

YOUTH NEWS

My amazing travel adventure



My name's Jack. I am 22 years old and I have severe haemophilia A.

Jack talked to HFA about travelling overseas and managing his haemophilia for some amazing trips!

Where did you go on your trips?

I've done two separate trips over the last couple of years.

With my first trip, I went to Southeast Asia for about five weeks, mainly around the south of Vietnam and Thailand. I went with one of my best mates who I've known for years. We travelled at a pretty fast pace, moving to a different city every couple of days, about 14 different places across the five weeks.

With the most recent trip, I went to Europe for about 7 weeks with my girlfriend. I flew into England and started in London. My girlfriend's family is from Wales, so I went across to Wales for a week or so.

Then we did a group tour, where we made some great friends and continued to travel with them following the tour. It was pretty similar to the earlier trip – we moved around really quickly and I went to about 12 countries. I started in England then went down through France, Switzerland, Spain, Monaco, Italy, Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and then back to London again, and then came home to Australia after that.

It was really exciting.

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What were the highlights for you?

Some highlights of my trip to Asia were Dalat in Vietnam, a small town up in the mountains, which was really cool. I also loved Hoi An, with its old lanterns and unreal food - just an awesome vibe there.

Then in Thailand we did an island-hopping cruise around the Phi Phi Islands - amazing crystal-clear waters and reefs. I also loved another small island called Koh Tao, which is a tiny little speck on a map. It's where a lot of people get their diving licence. It was just unreal beaches and scenery.

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When we went to London, I got to go to an EPL (Premier League) game to watch the soccer, which was pretty sick. I also went to Printworks. I'm a DJ and I love my electronic music. Printworks is one of the biggest venues in the world, so going there was awesome. It's actually closing down soon so it's cool we caught that before it finished up.

And going skiing in Austria was just unbelievable. It was the middle of winter, so it was freezing. But we had some 'bluebird days' where it was perfect weather whilst we were on the slopes! It was my first time skiing. We just skied because in Austria there wasn't a heap of snowboarding. But when I go to Canada later this year, I'm going to give snowboarding a crack and we'll see how that goes.



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How did you prepare to travel with your haemophilia treatment?

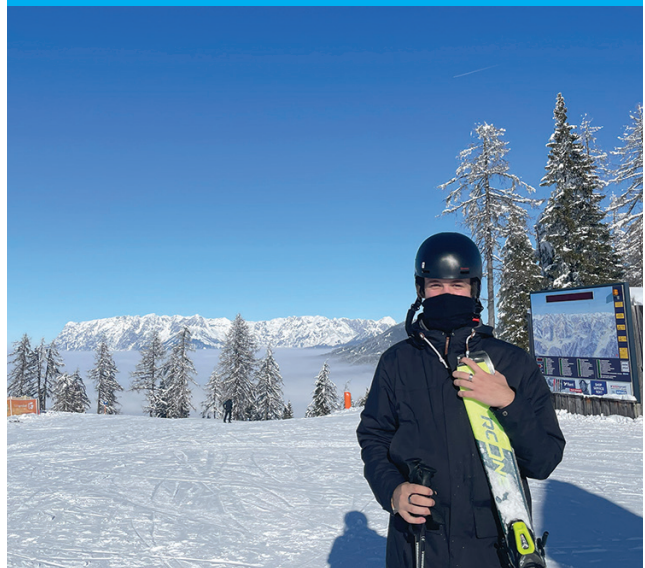
When I'm preparing to travel to another country, my first thing is to quickly check requirements in each country and make sure I am not bringing anything in that is illegal. It's important to know, especially when we're going to Asia or countries where they speak a different language. I get letters from the hospital to carry with me, so if I do ever get pulled up in customs, I have letters to explain why I'm carrying needles and treatment.

I usually have a meeting with my haemophilia nurse about eight weeks before I go away. We discuss a plan on how to tackle how much treatment I will need to bring to ensure they order enough treatment, as well as organise the doctors' letters.

Then I make a plan of how to keep treatment cold, which is one of my biggest challenges. Not all hotels have fridges, so I come up with the worst-case scenarios, like a plan for keeping my treatment cold if I have a 12-hour travel day, or have a hotel that doesn't have a fridge.

Then finally, I always make a list of where the Haemophilia Treatment Centres (HTCs) are, just in case of any emergency. That was a bit harder in Asia, because there weren't as many HTCs. But in Europe there were plenty, so if anything did happen, I had an HTC where I could go and see some knowledgeable doctors.

In Austria it was freezing. But we had some 'bluebird days' where it was perfect weather whilst we were on the slopes!



How did you manage your haemophilia while you were travelling?

I had two different experiences of managing my haemophilia when I was traveling.

During my first trip I was using factor VIII (8) products, which required far more frequent treatments. After discussions with my haemophilia nurse and doctor, I was having one treatment per day when I went to Asia. This meant I had 35 doses, which was a challenge to carry that amount of factor VIII over there. >>

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The biggest challenge is temperature, especially in a hot climate like Asia, and keeping that much treatment product cold for that long.



It was a stark comparison to my second trip where I was using a non-factor product. I only needed to bring 3 treatments with me, which was much easier to keep cold, plus it was winter, so it was a completely different scenario.

I also needed to make sure I had correct travel insurance that included haemophilia, so that in case of any emergency, I would be covered overseas.

What was easier than you expected?

I've always had some form of anxiety that I would be pulled over and questioned why I have all these needles and syringes in my carry-on luggage, but I've never been stopped at customs either in Asia or in Europe. Which is nice!

Did you need to do anything special in the group tour?

There were a few extra considerations with the group tour. The main thing was discussing my condition with the tour manager so he was across it, in case of any emergency. There were also quite long bus rides. I discussed it with my tour manager and he allowed me to use the fridge on the bus to keep my treatment cold as well. But aside from that, I found as long as I was transparent and up front with the tour manager so he was aware of the health condition I had, it was no drama, really.

Apart from the tour managers, haemophilia is something I've normally kept to myself on my trips because I think as long as you manage it correctly, it shouldn't affect the way you live. Obviously, my girlfriend was across it and when I travelled with my friend, he was across it, so they're aware in case anything happened on the trip. But aside from that, I never really told other people.

Will you do anything differently on your next trip?

My next trip will involve skiing in Canada, so there's probably going to be a bit more risk if I fell off a snowboard or something like that. Now that I am on non-factor therapy, that might mean carrying some extra factor VIII with me, just in case I did have a fall so that I have a bit of factor VIII to manage a bleed. But I'll discuss that with my haemophilia team when I am closer to the trip.

When I go to Canada later this year, I'm going to give snowboarding a crack and we'll see how that goes.



What travel tips do you have for other young people with bleeding disorders?

My main travel tip is to plan for every scenario and discuss this with your haemophilia nurses and doctors.

I suppose the biggest concern with going away is you are a long way from home. If your parents are anything like mine, they will be extremely worried!



My main travel tip is to plan for every scenario - so you can go on your trip with confidence and travel freely.

So have a plan to make sure you're never going to be stuck, you're always safe, you always have treatment with you and just be across everything you need to be so you can go on your trip with confidence and travel freely.

Read more

Want to know more about travel?

Visit the Travel section on the HFA website:
<https://tinyurl.com/HFA-travel>

Check out the personal stories from other young people with bleeding disorders on:

- Factored In, the HFA youth website - www.factoredin.org.au
- The HFA YouTube channel - <https://tinyurl.com/HFAYoutube>

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