

Travelling For Carnival?

Follow our advice for a safe and happy trip

Carnivals take place throughout the year; a popular carnival season falls between February and March. Careful preparation and planning helps travellers enjoy a safe and healthy carnival trip.

Key Messages

Pregnant women and their male partners should check our [Zika virus \(ZIKV\) update to guidance](#) news item.

Public Health England currently advise that pregnant women should postpone non-essential travel to 'high risk areas' until after pregnancy. They should consider postponing non-essential travel to 'moderate risk' areas until after pregnancy.

Check NaTHNaC's [Country Information pages](#) for vaccine and malaria advice.

Follow [insect bite avoidance advice](#) day and night.

Get travel health insurance.

Be safe—watch out for accidents, injuries and theft.

Be SunSmart—protect your skin from the sun.

Be responsible for your alcohol intake.

Practise safer sex.

See your GP, nurse, pharmacist or travel clinic or to see if you need malaria protection and to check all recommended vaccines are in date before you go - it's never too late.

Before travel

Do your research!

Check the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office \(FCO\) website](#) for up-to-date safety advice and travel entry requirements for your destination.

Vaccines and malaria

Outbreaks of yellow fever have recently been reported worldwide. Please check the Important News and Outbreaks sections on our [Country Information pages](#) for current updates, newly affected risk

areas and yellow fever vaccine recommendations.

See your doctor, nurse or pharmacist as soon as possible to discuss travel health advice, including any vaccine and malaria tablets recommendations, as appropriate.

Malaria is a serious, potentially fatal, illness spread by night biting mosquitoes. Antimalarial tablets are recommended for some regions of the world. See our [Country Information pages](#) for malaria advice at your destination.

Travelling last minute? – it's never too late to get advice: most vaccines can be given at short notice and antimalarial tablets, if recommended, can be started just before travel, including on the day you travel.

Travel health insurance

Many countries have no reciprocal health care agreement with the UK, so you must get comprehensive medical insurance (including cover for medical evacuation costs) before you go. Remember – tell your insurance company about any pre-existing conditions and medicines you are taking.

Medicines

Take a good supply of any regular medicines, as they may not be readily available. Fake drugs may be an issue, so it is always better to travel with your own supply of medicines. Advice on [transportation of personal medication by travellers](#) is on our website.

First aid kits

Carry a kit of first aid essentials, including sunscreen, painkillers, antiseptic, insect repellent and anti-diarrhoea tablets. These will be useful wherever you're going. If you're going to remote areas, take a kit with basic sterile medical equipment like needles and syringes. Then, if you need urgent treatment, you can ask your nurse or doctor to use this, as sterile equipment may not be available. These kits are usually available from travel clinics and larger chemists.

During travel

Food and water hygiene

Follow good [food and water hygiene advice](#). Diarrhoea is common in travellers and could spoil your trip. Avoid dehydration - drink plenty of water from a safe source and buy diarrhoea self-treatment medicine from a UK chemist before you go. If you have bloody diarrhoea, a fever or cannot keep fluids down, you must get urgent medical help.

Insect bites

Diseases spread by mosquitoes, such as [chikungunya](#), [dengue](#), [malaria](#), [yellow fever](#) and [Zika](#) are common in many popular carnival destinations. Some of these illnesses have no vaccines or drugs to prevent them, so avoiding mosquito bites is the only way to protect yourself. The “Other Risks” section on individual [country pages](#) highlights specific insect spread risks in that region.

Follow [insect bite avoidance measures](#) day and night; use insect repellents, cover up, and sleep under an intact mosquito net if you are not staying in air-conditioned accommodation. Remember, to prevent malaria, you may need antimalarial tablets.

Rabies

[Rabies](#), a fatal illness spread by animals, is reported in many countries that celebrate carnival. You are at risk if an animal bites or scratches you, licks broken skin or spits in your face. Any animal, including pets and domestic animals, can have rabies, so avoid contact with wild or domestic animals. After an animal bite, scratch, or lick: wash any wounds thoroughly with soap and water and seek urgent medical help.

Sun protection

The sun is likely to be much stronger in many carnival destinations. Try to keep cool, seek shade, drink plenty of water and avoid excessive alcohol. Limit your exposure; use an SPF 30 or above (UVA/UVB) sunscreen (reapply frequently), wear sunglasses, a hat and protective clothes. See NaTHNaC's [Sun protection information](#) for more advice.

Medical care

Many countries worldwide do not provide free healthcare. Private hospitals will not usually treat you unless you have proof that you can pay. Remember to contact your insurance and medical assistance company promptly if you are admitted to a clinic or hospital. Health facilities in remote regions or small islands may be very basic.

Sex, body piercing and tattoo risks

Carnival is a time for fun, but it's important to protect your health while enjoying yourself. Carry condoms and use one every time you have sex. This helps protect you from sexually transmitted infections (including HIV) which are more common in some world regions. Think carefully before getting a tattoo or body piercing while you are away, as unhygienic equipment can pass on HIV, hepatitis B and C. These serious infections can also be picked up by injecting illegal drugs.

Safety and security

Carnival destinations can experience high levels of crime and violence, especially in the bigger cities. Take care; be sensitive to your surroundings and alert to the risk of overcrowding and opportunistic crime. Avoid secluded areas and poorly lit places, try to avoid going out on your own – be vigilant at all times. Try to get immediate police and medical assistance if you are the victim of any kind of attack, including sexual assault. The [FCO can help support you following sexual assault abroad](#).

Road safety

Many carnival destinations have a high road accident rate and road quality can be poor. Avoid driving on unfamiliar and/or rural roads, especially at night and take care as a driver, passenger and pedestrian.

Water safety

Never swim after drinking alcohol or taking drugs, check water depth before jumping or diving into a pool and get local advice about currents and tides before swimming in the sea. You are at a risk of a parasite called bilharzia (schistosomiasis) in many regions in the Caribbean, Central and South America, so freshwater swimming or wading in rivers, streams or lakes, is not recommended. Swimming in chlorinated pools and in the sea does not put you at risk of bilharzia.

Drugs

You are strongly advised not to engage in any illegal drug use. Most Caribbean and Central and South American countries have very severe legal penalties for drug possession and/or use. European countries may have less strict laws, but many are likely to be stricter than the UK.

After travel

If you have any symptoms, like fever, flu-like illness or persistent diarrhoea, get immediate medical help. Make sure your doctor knows which country you have visited for carnival. If you travelled to malarial areas, an urgent malaria test must be arranged. This is important, even if you took antimalarial tablets and have been home for a while. If you had unprotected sex while you were away or think you might have a sexually transmitted infection, HIV or other infection, see your GP or go to a sexual health clinic as soon as possible.

Have a safe and healthy carnival!

Resources

- [Diseases transmitted by insects and ticks in the Americas](#)
- [FCO - Helping British people overseas: travelling and living abroad](#)

- [Food and water hygiene](#)
- [NHS Choices: Sex activities and risk](#)
- [Personal safety](#)
- [Sun protection](#)
- [Travellers' diarrhoea](#)
- [Zika virus \(ZIKV\) update to guidance](#)

REFERENCES

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