

You're moving to Saipan!!! You have made a wonderful decision!

### What Should I bring?

There are lots of bike races (road bike and mountain bike) and several triathlons here and on guam. Bring your bike and bring good running shoes if these are things you enjoy. You can buy reasonable bikes here, but they're full price and VERY limited in selection. Good shoes are hard to find.

Also bring good aqua shoes (like teva hiking sandals or the ones pictured below). The beaches are often covered in coral and several hikes end on the beach so you end up hiking in your aqua shoes. It is amazing how often I find myself in a bathing suit and aqua shoes. The ones here on saipan are cheap (\$9) and fall apart, but can last a month or two so if you're here short term it might be a good option.



Bring the clothes you think you'll need because there is really no place to buy them on saipan. Many stores on the mainland (Jcpenney, H&M, Macy's, Amazon, Gap) will ship here, though. Mostly we wear shorts, tank tops, t shirts, bathing suits, skirts and sun dresses. Bring a few long sleeved shirts and hoodies for the hospital. The hospital can be very cold and you'll want them under your scrubs. If you're in the ER, you'll wear scrubs. If you're in the clinic, you can wear scrubs or professional-ish street clothes. I have five 3/4 length shirts --again, it can be really cold so layering is good--and 4 pairs of slacks and linen pants and I just wear those all the time.

If you like being in the water, bring at least 3 bathing suits. The sun and salt water kill them and you tend to wear them ALOT here--hiking, swimming, etc etc etc.

The tap water is pretty strong here in terms of minerals and chlorine and destroys most really nice clothes. No one wears really nice clothes anyway. You'll need a couple nice dresses (there are a few "balls" that benefit some local ecological societies that everyone goes to) but leave clothes that you absolutely love at home as their life will be short lived here. Also, if you need to go home for a wedding or interview or something YOU CAN'T really shop for stuff like that here, so bring one of each thing to cover your bases. In a pinch Guam has a Ross, the biggest Kmart

in the world and some good outlets, so if you don't want to worry about bringing a bunch of stuff now, you could always take a flight ~\$200, 40 mins over there on a weekend once you get your bearings, to pick up what you need in terms of clothing, etc.

You can find basic toiletries here (dove body wash, pantene or herbal essence shampoo), its just a bit more expensive. Amazon pantry often ships here so that is also an option. I wouldn't fill your suitcase with toiletries unless you use something specific/hard to find. The difference in price isn't worth it.

Dishes and houseware items you can get here. Don't bring them.

You need no more than one pair of jeans. You will never wear them unless you travel.

When the temp drops to 75 degrees (from the usual 80-85) and the trade winds start in February, you will find yourself mysteriously "Saipan cold", no matter where you are from. At that time you might actually have another occasion to wear hoodies and long sleeved shirts.

Bring a thick jacket and a few cold weather outfits. If you explore south east asia (you can get flights to Seoul, korea for \$200!! RT) or shoot home for a wedding or something you will be dying without them!

Lights go out here more often than at home and we also get Typhoons/hurricanes. This happens maybe once every few months, so not bad. Bring a headlamp.

### **Should I Join a Certain Bank?**

As for banking, I HIGHLY recommend getting a Charles schwab account before you come (or any other that has no ATM fees/no foreign transaction fees) . On Saipan there are no international or currency conversion fees when it comes to credit cards (because we use US dollars and are technically the US) but there are only a couple of bank ATMs available on island (Bank of Hawaii, Bank of Guam, Bank of Saipan, First Hawaiian). Your options are to get a local bank or get one on the mainland that you can use here. Schwab charges no foreign ATM fees and actually REFUND up to \$14/month of fees charged by use of any other ATMS (including international). Basically I just use my card at the closest ATM—even MORE convenient than if I were part of a local bank. The hospital is able to direct deposit my paychecks into my mainland Schwab account. You can take pictures of checks via their app to deposit money. It was really fast to apply, just don't let schwab or anyone else know you'll be abroad semi permanently. Just let them know you "travel alot."

### **How do you suggest we bring our bikes? Is that something that airlines will allow us to check?**

You can have your bike boxed at a bike store (even if it isn't new), they'll just use one of their retail bike cardboard boxes and will minimally dismantle your bike. Then you just take it on the plane with you as a checked bag. That's what I did. You can either put it back together when you get here--you're welcome to borrow my tools--or I can send you in the direction of my bike guy.

Alternatively, you can buy a more standard plastic reusable bike box for travel. All of the airlines charge "sports equipment fees" This is infuriating because often the bike boxes can be as small as standard suitcases. I think United charged something like \$270 on my way to Saipan from SF. This is still entirely worth it because what you can buy here is mostly terrible in quality or double the price of what is at home. Heads up though, if you stop in Tokyo, Hawaii, Guam or anywhere else for more than 24 hours, they will charge you an ADDITIONAL fee for the next leg of your trip. Yet another option is to visit the Giant Brand bike store in Seoul, Korea. Their bikes are reasonably priced and Jeju air (\$200 RT tix from Saipan) supposedly charges TEN DOLLAR bike fee to bring them back to Saipan. A colleague recently did this and was very happy. When I tried to do it the box was just a little beyond the size listed on their website so I lost my nerve at the shop.

### **Any recommendations on cell phone service?**

Whatever cell plan you have in the states will be basically worthless here. Only Docomo and IT&E work here. If you have an unlocked phone, you can simply get a sim from either one of those companies when you arrive and use it in your phone. I have docomo and about half of my friends have IT&E. I had docomo for the first 2 years but as of September 2016, IT&E is offering such amazing plans that I changed! I get 3GB LTE data, then unlimited 3 or 4G data, unlimited calls and texts on saipan and the Mainland USA for \$40/month!!!! I am SOOOO connected!! **Your cellphone service MUST unlock your current phone if requested. They “process the request” for 7 days though so ask in advance.** You can always borrow my unlocked phone for the first couple of days and then just use the same sim once your phone is unlocked.

### **Does one service work better than the other when traveling abroad?**

If you are planning on staying on saipan long term but will be traveling back and forth to visit the mainland, I'd recommend getting a T mobile sim. You just put money on your account and If you are on the mainland and use your phone with that sim in, it'll cost \$3/day for unlimited data, texts and calls or if you are

there for a month you can change it to a monthly plan \$54/month with more limited data and calls. It only charges when you are using it and if you put \$100 on the account, it keeps for 365 days even without use. They have great coverage in Europe and asia. Roaming texts are usually ~ 50 cents and calls are more in the range of \$1.50-\$2/minute. Sometimes I just buy a local sim if I have friends I'll be meeting and expect to be chatting a lot.

### **What about internet plans?**

You do have a few options when it comes to internet. If you do get fancy internet on your phone that is fairly ample, you can make your phone a "hotspot" and use it on your computer. You can also purchase a mobile "mifi" for something like \$50 a month for a certain number of GB. You can carry that with you everywhere and get supposedly 4G internet wherever you are. It seems variable by location. Home internet is currently only offered by IT&E and is expensive (~\$75-\$150) for variable quality, but the quality is rapidly improving as the economy improves on the island right now. Some parts of the island it runs fast and great and less so on others. You don't at all need to have the same company for internet and phone.

**Also, we will be in the market for a car, new or used, any recommendations?  
We are simple people and are likely looking for something small and cheap  
just to quickly get to and from the hospital while on call, groceries, etc.**

I got my FIRST car (2006 Hyundai Sonata with rust spots) from DPA car mart , which is on the map. They have variable stock. Garage Sale

Saipan <http://garagesale.saipan.com> is another place to buy used cars by owner. The best is always just to buy from someone leaving at the time you arrive so you know more of the history. You'll have to see about that closer to the time you get here. Cars are definitely not my strong suit since I was car-free for the first 35 years of my life (lived abroad, NYC, and SF). Worst case, you guys can rent a car for a bit while you find a good option.

As of Sept 2016 I have just bought a new Toyota Yaris. Buying ANY car is slightly more expensive here (shipping your car here is ~\$3000, so think about doing that keeping in mind all cars are more expensive because of this). Most people who live in Saipan, return to the states and move back to saipan bring their cars the second time around.

Buying a new car is slightly less stressful because prices are non-negotiable. Wait for a sale. I love the guys at Toyota.

**Any help with the house/apartment search would be very much welcome, there is next to nothing available online.**

Absolutely! This is really tough to try to do from the states and with the opening of the new casino and the HUGE influx of Chinese who are working there, housing is very difficult to find. According to my old landlord , the old apartment buildings I lived in prior to the typhoon are being renovated. They have a lovely ocean view and breeze, are a 2 minute drive from the hospital and should be shiny and new. He says they may be available by Spring 2017. My apartment area right now (april 2017) has two open 2 bedrooms. This is where Mike and Heather live and where Jason will be moving as well (he fell in love with Heather and mike's 3 bedroom and snagged the one next door). Rent would probably be ~\$1200 a month, there's an ocean view and a little tennis court and its about an 8 minute drive from the hospital. We all do our own thing but occasionally invite each other for dinner or I go play with Mike and heather's cats when I need to. Totally understand if you want more of a separation from work though. I'll also be keeping my ears open for other options. Housing options should hopefully get more plentiful as post-typhoon repairs finish up.

**Also, are there any small houses that may be available for rent?**

Most of the houses are being bought by Best Sunshine, the casino. It's a huge problem. I have no knowledge of any open ones right now, but an agent would be best for that. I have friends looking at houses now and can give you the name of their agent. You can buy a house on the island, but you can only LEASE THE LAND from a local for up to 55 years. Several colleagues do own houses. At the end of the 55 years you can either extend the lease or it goes back to the family. Technically you could destroy the house since you own that. It's a weird thing to prevent what happened in Hawaii--none of the natives can actually afford to own property on their island.

**We're wondering about the most economical way to ship things that we cannot bring in our checked bags.**

Amazon ships here! People have Netflix and most can stream and I even joined...enter 2002...a Video rental club to rent DVDs! I bought my dvd player on island. A few dollars more than on amazon but I wanted it right then. You can buy small electronics all over the island (I bought most of mine at Fake K mart) or amazon shipped them. Amazon ships large orders for like \$1 each item shipping. The tricky thing is, you never know if an item will actually ship

to saipan (no matter what they say, even if you click on "ships to northern mariana islands items" unless you choose a saipan address and almost check out. What we all do----and this takes a little patience but, hey, island time, right?--is you put the same or similar items in your cart from multiple sellers, try to check out with Saipan address and the first thing that will happen is it will mark items in red that can't ship, so you delete those from your cart. Then , of the ones that will ship, I make sure "group into the smallest number of packages" is clicked and I look at the shipping cost and I delete each item to see how much that one is contributing to shipping. I just did this looking for food processors and an extra electric kettle yesterday (I want red ones and fake kmart only has black) and all of them ended up being \$1, but occasionally you'll have a seller that charges like \$10, so you make sure you don't buy from them. What I would do is go to amazon right now, put a bunch of stuff in your cart and use my PO box address as your checkout address (it is listed Under Basic Life things in the Map under PO Box for future reference PMB 3782 Box 10002 Saipan, MP 96950). See what you can find of what you need.

Books are heavy. My ER friends from UCSF , Nick and his wife Kate, are both super studious and brought some pretty huge books with them. Nick was just commenting on how little he uses them since he often just finds himself looking things up online--you tube for procedures etc. I brought 3 small books--a tropical medicine one, emergency peds, and Bright futures-- and have opened them never. We have a ton of Harriet lanes floating around the clinic and hospital. I have a soft copy of a ton of books from when I worked in Ethiopia before this with baylor global health corps. I took a screenshot of all of my soft book copies--including Nelson's 19th edition--and attached below. I can give them to you when you arrive. I also have a soft copy of Uptodate 2011. All of this is WAY more useful than having books that you left at the hospital and now you're home or books at home while you're at the hospital. Tongwooi, my former saipan peds colleague who is just waiting to finish endocrine fellowship so she can come back in 2 years, got a subscription to uptodate while she was here and I decided to split it with her. It dies at the end of the month. I was thinking of signing up again. It costs \$500/year but I used it every day.

**Basically, Yes. Clothes and a bike (and good water shoes!) are most important things you can't easily get here. And anything sentimental. I didn't ship stuff here, so I'm not sure about cost of large boxes. I had a family reunion 3 months after starting work (we meet up at Disney every other Thanksgiving--happening again this year) so I just brought back what I needed then. A great thing to know is that the flat rate shipping boxes that you can get at USPS --I think they're like \$12, \$15, \$17 SHIP FOR THE SAME COST ALL THE WAY TO SAIPAN SINCE IT IS STILL TECHNICALLY WITHIN THE US!!**

When I've gone back to the mainland and bought a bunch of clothes, I've rolled them tight while I was traveling and shipped them for \$12 across the ocean no problem! Took a month to get here that time though. no weight restriction! Once it took 1.5 weeks when I mailed my macy's duvet to my mom and she flat rate sent it. One couple that did ship a ton of boxes were told it would take a month and IT TOOK THREE. Everything eventually gets here, it just really could be 2weeks to three months.

I think Walmart might ship to Saipan. For everything, you can always go to the site and try to make a shipment with my PO box above!

**For larger items, Triple B forwarders is a great option.** You can mail things to their office in California and then they ship either through Air Freight or Boat Freight (they can give you estimates on both by weight/size). Their website is <http://www.tripleb.com/locations/saipan.php>

JCPenny ships for free to saipan on anything over \$100. This is awesome for housewares, clothes, decorations etc. Occasionally they'll have an item that says "won't ship to that location" but I've even shipped myself multiple carpets! Nick and Kate just went domestic crazy on JCPenny. They also regularly do large amazon shipments. Macy's was a little bit more glitchy. It kept thinking I was doing something fraudulent. I think i did finally have success when I called and ordered through customer service. Gap, Old Navy and a ton of clothing stores do ship here for pretty minimal shipping. I just hate not trying on clothes before buying and not being able to easily return.