Epilogue

General Travel Precautions

While this book discusses what appears to be a huge inventory of parasitic diseases, they should not inhibit the traveler from venturing out into the world since a few common sense precautions would be enough to avoid the vast majority of the parasites mentioned. The author is an avid foodie and have been eating street food from street vendors around the world for decades with an enthusiasm that few of the readers would have matched, and yet have avoided any infection (Fig. A1).

The first rule is to never eat anything raw or uncooked. Therefore you should avoid salads, cut fruits, fruit juices, popsicles and the like, and avoid ice with drinks such as sodas since you should always suspect that the ice could have possibly been made with contaminated water. Follow these rules of avoiding uncooked food even in upscale hotel restaurants. Do not be lulled into a false sense of security just because you are in a fancy air conditioned environment where there are clean table cloths and folded napkins and where you are served by impeccably dressed waiters. What happens behind closed doors inside the kitchen has a greater impact on your health and well-being than the splendid surroundings of the restaurant itself. Cooked food are generally safe as most parasites do not survive normal cooking temperatures. So if they are braised, boiled, roasted, grilled, broiled, baked, stir fried or deep fried they are quite safe. I personally avoid eating raw fish such as those in sashimi and cerviche, as noted in the previous chapters, but that is a judgement call as most people have decided that the risks are small enough to justify ignoring my advice.

Whether I eat from street vendors in Ayutthaya or from the little open tea stalls in Pune, or the night market in the Muslim quarter in Xi’an or at a coffee stand in Tegucigalpa, I follow the same rules. First I look for a busy and obviously popular vendor with many locals waiting in line—that is a sure sign that the food is good and the local people trust the hygiene of that place. Show a friendly smile and watch the cooking process with interest; use hand signs and body language to ask about what they are cooking even when you don’t know the local lingo. All the while check out
the general cleanliness of the eating utensils, plates, cups etc. Nowadays most places around the world use disposable plastic and polystyrene ware, and while not environmentally friendly, are generally hygienic. If you see that what you are about to eat is cooked in front of you and the other customers, you can be quite assured that the general level of hygiene and cleanliness is fine as the locals wouldn’t be returning to that stall if it was otherwise. If the food is not being freshly cooked but looked as if it had been displayed and sitting on a tray for some time, I would give a friendly smile and move on.

As for drinks, I would stick to hot coffee or tea (which necessitate boiling the water), or if they have cold sodas in a can or bottle, I will tell them “no ice” by hand signs and drink straight from the can or bottle. Bottled water is ubiquitous and incidentally beer is one of the safest things to drink. I try to eat a lot of fruits whenever I travel and will buy uncut fruits from street vendors and market places. Local fruits are usually cheap, nutritious and safe to eat when you cut or peel them yourself. Discovering new kinds of tropical fruits that you have never eaten before is one of the joys of travel. Pack a small pocket knife in your check-in luggage and you will find that it is a very useful companion to have on a train or bus.

For specific travel advisories, including vaccines and anti-malarial medications, check out the following excellent websites, as public health bulletins change frequently depending on the current situation in different regions of the world and where new disease outbreaks may have recently occurred. The following websites are updated frequently and are the most reliable sources for public health advisories regarding the countries or regions to which you are planning to travel.
The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has a continuously updated website which gives you comprehensive and detailed information for all travel related advice.

This should be your first source for travel advisories: https://www.nc.cdc.gov/travel/

They also have a webpage just for vaccines: https://www.cdc.gov/features/vaccines-travel/index.html and another for malaria: https://www.cdc.gov/malaria/travelers/ and updates of recommended anti-malarial medications: https://www.cdc.gov/malaria/travelers/drugs.html There is even a chapter regarding mosquitoes and biting arthropods: https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2018/the-pre-travel-consultation/protection-against-mosquitoes-ticks-other-arthropods

Another excellent source of information and advice is that provided by the World Health Organization (WHO): http://www.who.int/ith/en/ The WHO organizes the information into categories such as current disease distribution maps, vaccines, and general precautions, and I would highly recommend that you visit their webpage.
Further Reading

Chapter One

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Chapter Two

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Chapter Four


Chapter Five

Chapter Six


Chapter Seven


Chapter Eight

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Further Reading


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Chapter Nine


Chapter Ten


Chapter Eleven


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Chapter Twelve


