

ORIGINAL POST

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The excitement of upping sticks and moving overseas can be intoxicating, and so it should be. Not everyone has the opportunity to live in far flung locations and to experience a taste of the exotic, so it should be grasped firmly with both hands. How much you get out of your new life as an expat will depend largely upon how much you put into it. Avoiding pitfalls such as illness and accidents cannot always be avoided but you put in place measures to make sure you minimise the impact, both health wise and financially.

Principle Assurance <https://www.principleassurance.com/en/home> has come up with some sage advice for anyone considering relocating to Hong Kong or indeed any other Asian countries to live or work. In simple terms, you need to be mindful that medical treatment is expensive and that you need to look after yourself and your family. The more information you have about possible risks, precautions and procedures will stand you in good stead.

Unlike the EU, where European expats enjoy access to free state healthcare under a reciprocal agreement between member nations (including UK citizens until Brexit) no such agreements are in place in Asia. If you can't pay, you won't be treated. So it makes sense to do everything within your power to start your new life as healthy as possible and armed with enough information to keep you as safe as possible.

The first question for any potential expat looking towards starting a new life in Asia should be: Are you prepared medically? This applies as much to the medical precautions that you can take before your arrival, as it does to finding the right international health insurance plan.

Get professional medical advice

Similar to when you travel overseas, you should inform your doctor of where you are travelling and find out if there are any medications or vaccinations for diseases such as typhoid, tetanus and hepatitis that you should take. Not every condition can be prevented by vaccines or tablets, but many can. For example, do you know that measles is still a problem in many parts of the world?

Be vigilant and safe

It is vital that you have adequate expatriate healthcare to cover you for accidental injuries. The World Health Organisation (WHO) lists accidental injury as one of the major causes of death amongst young people aged between 15 and 29. Until you get used to driving on unfamiliar roads with different road rules, you are more vulnerable to road traffic accidents. Without wanting to be a killjoy, we should mention that even exercise, such as swimming, diving and running can result injury. The cost of medical treatment overseas can be mind-bogglingly expensive.

On the flipside, you'll be pleasantly surprised to hear that if you're planning to move to Hong Kong, the ratio of police to the population is high, so it is relatively safe to wander about without incident.

But if you do have an accident, beware because Hong Kong is recognised as having the highest healthcare costs in the world, second only to the USA. To bring things into perspective, here is an example of just how expensive medical treatment can be:

Principle Assurance has recently paid out on a claim of 50,000US\$ for treating bronchitis in Hong Kong. Similarly, a broken leg could result in medical expenses of around 25,000US\$ and stomach complaint can result in bills adding up to a whopping 10,000US\$.

If these conditions weren't treated under an international private health insurance plan, the patients and their families would be liable for these astronomical and potentially catastrophic life-changing costs.

International medical insurance

Taking into account the costs already mentioned, no sensible person would argue against the need for private medical insurance. Yet, there is still the 64 million dollar question: Is your health insurance coverage up to the job?

Choosing to take out cover is not enough. You need to choose not only the right level of cover but also a provider with a presence in the region where you will be based, with the financial clout to pay out if you claim. Principle Assurance is a leading expatriate healthcare provider in Asia, for both individuals and corporations providing cover for their increasing numbers of expat employees. The company is known for its no-nonsense quick claims service. It is also unique in the fact that it pays out on an impressive 99% of claims, which is 19% above its competitors.

Do you need evacuation?

Just one more thing that you should consider: Evacuation and repatriation cover. One of Principle's many features is the inclusion of medical evacuation provision. It's important because you may fall ill or suffer an injury in an area where there isn't a sufficiently high standard of medical treatment or you need specialist care.

You have probably heard the old expression, "failing to prepare, is preparing to fail". With a little preparation, you can ensure that you get the most out of your exciting adventure overseas. Should the worst happen at least you know that you have done everything you possibly can to minimise risk and that you will be in safe hands.