

# The wide world of travel nursing: Islands, cruise ships, and foreign countries

By David Morrison, RN

**IN MY EARLIER ARTICLE** on travel nursing (“Travel nursing, anyone?”, November 2014), I described some of the traits and qualifications travel nurses should possess. In this article, we’ll look at nontraditional travel nursing assignments.

For my first travel assignment, I told my recruiter, “I’m sure you’ve never heard *this* before, but I want to go to Hawaii.” I was joking—but within a few weeks, I was notified that an ICU nurse was needed on Maui. Should I spend the winter in Columbus, Ohio, or on Maui? My decision wasn’t hard. I started my travel nursing career with island travel.

Although island positions may require a few years of travel experience (at least a few other

candidates are likely to vie for the same position), I still sometimes see postings for Hawaii and the Caribbean. One of the travel companies I’ve used has posted nurse openings in Guam.

An island assignment might seem like paradise, but you’ll need to understand local customs. Also, be aware that on an island, nursing care may not be exactly what you’re used to providing. You may have to mix your own antibiotics or I.V. infusions due to the lack of a 24-hour pharmacist, or manage a critically ill patient without access to a physician who can respond to the bedside. Your nursing skills and adaptability are key factors when consider whether to accept an island assignment.

## International assignments

Today, travel nursing positions pop up in the United Kingdom, Australia, China, Ireland, and New Zealand. Obviously, language may be a barrier in some destinations, and you need to obtain a nursing license to practice overseas. The process of obtaining a license may differ for each country, but a language test and possibly a knowledge exam (similar to the U.S. NCLEX exam) may be required. Some international travel nurse agencies will guide you through the steps to getting a license.

## All aboard! Cruise ship assignments

If you seek a destination outside the United States without the hassle of getting international licensure, consider an assignment aboard a cruise ship. Usually these are handled by cruise lines rather than travel nursing companies, but they require the same skills as a regular travel assignment.

To deal with the vast majority of situations arising on the open ocean, you’ll need a strong background in emergency nursing and critical care (and perhaps even a little operating-room experience). Care facilities aboard some large cruise ships rival those of big-city emergency-department trauma suites. Some are even suitable for minor surgical procedures.

To apply for these positions, you’ll probably have to contact individual cruise lines. Be aware that cruise-

Hoping for a Hawaii assignment? Your wish might just come true.

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## Travel nursing resources

For more information on travel nursing, check out these websites:

-  [www.Travelnursingblogs.com](http://www.Travelnursingblogs.com)
-  [www.Healthcaretravelbook.com](http://www.Healthcaretravelbook.com)
-  [www.Ultimatelnurse.com/travel-nursing/](http://www.Ultimatelnurse.com/travel-nursing/)
-  <http://Allnurses.com/travel-nursing/allnurses.com>
-  [www.PanTravelers.org](http://www.PanTravelers.org)
-  <http://forums.delphiforums.com/travelnurses>

Also, I often help nurses wishing to enter travel nursing and am available to answer questions or help you connect with the people I entrust with my own travel assignments. ★

David Morrison is the author of *The Travel Nurse's Bible: A Guide to Everything on Travel Nursing*. He answers questions about traveling in his column "Ask a Travel Nurse" at <http://travelnursingblogs.com/ask-a-travel-nurse> and can be reached directly at [david@travelnursesbible.com](mailto:david@travelnursesbible.com).

ships assignments may last longer than the typical 13-week travel contract. Some last 6 months to a year. Pay might be an issue, too, especially if you have bills to pay back home. Usually, the pay rate for cruise work is lower, as the ship normally provides not just lodging but all meals and medical care. Scheduled hours aboard a cruise ship offer time off to go sightseeing—but expect to have to work some clinic hours and nights when you'll be on call should an emergency occur. For more information on cruise-line nursing, read "Adventure at Sea: Diaries of Cruise Ship Nurses" at [www.modernmedicine.com/modern-medicine/content/adventure-sea?page=full](http://www.modernmedicine.com/modern-medicine/content/adventure-sea?page=full).

### Location, location, location

In travel nursing, location usually trumps the work. For nurses who feel locked into their positions or who seek new challenges, the change of venue keeps your career exciting and refreshing. My travel experiences have helped me to adopt the best practices of each facility where I've worked, diversify my practice, and deliver the best care possible while providing wonderful opportunities I wouldn't otherwise have had.

To connect with travel nurses, read about the various aspects of travel nursing, and understand the challenges travel nurses face, see *Travel nursing resources*.

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