**Round-The-World (RTW) Trip Planning Timeline**

**Fourteen to six months in advance:**

* Get out your bucket list or top ten must-do lists and start thinking about where you’d like to go. Start tapping your significant other and friends for ideas and utilize the internet for inspiration. Put potential destinations in rough geographical order, check out weather patterns, get ideas of what you want to do while traveling and generally get excited about the whole thing. Remember it is a bit too early to be purchase tickets, so use this time to [decide upon your destinations](http://www.airtreks.com/ready/where-do-you-want-to-go/), outline your itinerary and set a budget – in other words, DREAM.
* [RoundtheWorldFlights.com](http://www.roundtheworldflights.com/) has plenty of videos on its [Youtube Channel](http://www.youtube.com/profile?gl=GB&user=RTWflights). There are blog entries that make for great reading and include some top tips on what or what not to do. There are plenty of other great travel blogs out there. Try [501Places](http://www.501places.com/) and [EverythingEverywhere](http://everything-everywhere.com/) and explore their favorite sites for others. Web forums, such as [Travellerspoint](http://www.travellerspoint.com/)  and [Lonely Planet’s Thorn Tree](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree/index.jspa?categoryID=1) are good for picking up tips and asking specific questions.
* To fully benefit and experience your trip as much as possible, it is recommended that you be physically fit and be able to walk a minimum of five miles a day. Begin a physical fitness routine that includes walking a minimum of **five miles a day.**
* Get a physical exam. If something physical is bothering you, get it checked out, fixed, or under control. If you take medications, get educated on what it takes to get the needed prescriptions for your trip. Talk to your doctor or health provider, insurance company, etc. and ask if you are covered while traveling. If not, get travel/health insurance.
* Start establishing what immunizations you will need for the countries you plan to visit and get an International Certificate of Vaccination card. [The Centers for Disease Control](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/) (CDC) web site and your physician can help you decide what immunizations you will need based on your past immunization schedule and what is required. Make sure all past and current vaccinations are noted by your doctor or immunization provider on the International Certificate of Vaccination card as this card will need to be presented in some countries along with your passport and/or visas before entry.
* Make a destination list, ranked by importance, interest and convenience. Then get a world map and plot them on the map.
* Research, and then prioritize your country and city list to decide which are included or omitted.
* Utilize [AirTreks](http://AirTreks) or [BootsnAll](http://www.bootsnall.com/) to price out different itineraries and get a feel for what each one costs based on what matters to you most: price, length, timing, destinations and route
* Use seasonality and websites like [What’s On When](http://www.whatsonwhen.com/sisp2/) and [Goby.com](http://www.goby.com/) to estimate when you want to be in different locations. This will also help you decide what to pack!
* Get involved with organizations such as [CouchSurfing](http://www.couchsurfing.com) or contact local tourism organizations that help travelers find what is going on in the communities you plan to visit.
* Dig a little farther – not all the best info is reachable through Google. Use the blogrolls from your favorite travel blogs and research there. Some of the best information can be found in [small-time travel blogs](http://www.airtreks.com/ready/other-considerations/travel-links-and-websites/) or [CouchSurfing.org](http://www.couchsurfing.com)
* Check that your passport valid for at least 6 months longer than your trip, renew it if it’s not and it’s best to do it early. Go to [Travel.State.gov/passport](http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html) to get the necessary information.
* This is also the time to determine what visas are needed and what the basic requirements are for each country. Travel.State.gov/visa will give you the information you will need. (Know that most visas are time sensitive, so don’t apply to soon or too late.)
* Set up Home-Base Supporter/Monitor/Travel Support teams. These are people you trust who will be your life line while you are traveling.
* Make a checklist of your important legal documents. Review them and, where appropriate, create these essential documents of update them. These include Last Will and Testament, living trusts, powers of attorney, etc. Make copies for distribution to key family members/friends and your Home-base Support team.
* Make a packing list of essential. If your trip is longer than a month, develop a list of things to include in care-packages that can be sent to you during your travels.
* Start planning your budget. Set price goals and think about adding 25% to it, just to be realistic.
* If planning to sell your house, arrange for it now or get the house ready for rent/lease.

 **Five to six months in advance:**

* Establish a banking relationship with an international banking company (HSBC, Bank of America, Barclays, etc.) and apply for a credit/debit card that can be used anywhere in the world or charge currency exchange fees.
* Establish online financial transaction tools with your bank for deposits, money transfers, bill paying (especially reoccurring utility, insurance, and mortgage bills), etc.
* Identify and confirm Home-base Supporters/Monitors/Travel Support team and their role. Prepare information packets for them that include itineraries, contact information, essential documents for emergencies, etc. (See Home-base Supporter Infrastructure handout.)
* Time to get the ball rolling! Select a travel route. You can go online to [BootsnAll](http://www.bootsnall.com/rtw/) or other resources to find out costs for yourself and compare. If you are so inclined, hire a RWT consultant to help put travel arrangements together or use them as a back-up if you want to do it on your own. Now is the time.
	+ Take as much time as you need when working with a travel consultant to get the trip you want. Ask many questions about:
		- travel costs: cheapest vs. best bang for the buck route, travel options (air, rail, drive, water etc.)
		- options for lodging, places to eat, points of interest, the challenges and opportunities where you are traveling
		- health alerts, visa requirements, cultural requirements and political situations.
		- Get a rough idea of how suitable your dream itinerary is and routing considerations. Just about every route can theoretically be done, but some are a lot cheaper than others. For example, if you want to island hop through the South Pacific, it will almost certainly work out a lot less expensive if you combine Samoa and Tonga rather than Samoa and Tahiti. Once you’ve got a rough idea of what you can and can’t do for the price, you can fine-tune your plans.
* Research necessary visas [Visa Central](http://zvs.com/) . *(Visa limitations often dictate travel dates.)* Get visa applications and fill them out when appropriate.
* Decide on your travel dates.
* Take the plunge – buy the tickets! (Don’t forget the insurance). There are lots of places to buy tickets and insurance such as AAA, your insurance broker, travel agents, travel services, etc. It is important to shop around and compare. <http://www.airtreks.com/set/insurance/>.
* If you haven’t already, check how long your passport is valid. As a general rule, you need to have a spare six months available from the date you come back. So, if yours expires without the six month cushion, get down to a photo booth, fill in the forms and send off for a new one.
* Check to make sure you are on schedule to have all your vaccinations completed by your departure date. Some vaccines have to be in series and the series sometimes require several week intervals or are not readily available. Check with your doctor, health clinic, pharmacist or the [CDC](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/) for specifics about vaccine schedules.
* If you haven’t started saving cash, this is the time. There is a temptation to regard the round-the-world flight ticket as your only big expense, but you will need some money to fall back on as during your travels and the more you can stick in the bank, the more you’ll be able to do while you’re away. The budgeting regime doesn’t have to be drastic, but saving your partying for the trip, eating in more regularly, making rather than buying lunchtime sandwiches and cutting down the alcohol intake and smoking will create a surprisingly large pot of cash for your trip.
* If you’re taking a break from work, negotiate the time off. If you’re quitting, leave the door open for a possible return and make sure you know what your notice period is.
* Secure required medication prescriptions and locations for filling them. Talk to both your doctor and the health insurance company to understand what can be done.
* At this point your exercise regimen should be well established. If not, get on it. The enjoyment and safety of the journey will be greatly improved the healthier you are.
* Start buying necessary luggage, clothing and other necessities needed for the trip. What you purchase will depend on the type of traveler you will become. *(see universal packing list and read #4 of the “Ten essential questions to answer before taking a RTW trip.)*

**Three to four months in advance:**

* Create a directory that includes where to find key and essential information, including itineraries, key contact information for travel support team and family members. Make copies for yourself, distribute to family and Home-base Support team and keep a copy on your Ipad, computer, or other electronic devices you will be using.
* Understand your physical capacity and, if you haven’t done it already, get a full physical. If you have established 5 miles a day walking regimen, include a backpack with the weight you plan to carry, if you’re taking one; include your purse, or equipment bag on your daily walks to be sure you can handle it.
* The hard part is done, it’s time to set up the other facets of the trip: where you’re staying, what you’ll be doing when you’re there, arranging tours, events, activities, down time, etc. *(see list of website that will help with lodging, tours and related travel services)*
* Tell your family and friends you’ll be out of town and give them the dates of your travel.
* You should have a valid passport (valid for at least 6 months beyond your last travel date). If not, get yours renewed now!
* Sort out what [visas](http://www.roundtheworldflights.com/travel-visas.aspx) you will need and how soon you can apply for them. Remember, without a valid passport you can’t get your visas. Many countries either give visas on entry or don’t require them. Others (such as the US and Australia) can be gotten pretty much instantly on the internet. Some, however, require you to send off your passport or even require your presents to apply for a visa. Countries likes of China, India, Brazil and Vietnam won’t let you in without that magic bit of paper.
* Understand what vaccinations you still need and schedule those that require a series so you will be ready before your trip. Keep in mind some prevention needs to be carefully timed with your departure and arrival times. For example, some malaria pills need to be ingested one week before departure, during the trip and one week after your return. Check with the [CDC](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/) to determine what immunizations are required and recommended in the countries you plan to visit.
* Add everything to your calendar. If you have specific things you want to see, get them in between flights. Make sure you have maps! Consider getting a handheld electronic device (iPad, tablet, small laptop computer, etc.) that can house your itinerary and daily schedule you can conveniently access.
* Buy or download guidebooks ([www.LonelyPlanet.com](http://www.LonelyPlanet.com), [www.Frommers.com](http://www.Frommers.com) [www.Fodors.com](http://www.Fodors.com), [www.ricksteves.com](http://www.ricksteves.com), etc.).
* Update you iPad apps or laptop computer software. Make sure you can access documents, maps, addresses, language translators, contact information, etc. Keep it current while travelling.
* Contact friends in faraway places to let them know you’re coming. No friends there? Try [www.couchsufing.com](http://www.couchsufing.com) or other travel sites that specialized in building relationships to meet new friends before you arrive.
* Begin to organize your life for an extended leave of absence. Decide upon how your life at home will be maintained. <AirTreks> offers some insights on what to do with your house/apt, bills, car, mail, pets, etc. and suggestions on setting up automatic bill pay, subletting, mail suspension. Best to get it done now.
* If so inclined setup a travel blog using [WordPress.com](http://wordpress.com/) or [Travelblog.com](http://www.travelblog.com/). Get a FaceBook or Twitter account and start letting people know they can follow you or contact you through the internet. Some may want to have more face-to-face contact consider using Skype. If Skype is the ticket, then set it up - it’s free!
* Finalize your contact information documents with current phone numbers, email addresses and other pertinent information. Don’t forget to add airline company, bank, credit card company and other customer service contacts to your list!
* Confirm all contacts for hotels, hostels and in country support like [Couch Surfing](http://www.couchsurfering.com) you will be using during your travel.
* Read [101 Things To Do Before Your Trip](http://news.airtreks.com/post/2010/07/101-things-to-do-before-your-trip/) to make sure you have thought of everything possible.
* Go over your itinerary with your travel partner(s) and your travel professional (if you have one) to do any further fine tuning and buy your personalized RTW ticket. Apply for frequent flier accounts with the airlines/airline alliance you’ll be using and get your number added to your ticket.
* If you’ve not done so already, buy some guidebooks (get them electrically) and give them a proper read to get an insight into the history and culture of the places you’ll be visiting – as well as getting ideas of what you want to see and do. Start penciling in a few probable highlights between the flights. Many of the travel guide books are available online and are downloadable.
* Start gathering items from your packing list of clothes, medications, first aid kit, equipment, etc.
* Prepare care packages to be mailed to you while travelling. (toilet paper, deodorant, Baby/handy-wipes, bar soap, etc.)
* If you haven’t already, get a credit card (Visa or MasterCard are most accepted) or an extra bank account with a globally recognized credit/debit card. Having a spare card can save an awful lot of pain if one goes missing or is stolen.
* Register to vote and request mail-in ballots.

**Two months in advance:**

* Collect needed medications and prescriptions. Make sure you understand the [TSA rules](http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/specialneeds/editorial_1059.shtm) about carrying prescriptions and over-the-counter medications.
* Take advantage of the time period between your major planning and the departure week to hone your travel skills. Take local trips, be a tourist in your hometown or simply take a planning break. Maybe watch some [travel movies or listen to some world music](http://www.airtreks.com/ready/why-we-love-to-travel/travel-media-music-books-and-movies/). You can also take this time to [set up a travel blog](http://www.airtreks.com/set/packing-gear-and-technology/travel-blogging-mobilemicromacro/), buy a [new camera](http://www.airtreks.com/set/packing-gear-and-technology/travel-cameras/) or read an [encouraging book](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0812992180?ie=UTF8&tag=airt0b-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0812992180).
* Request your sabbatical, give your resignation, or retire (gulp!).
* Keep walking 5 miles a day (with your backpack)!
* Begin applying for visas. If you are planning to work while traveling, apply for work permits.
* Get your International hostel card, if applicable.
* Get an international driver’s license, if applicable.
* Acquire extra passport photos just in case you need them later.
* Arrange for subletting, if you’re going that route.
* Organize your address book.
* If you want to use your own cell phone, check with your cellular provider to review the international calling options and roaming charges. Or, purchase an ‘unlocked’ phone that can use a country-specific SIM chips that can be purchased in the countries you will be visiting when you arrive.
* Review checklist and reconfirm commitments made by others to support your travels.
* Your online services should be working smoothly at this time. Check to be sure, if not get it that way…
* Arrange for dinner dates with family and friends you won’t see for a while.
* If you need to, hand in your notice on your rented accommodations, find tenants for the place you own, or sublet your apartment. Now is the time to do it. If you’re planning to sell, you probably should have done so before booking your tickets.
* Arrange for gym memberships, subscriptions, utility accounts – such as electricity, gas, telephone and the like - to be closed or put on “hold” for the duration of your trip.
* Contact any family, friends or friends-of-friends you may have in the places you’re visiting. Get tips, arrange to meet up and ask for whatever free accommodation you can wrangle.

**Four to six weeks in advance:**

* If you need immunizations, find out what you need and get it taken care now!
* Buy a [decent RTW  travel insurance](http://www.roundtheworldflights.com/round-the-world-insurance.aspx) that it covers you for the duration of your trip, all areas you’ll be visiting, and any risky activities (such as skydiving, scuba diving, etc.) you may intend to partake in. A cheap policy that leaves you uncovered can cost you far, far more in the long run.
* Start buying any specialty gear you want or need to take with you – be it clothing, walking boots, backpacks, a new camera, adaptors or toiletries. And, just as importantly, test that the electronics work and the rest are broken in before you leave. Don’t forget foreign electrical adapters and surge protector!
* Arrange for your mail services to be stopped or redirected and cancel any subscriptions. Be sure to tell everyone to the change.

**Three to four weeks in advance:**

* Confirm your accommodations, especially your first night away.
* Get your [travel vaccinations](http://www.airtreks.com/set/staying-healthy-on-the-road/) and immunization records up to date on your International Certificate of Vaccinations.
* Finalize your purchase of supplies, gear and clothing (backpacks/luggage, travel-wear, soap, personal ID, long white scarf, [travel mascot](http://www.flickr.com/groups/travelmascots/) etc.)
* If required, arrange for a medical appointment, secure prescriptions, and get your malaria tablets. If you’re immediately heading to a malarial zone, you’ll need to start taking them before you leave.
* Start embarking on your farewell tour – make sure you catch up with all the friends and family you want to see before you go.
* Work out how you’re going to get to the airport on the big day. If by train, now’s the cheapest time to book tickets. Make sure you factor in time for things to go wrong (train delays, traffic delays, shuttle service hours, etc.).
* Are you still walking five miles a day?
* If you have plants and pets, make arrangement someone to care for them or hire a boarding facility.

**Two weeks in advance:**

* Carefully read over to look for discrepancies and confirm your itinerary and reservations. The rest can be done on the road.
* Visualize yourself traveling in each place from day to day. This will help in acclimating yourself to the experience and also remind you of any last minute needs.
* Make copies or scans of important documents such as your passport, insurance policy, driving license, hostel card, visas and tickets. Give one copy to a family member, store one copy separately from your real documents in a safe part of your luggage and e-mail copies to yourself.
* Get any foreign cash and travelers cheques you’re planning to take through a bank or other financial institution. Be sure to give yourself time as some currencies need to be ordered.

**One week in advance:**

* Call your bank and credit card company to let them know you will be traveling and tell them what countries you will be visiting. Banks often freeze accounts when international charges start appearing out of the blue.
* Stop your mail.
* Start gathering things you’ll be taking and start the packing process. Get everything you’re taking with you and *do an inventory*. Keep that list with you throughout your trip so you can do counts along the way. This will keep your baggage within airline limits and also let you know right away if you’ve lost something. ***Tip:*** *Buddy packing: pack half of each person's things in the other's bag. That way, in the event a bag is lost (much less likely for the carry-on traveler), each of you will still have half of your necessities available.*

**Two days in advance:**

* Time to [reconfirm](http://www.airtreks.com/go/travel-documents/reconfirming-your-flights/) your first flight! (A good thing to do before every flight.)
* Jot down a reminder list for the night before your departure.
* Set up an out-of-town message on your email to let people know about a delay in responding.
* Check your itinerary in [View Trip](http://www.roundtheworldflights.com/Ticket-round-the-world-RTW-Booking.aspx)
* Start your diary of your trip. You will be grateful of being able to look back on your adventures. One option is to keep an online diary ([www.blogger.com](www.blogger.com%20) is simple and free) in order to share your experiences with friends and family back home and reassure them that you are safe and well.
* Pick up your foreign cash/travelers cheques. Consider having foreign ‘pocket change’ for your first destination for tips, snacks, sundries, etc.
* Do your laundry.
* Don’t forget to breathe! Take a sleep aide if necessary. Anxiety overload can keep you from accurately gauging what’s left to do.
* Finish any last minute packing.
* Balance your bank accounts.
* Empty your wallet (except with things for the trip).
* Leave expensive watches, jewelry other expensive items at home or in your safety deposit box.
* Pay the rent and other necessary bills.
* Water and fertilize your plants. Have all necessary instructions and supplies out and available for the person who will be taking care of them.
* Play with your pets and plan their care for while you’re gone. Make notes of any toys, routines, medical conditions, habits, etc. that your care taker may need to know. Give the care taker the name and phone number for your veterinarian.
* Turn down the temperature on your water heater. Set your homes thermostat.
* Store away things that might be easy to steal.
* Empty your refrigerator of perishables.
* Fill in your tax return form.

**One day in advance:**

* Pack it up! Checklist in hand, [load up that luggage](http://www.airtreks.com/set/packing-gear-and-technology/whathow-to-pack/). Don’t forget to weigh your bags and check [Luggage Limits.](http://www.airtreks.com/Redirect.aspx?DIR=outbound&AFFID=AIRTREKS&DST=PAGE_NAME&GOTOPAGE=http://www.luggagelimits.com/) Checking everything off against your list.
* Make any last minute phone calls.
* Hug your family, friends and pets.
* Charge all your electric gadgets - camera/laptop/music player batteries etc.
* [Look wistfully to the future](http://www.airtreks.com/ready/why-we-love-to-travel/17-reasons-why-travel-is-good-for-you/).
* Celebrate! But resist the urge to get absolutely hammered. Being violently hung-over on a long distance flight is an excruciating experience. Remember, alcohol increases the effects of [jet lag](http://news.airtreks.com/post/2010/02/how-to-defeat-jet-lag-once-and-for-all/).
* Check in online – it’ll save you a lot of time at the airport, allow you to update your seating assignment and allow you to pay for any baggage charges, sometime at a discount.
* If you haven’t done so already, you can exchange currency at an airport kiosk for the host country to will be visiting.
* Set your alarm! Make sure you know how much time you will need to get up and out the door. Remember, foreign travel check-in takes longer than for domestic travel. Arrive at the airport well in advance to allow for delays.

**Day of departure:**

* Eat well and drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration. You’ll need the carbohydrates and hydration. Make sure to have a nourishing meal before your flight but don’t eat too much or you will feel bloated on the plane. Again, alcohol is a sure-fire way to deepen jet lag, which can be debilitating upon arrival in a new country. You’ll need your faculties for the unexpected - prepare for it!
* Feel free to scream with excitement – the adventure of a lifetime starts today!

**Post departure:**

* Reconfirm your flights and accommodations two to three days before each flight (see above).
* Take lots of pictures.
* Blog often.
* Have fun and enjoy life! You’ve earned it.