

# DEATH AWAY FROM HOME

## Death Away from Home but in the United States

If a death occurs while you are away from home but **in the United States**, you have several options.

### Cremation

Cremation is typically the most affordable option if you select a funeral provider located in the area where the death occurred. If you need help selecting a provider or guidance about how to compare prices, contact the Funeral Consumers Alliance at 802-865-8300, or visit their website to see [a list of more than 70 local FCAs](#) across the country. You can also search online for “cremation” and the state name. When you call to ask about prices, make sure the bottom-line price includes the crematory and permit fees.

Cremated remains can be hand-carried or mailed. If you choose to take them on a plane, be sure they are in a container that can be x-rayed. If the cremated remains are mailed – by you or by the funeral home – you must use the [US Postal Service, which has specific regulations](#).

If, at any point, you decide to arrange a memorial / life celebration service, you have a lot of flexibility in terms of time and location. The services of a funeral home are not required.

### Body Interment

If there is no need for a viewing or funeral service in the area where death occurred, you will generally save money by working through a funeral director **located where the body is to be interred**.

The funeral home you select will then arrange for the **Receiving of Remains**, which typically includes picking up the body at the airport, filing permits and the death certificate, and transportation to the cemetery.

If the body was already taken to a funeral home at the place of death, you are likely to incur their charge for **Forwarding Remains**, which usually include pick-up of the body from the place of death, embalming, and possibly a shipping container as well as transportation to the nearest airport. This price is often much less than the individual items priced separately, but is generally more than the charge for Receiving Remains.

**Note:** Whether purchasing the Forwarding Remains or Receiving Remains packages, the cost of the airline ticket is additional.

### Additional Information

- **Bereavement airfares**  
Bereavement airfares are largely a thing of the past. Your best bet for lower-priced seats is to check websites that offer discount airline fares.
- **Authorizations**  
Take your advance directives with you when you travel. Although the forms may not carry full authority in the state or country in which illness or death occurs, they will give guidance to others as to your wishes.
- **Body donation**  
If you had planned to be a body donor, you may wish to amend your donor card to indicate “or nearest medical school”. You’ll find a list of Willed Body Programs in the US [here](#).

## Death Abroad (see next page)

## **Death Abroad**

The US Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs says on their [website](#):

When an U.S. citizen dies abroad, the Bureau of Consular Affairs assists the family and friends. The Bureau of Consular Affairs attempts to locate and inform the next-of-kin of the U.S. citizen's death. The Bureau of Consular Affairs provides information on how to make arrangements for local burial or return of the remains to the United States. The disposition of remains is subject to U.S. and local (foreign) law, U.S. and foreign customs requirements, and the foreign country facilities, which are often vastly different from those in the United States.

The Department of State has no funds to assist in the return of remains or ashes of U.S. citizens who die abroad. The Bureau of Consular Affairs assists the next-of-kin to convey instructions to the appropriate offices within the foreign country, and provides information to the family on how to transmit the necessary private funds to cover the costs overseas. Upon issuance of a local (foreign) death certificate, the nearest embassy or consulate may prepare a Consular Report of the Death of an American Abroad. Copies of that report are provided to the next-of-kin or legal representative and may be used in U.S. courts to settle estate matters.

A U.S. consular officer overseas has statutory responsibility for the personal estate of a U.S. citizen who dies abroad if the deceased has no legal representative or next-of-kin in the country where the death occurred, subject to local law. In that situation, the consular officer takes possession of personal effects, such as jewelry, personal documents and papers, and clothing.

The consular officer prepares an inventory of the personal effects and then carries out instructions from the legal representative or next-of-kin concerning the effects.

Additional Information:

- [Consular Report of Death of a U.S. Citizen Abroad](#)
- [Return of Remains of Deceased U.S. Citizens](#)
- [Estates of Deceased U.S. Citizens](#)

## **Suggestions from our national Funeral Consumers Alliance**

### **Local burial**

Local burial is often the least expensive option; however, a few countries do not allow the burial of foreigners. The Consular Officer will be able to tell you.

### **Cremation**

Cremation is an option in most countries; however it may be prohibited or limited in predominantly Catholic or Muslim countries. Some countries have only a few crematories, which might increase cost and delay the return of the ashes. However, compared to the high cost of transporting a body, cremated remains can be returned home at less expense. You can mail them or take them on an airplane at no cost. Just make sure the container can be x-rayed.

### **Body donation**

Many foreign countries have an urgent need for body donors. The Bureau of Consular Affairs should be able to assist with arrangements.

### **Returning the body to the US**

Preparation and shipment are done according to local laws, regulations, and customs. Embalming is not widely practiced in most foreign countries, though there are other methods of preparation for shipment, some of which will preclude viewing (such as chemically saturated shrouds). Charges for these services are high and vary widely from one location to another. After receipt of the necessary funds, there may be a three to ten day interval until actual shipment. You will need to contact a funeral director in the US to assist with arrangements.