis as you would in a frantic round of back-to-back meetings.

**Do** get the most out of your trip by ensuring it does not coincide with traditional holiday periods. For example, not much work would be accomplished in Rio during carnival.

**Do** write to the trade commissioner(s) you met on your visit. Let them know how your meetings went, who your agent is (if you appointed one) and what your future plans are. If you need any additional assistance or information, now's the time to ask for it. Keeping the trade commissioners fully in the picture lets them know you are serious and they can be on the look-out for other sales leads and opportunities for you.

### **DON'Ts**

**Don't** start out on a foreign marketing trip without pre-planning and careful organizing. Don't arrive without warning and avoid whirlwind trips.

**Don't** try to cram too much business or too many countries into your first trip. Three countries in two weeks are probably all you can effectively absorb in a single trip, particularly the first one.

**Don't** believe everything you've heard about relaxed attitudes to time in certain countries. Check the local custom with the Canadian trade commissioner.

**Don't** show up at the office for business as usual at 9 a.m. on your first day back. Take it easy. Get over your jet lag and spend the time at home sorting out business cards and organizing lists of people to whom you should send follow-up letters. Jot a few words on the back of each business card describing the follow-up action required. Draft a general follow-up letter before clearing the backlog of items that piled up during your absence.

***Arrive early at airports.  
Allow two hours for security.***