

## Travel clinic is tailor-made for globetrotters

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Dr. Susan McLellan and Dr. Nicholas Van Sickels stand at the ready to give expert advice to people who are planning travel adventures. (Photo by Cheryl Gerber)

If you're jetting off to go camping in the wilds of sub-Saharan Africa, it's a good idea to soak your clothes in insecticide before you pack. And if you're really roughing it, you'll need anti-malarial pills and mosquito netting.

If this sounds like expert advice from a seasoned travel agent, think again. It's part of a typical day's work for doctors at the [Tulane University Travel Clinic](#), a one-stop shop where travelers get vaccinations, medications and expert advice about health precautions for trips to exotic locales.

The clinic, which relocated to a new space on the 15th floor of 1440 Canal St. in downtown New Orleans, caters to researchers working abroad and tourists preparing for vacations of a lifetime.

“Most people come to a travel clinic because they’ve heard they need some “shots,”” says clinic director [Dr. Susan McLellan](#), an associate professor of medicine. “Most are surprised to learn that vaccine-preventable illnesses make up only a small proportion of illness related to travel.”

Travel medicine has become more complex due to changes in global infectious disease epidemiology, emerging patterns of drug resistance and an increase in travelers with chronic health conditions, McLellan says. Staff members counsel patients on their itineraries, medical risks and all aspects of health while abroad.

“We map that to the countries they are visiting to come up with comprehensive safety and prevention recommendations,” says [Dr. Nicholas Van Sickle](#)s, associate director of the clinic, who is an assistant professor of medicine.

Doctors spend a lot of time talking about avoiding risky behaviors. Thinking about bungee jumping off a cliff? Don’t, if you’re not around a region with a Level 3 trauma center. Don’t swim in areas known for rough surf without a lifeguard. The advice ranges from the mundane (wear sunscreen) to the risquÃ©.

“If you are asking for a supply of Viagra for your travel, we are first going to have a nice, long chat about safe sex,” McLellan says.