

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

Proper planning is vital to a successful foreign market visit. The following list highlights a number of important details that can help make your visit successful.

- If you intend to apply for assistance to make the trip (e.g. through the Program for Export Market Development), be sure to apply two to three months before your planned departure.
- Write to the trade commissioner in each target country, also two to three months in advance, and provide details of your product or service and your marketing plans. Outline what your objectives and expectations are for this visit. Let the trade commissioner know about your travel plans as soon as they have been finalized.
- When planning your itinerary use a reliable travel agent who can help you take advantage of the most efficient and economical travel routes. When you have approved the plan, make confirmed travel and hotel reservations and reconfirm them just before you leave.
- Carry a good supply of business cards printed in English or French and, if possible, in the language of the country you are visiting.
- Include a supply of business stationery, sales brochures, literature and photographs of your product for use abroad. A small dictaphone or recorder is handy for making on-the-spot notes to yourself on business details.
- Carry a list of C.I.F. prices for your products for each country on your itinerary as well as scheduled departures from major Canadian ports.
- Samples of your products, if feasible, or small gifts related to your product/service or to Canada are always appreciated by contacts. Check local customs on such items with your trade commissioner.
- Make sure that you have a valid Canadian passport and any visas required for your trip. Carry a few extra passport photos for additional visas that you may need. Also be sure to carry a record of immunization shots required for each country.
- Obtain an international driver's licence if you plan to use a car during your trip. If renting a car, reserve well in advance and reconfirm just before you leave.
- Take advantage of any memberships you may have in international service clubs — they can be an excellent means of making business contacts.
- Ask your bank manager to send a letter of introduction to a bank in each city you plan to visit. The letter can be helpful in checking references of potential customers and agents or if you run into unexpected financial difficulties.
- Background reading on the countries you plan to visit can make your trip easier. Such things as knowing the local dress codes, meal times, and how to address people will help eliminate small problems and earn you the good will of your hosts.