



Vanguard TEFL

First 90 Days Abroad Survival Kit

Pre-Departure Checklist

- Check passport validity (at least 6 months).
- Obtain required visas.
- Update vaccinations & secure travel/health insurance.
- Set up ID.me for veteran travel discounts.
- Scan important documents & store digitally.

Packing Lists by Climate

Tropical Regions: Light clothing, mosquito repellent, teaching props.

Cold/Seasonal: Layers, insulated jacket, indoor shoes.

Teaching Essentials: Flashcards, markers, USB drive, lightweight laptop.

First Week Priorities

- Register with local authorities if required.
- Open a local bank account.
- Purchase a SIM card or portable Wi-Fi.

- Map your commute to work.

Housing Without Scams

- Use trusted listing sites and expat Facebook groups.
- Avoid paying large deposits before seeing the property.
- Have contracts translated before signing.

Budget Planning – Month 1 to 3

- Research cost of living in your region.
- Set aside emergency cash for at least one month's expenses.
- Track spending to adjust budget.

Veteran-Specific Relocation Advice

- Set up VA mail forwarding before departure.
- Learn how to access VA benefits overseas.
- Connect with local veteran communities for networking.



First 90 Days Abroad – Addendum

Specific Providers, Banking Tips, and Country Vaccination Checklist Templates

Virtual Mail & Mail Forwarding Providers

- **iPostal1** – Large address network; scanning, forwarding, check deposit (USPS Form 1583 required).
- **Anytime Mailbox** – Many low-cost locations; scanning & forwarding, mobile app.
- **Earth Class Mail** – Premium service; check deposit, integrations (higher cost).
- **Traveling Mailbox** – Good international forwarding rates; scanning & secure PDF delivery.
- **US Global Mail** – Expats-focused; consolidated forwarding, check deposit, virtual address.
- **PostScan Mail** – Budget-friendly; scanning, shredding, forwarding.
- **VirtualPostMail (VPM)** – Strong for businesses; virtual address & registered agent options.

Note: All US virtual mailbox providers that receive mail on your behalf are CMRAs and require **USPS Form 1583** with ID verification (often via online notary). Keep a copy with your records.

Banking & Payments Abroad — Avoid Card Freezes

- Set a **travel notice** with your bank/credit card before departure and keep the app installed for approvals.
- Bring at least **two cards** (different networks) and store a backup separately.
- Enable **two-factor authentication** with email or authenticator app (SMS may fail overseas).
- Consider a cross-border account like **Wise** or **Revolut** for local currency and low-fee withdrawals.
- Know **daily ATM limits** and fees; prefer bank ATMs inside branches.
- Save your bank's **international fraud phone** number in your contacts.
- Download statements and keep a small emergency cash reserve for the first month.

Phone & eSIM Options

- Keep your US number active for logins; set a **SIM PIN** to reduce port-out risk.

- Use an **eSIM** for instant data on arrival (e.g., Airalo, Nomad, Holafly) or buy a local SIM after landing.
- If relying on SMS 2FA, add a backup method (email/Authenticator app) before you travel.

Vaccinations & Health Requirements — How to Check

Requirements and recommendations change. Use official sources and a travel clinic for personalized advice. Start at least 6–8 weeks before departure.

- **CDC Travelers' Health** — Country pages with required/recommended vaccines and health notices.
- **WHO International Travel & Health** — Global guidance and disease updates.
- **NHS Fit for Travel (UK)** — Clear country-by-country recommendations.

Commonly recommended for many destinations: routine boosters (MMR, Tdap), Hepatitis A, Typhoid; sometimes Hepatitis B, Rabies, or Japanese Encephalitis depending on activities/region. Confirm with an expert.

Country Vaccination Checklist — Templates

Japan

Required on Entry (e.g., Yellow Fever if arriving from risk areas):	
Recommended (per CDC/WHO/NHS):	
Personal Risk Factors / Clinic Advice:	
Pre-Departure Tasks (clinic appt, records uploaded to cloud):	
Links Checked (CDC / WHO / NHS):	

South Korea

Required on Entry (e.g., Yellow Fever if arriving from risk areas):	
Recommended (per CDC/WHO/NHS):	
Personal Risk Factors / Clinic Advice:	
Pre-Departure Tasks (clinic appt, records uploaded to cloud):	
Links Checked (CDC / WHO / NHS):	

Thailand

Required on Entry (e.g., Yellow Fever if arriving from risk areas):	
Recommended (per CDC/WHO/NHS):	
Personal Risk Factors / Clinic Advice:	
Pre-Departure Tasks (clinic appt, records uploaded to cloud):	
Links Checked (CDC / WHO / NHS):	

Vietnam

Required on Entry (e.g., Yellow Fever if arriving from risk areas):	
Recommended (per CDC/WHO/NHS):	
Personal Risk Factors / Clinic Advice:	
Pre-Departure Tasks (clinic appt, records uploaded to cloud):	
Links Checked (CDC / WHO / NHS):	

Spain

Required on Entry (e.g., Yellow Fever if arriving from risk areas):	
Recommended (per CDC/WHO/NHS):	
Personal Risk Factors / Clinic Advice:	
Pre-Departure Tasks (clinic appt, records uploaded to cloud):	
Links Checked (CDC / WHO / NHS):	

Vanguard TEFL – Visa Guide

Thailand

Visa Type: Non-Immigrant B (Work Visa) – must be paired with a Work Permit Requirements: Bachelor's degree (any field), 120-hour TEFL, clean criminal background, health check, authenticated documents, employer's letter/invitation, passport (6-month validity), photos. Employer handles work permit and teaching license. Processing: 5–15 business days; initial 90-day stay extendable in-country. Pro Tip: Start degree legalization early; avoid entering on a tourist visa if possible.

Czech Republic

Visa Types: Zivno (Self-Employment Visa) or Employee Card (employer-sponsored). Requirements: Bachelor's degree + TEFL (120+ hours), clean criminal check, apostilled & translated documents, proof of health insurance & funds (~\$8K), housing contract. Often native/advanced English required. Processing: Usually starts on tourist visa, final approval takes 2–3 months. Pro Tip: Visa-assistance services can speed the process; some employers sponsor directly.

Spain

Visa Options: Student Visa (up to 20 hrs/week teaching), Cultural Assistant Programs, or Work Visa. Requirements: Bachelor's degree or enrollment in study program, TEFL certificate, clean background check. Processing: Apply via consulate after securing acceptance into a program or job. Pro Tip: Student visa is easier than work visa; government Cultural Assistant program is well-established.

South Korea

Visa Type: E-2 (Foreign Language Instructor). Requirements: Bachelor's degree, native English proficiency, background & health check, sealed transcripts, copy of degree, signed contract, embassy interview. Processing: Employer applies for Certificate of Eligibility, then teacher applies for visa. Pro Tip: Use reputable recruiters and schools for smooth COE issuance.

Japan

Visa Types: Instructor Visa (public schools) or Specialist in Humanities (private academies). Requirements: Bachelor's degree, TEFL/TESOL (~120 hours), job offer with employer sponsorship, COE issuance. Processing: Employer arranges COE; applicant applies at Japanese consulate. Pro Tip: Some may qualify for Working Holiday Visa depending on nationality and age.

China

Visa Type: Z (Work Visa). Requirements: Bachelor's degree, TEFL certificate, clean criminal/health check, employer invitation & COE, document legalization/translation. Processing: Can take up to 3 months. Pro Tip:

Work only with reputable agencies/schools to avoid contract issues.

UAE / Dubai

Visa Type: Employer-sponsored Work Permit & Residency Visa. Requirements: Bachelor's degree, TEFL certificate, often prior teaching experience, health screening. Processing: Usually within weeks; employer handles most paperwork. Pro Tip: International schools offer best salary and benefits packages.

Vietnam

Visa Type: Work Visa & Temporary Residence Card. Requirements: Bachelor's degree, TEFL certificate, background check, job offer, medical exam. Processing: Often starts with business visa then converted in-country. Pro Tip: Vietnam is degree-flexible in some cases, but work legally to avoid fines.

Vanguard TEFL – Cultural Briefing: Staying Out of Trouble

Quick, practical country notes to avoid fines, arrest, deportation, or contract issues.

Japan

Dress Code

- Modest, neutral-toned workwear; cover tattoos when possible.
- Remove shoes indoors; keep socks clean and intact.

Behavior

- Keep voices low on trains; avoid phone calls/eating on transit.
- Queue politely; be punctual.
- **[HIGH RISK]** Openly showing tattoos in baths/onsen may lead to refusal of entry.

Social Norms

- Light bow when greeting; exchange business cards with two hands.
- Carry trash until you find a bin; no littering.

Legal Notes

- Zero tolerance for drugs; possession can mean detention/deportation.
- Cycling rules are enforced (lights at night, no phone while cycling).
- **[HIGH RISK]** Working on a tourist visa; overstays are taken very seriously.

South Korea

Dress Code

- Conservative at work; cover shoulders and avoid low-cut tops.
- Tattoos are more accepted but still cover in professional settings.

Behavior

- Avoid loud conversations on public transit; offer seats to elderly.
- Drinking culture is common—pace yourself and stay respectful.

Social Norms

- Use two hands when giving/receiving items; respect hierarchy.

- Remove shoes in homes and some venues.

Legal Notes

- Illegal drugs carry severe penalties; DUI limits are strict.
- Visa status tied to employer; do not work outside your visa.
- [HIGH RISK] Public disturbance or altercations; can lead to arrest/deportation.

China

Dress Code

- Smart-casual for work; conservative in schools and public offices.

Behavior

- Avoid public political discussions; be mindful of social media.
- Respect queuing and local customs; cashless payments are common.

Social Norms

- Gift-giving and banquets have etiquette; follow host's lead.

Legal Notes

- Strict drug laws with severe penalties; VPN use exists in a gray area.
- Register residence with police within required timeframe after arrival.
- [HIGH RISK] Teaching on a tourist/business visa; ensure proper Z-visa and residence permit.

Thailand

Dress Code

- Neat, modest attire for school; cover shoulders and knees.
- Beachwear only at beaches/pools.

Behavior

- Do not disrespect the monarchy; avoid heated public arguments.
- Remove shoes in temples/homes; dress modestly at religious sites.

Social Norms

- Wai greeting (palms together) is common; avoid touching heads.

Legal Notes

- Vaping/e-cigarettes can be illegal; large fines/confiscation.
- Overstaying visas leads to fines, blacklisting.
- [HIGH RISK] Drunk driving and disorderly conduct; serious penalties.

Vietnam

Dress Code

- Smart-casual at schools; modest clothing in temples.

Behavior

- Traffic is chaotic—use crosswalks carefully; helmet on motorbikes.
- Avoid public arguments; keep valuables secure.

Social Norms

- Respect elders; avoid overt public displays of affection in rural areas.

Legal Notes

- Work only with proper permits/TRC; police checks do happen.
- Drugs carry harsh penalties.
- [HIGH RISK] Driving without proper license/registration; frequent enforcement.

UAE / Dubai

Dress Code

- Public places: shoulders/knees covered; avoid tight/revealing clothing.
- Swimwear only at pools/beaches; cover up when leaving.
- [HIGH RISK] Wearing very revealing outfits in malls or public areas.

Behavior

- Avoid public displays of affection; no profanity or rude gestures.
- Be respectful during Ramadan (no eating/drinking in public daylight).
- [HIGH RISK] Kissing in public; can lead to fines/arrest.

Social Norms

- Photography: do not photograph strangers without consent.
- Be mindful of religious sites and prayer times.

Legal Notes

- Alcohol only in licensed venues; DUI penalties are severe.
- Laws on cohabitation, LGBTQ+ issues, and cybercrimes are strict.
- [HIGH RISK] Posting critical or offensive content online about the UAE.

Saudi Arabia

Dress Code

- Modest clothing required; women should dress conservatively (abaya not always required but common).
- Men: avoid shorts in formal settings.

Behavior

- No public displays of affection; respect prayer times and closures.
- During Ramadan, avoid eating/drinking in public daylight.

Social Norms

- Gender segregation can apply in some settings; follow local cues.

Legal Notes

- Strict penalties for drugs, alcohol (outside licensed venues), and proselytizing.
- Online speech laws are strict.
- [HIGH RISK] Public morality violations can lead to arrest/deportation.

Spain

Dress Code

- Smart-casual for schools; beachwear only at the beach.

Behavior

- Keep noise reasonable at night; local quiet hours enforced in some areas.
- Pickpockets in tourist zones—guard belongings.

Social Norms

- Two-cheek greetings among acquaintances; follow others' lead.
- Tipping is modest and optional.

Legal Notes

- Open container and public drinking can be fined (varies by city).
- Visa/work rules enforced; carry ID.

Italy

Dress Code

- Smart-casual; cover shoulders in churches.

Behavior

- Noise and public drunkenness can attract fines.
- Beware tourist scams; validate train tickets where required.

Social Norms

- Greetings vary by region; handshakes common.
- Coffee etiquette: cappuccino usually morning only.

Legal Notes

- Some cities restrict sitting/eating on monuments; fines apply.

France

Dress Code

- Smart-casual, understated; avoid athletic wear in workplaces.

Behavior

- Use quiet voices on transit; say 'Bonjour/Bonsoir' upon entry to shops.
- Strikes/protests are common—avoid confrontations.

Social Norms

- Kissing on cheeks common among friends; handshakes in professional settings.

Legal Notes

- Public drinking varies by city; cannabis is illegal.

Czech Republic

Dress Code

- Neat, practical clothing for schools; seasonal layers.

Behavior

- Public intoxication and rowdiness can draw police attention.
- Validate transit tickets; spot checks happen.

Social Norms

- Punctuality matters; remove shoes in some homes.

Legal Notes

- Drug laws stricter than they appear; avoid possession.

Mexico

Dress Code

- Smart-casual at schools; modest in conservative areas.

Behavior

- Be vigilant in crowded areas; use authorized taxis/rideshares.
- Avoid public intoxication; respect local neighborhoods.

Social Norms

- Warm greetings; handshakes common, cheek-kiss among acquaintances.

Legal Notes

- Drug laws strict; penalties severe.
- Carry ID; respect police instructions.
- **[HIGH RISK] Travel in high-risk regions at night.**

Chile

Dress Code

- Business casual at schools; weather varies by region—layer.

Behavior

- Punctuality appreciated; avoid loud behavior late at night.

Social Norms

- Polite forms of address; cheek-kiss greeting common.

Legal Notes

- Drug laws enforced; DUI penalties strict.

Colombia

Dress Code

- Business casual; modest in conservative areas.

Behavior

- Avoid flashy jewelry; use registered taxis/rideshare.
- Keep copies of documents; police checks possible.

Social Norms

- Warm, friendly culture; cheek kisses common among friends.

Legal Notes

- Drug possession laws are strict despite perceptions.
- **[HIGH RISK] Entering restricted neighborhoods; safety first with local guidance.**

Indonesia

Dress Code

- Modest clothing; cover shoulders/knees in many regions; stricter in Aceh and religious sites.

Behavior

- Avoid public displays of affection; alcohol restricted in some areas.
- Remove shoes before entering homes and some businesses.

Social Norms

- Use right hand for giving/receiving; be respectful during Ramadan (in Muslim-majority areas).

Legal Notes

- Drug laws among the harshest; penalties severe.
- Visa overstays fined; immigration checks occur.
- **[HIGH RISK] Disrespecting religious sites or norms; arrests have occurred.**



Vanguard TEFL – Emergency Protocols for Teachers Abroad

Before You Go – Safety Checklist

- 1 Register with your embassy or consulate (e.g., STEP for U.S. citizens).
- 2 Save embassy, employer, and local emergency numbers in multiple places.
- 3 Purchase travel insurance and keep proof accessible.
- 4 Set up a VPN to access home services securely.
- 5 Carry duplicate passport photos and a printed copy of your passport.
- 6 Notify your bank of travel plans to avoid frozen accounts.
- 7 Pack a small 'go bag' with essentials in case of sudden evacuation.

If Arrested or Detained

- 1 Stay calm, respectful, and avoid confrontation.
- 2 Request contact with your embassy immediately.
- 3 Do not sign documents you don't understand.
- 4 Ask for a certified interpreter if needed.
- 5 Only discuss your case with your lawyer or embassy officials.

If Caught in Civil Unrest

- 1 Stay indoors and avoid large gatherings or protests.
- 2 Monitor embassy alerts and trusted local news.
- 3 Avoid photographing police, protests, or military.
- 4 Have an evacuation route and 'go bag' ready.

Medical Emergencies

- 1 Know the location of the nearest English-speaking hospital.
- 2 Keep health insurance details with you at all times.

- 3 Contact your insurer before treatment if possible.
- 4 Have local emergency numbers saved.

Legal Resources

- 1 Embassies can't get you out of jail, but they ensure fair treatment.
- 2 Obtain a list of local English-speaking lawyers before you need one.
- 3 Understand local bail laws — some countries do not have bail.

Quick Access – Travel Safety Resources



U.S. Embassy Locator



U.S. STEP Enrollment



UK Foreign Travel Advice



Australian Smartraveller



Canadian Travel Services