

schoolies' week checklist

If you have made the decision to go to Schoolies' Week celebrations, complete the checklist below and see just how much you know about your upcoming trip. Answer Yes or No to the following questions:

	YES	NO
Do you know where you are staying?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you know who you are staying with?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you have any under 18s staying with you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you know how you are getting there?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you know how you are getting back?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you know whose name is on the accommodation contract?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you know what the contract says about alcohol use?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you know what the contract says about parties and noise?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you know how drug detection dogs work?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you organised travel insurance?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If you are going to an 'official' Schoolies' Week event, do you know how to get accredited and get a wristband to attend events?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you are planning to go overseas to celebrate Schoolies, answer the questions below:

Do you know the legal drinking age in that country?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you registered with DFAT to let them know you are travelling to another country?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you organised travel insurance?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you discussed an 'emergency plan' with your friends should something go wrong?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Things to consider if you're travelling within Australia for schoolies

Where are you staying?

It is important to know not only the address of where you are staying, but also what type of accommodation it is – i.e., a house, hotel room, rented apartment or backpackers hostel. Each of these will have different rules and be a very different experience. If you are renting a house (or even if you are staying in your parents' or friend's holiday house) you will usually have neighbours that you need to consider. It is important to remember that most residents of Schoolies' destinations do not want you there. Noisy partying or bad behaviour will quickly be reported to local police and this can result in eviction.

It is unusual for 'non-Schoolies' to stay at a hotel during the Schoolies period but it still happens – once again, when you stay at a hotel you will need to consider others who may be staying there and act accordingly.

Who are you staying with?

If you have anyone under the age of 18 years staying with you there are serious legal issues to consider regarding the supply of alcohol. In some states, if an adult supplies alcohol to a minor (someone under the age of 18 years) they may receive a fine and even a criminal record. If the police have reason to enter your accommodation and find evidence that minors are drinking and believe that one of the adults present provided that alcohol there is the possibility that that person may be charged with 'secondary supply'. If you are 18 or older, you will be treated as an adult under this law.

Travelling to and from Schoolies within Australia

There are a number of ways that Schoolies travel to the various destinations around the country, depending, of course, on where they live and where they are going. No matter which way you intend to travel (plane, car, bus, boat, ferry or train) be sure you note that there will be many more young people travelling at the same time. Tens of thousands of Schoolies travelling to a number of key destinations can cause congestion and it is important to remember that the trip may take longer than it would normally.

Be aware that if you intend to drive you have a much greater chance of being subject to random breath testing (RBT) than you would at other times and that as a provisional driver there are restrictions on how many people may travel with you. There is also the chance that you could be roadside drug tested. This is a saliva test that is given to drivers when they are pulled over for an RBT. Many young people are unaware that if a police officer believes that you may be driving under the influence of an illicit drug they have the power to request you have a blood test. If you have smoked cannabis in the previous month there is a chance you could get a positive blood test. The law in this area is not concerned about 'intoxication', you will be charged with driving under the influence of an illegal drug if you have the presence of the drug in your system.

Drug detection dogs are able to be used on any form of public transport and the chances of getting caught if you plan on taking illicit drugs to Schoolies' celebrations are very real (see below for more information on this law enforcement strategy).

Accommodation contracts

If you are renting a house or apartment or booking a hotel room you will need to have an adult (someone aged 18 years or over) sign an accommodation contract of some description. This will confirm where you are staying, how much the accommodation will cost you and will outline the Terms of Agreement, i.e., what rules you need to follow. You will also have to pay a security deposit – this is a sum of money given to the owner of the property as 'proof of intent', i.e., that you intend to follow the rules and set out in the contract. If any of the rules are broken or there is any damage to the property the security deposit will not be returned. If the damage costs more to repair than the security deposit will cover, you may be liable for extra costs.

Everyone who is staying at the property should be given a copy of the accommodation contract so that they are all aware of the rules that need to be followed. Some of the typical rules that can be found in contracts over the Schoolies period may include no glassware, no guests, no parties, no alcohol, as well as noise restrictions.

Drug detection dogs

It is important that those travelling to Schoolies' destinations across Australia are aware that drug detection dogs not only travel to those locations, but also work at airports across the country in the lead-up to, and during the period. These dogs are trained to detect a number of drugs, including cannabis, amphetamines and ecstasy. If the dog detects the presence of drugs on a person it will usually sit down in front of them. That person may now be subject to a search, including a 'strip search' if the police deem one necessary. If you are found with illicit drugs and are charged and convicted with a drug offence your life can change forever, with your travel and employment options being significantly affected. Ignorance of the law is no excuse!

The dogs are also able to detect debris of drugs, so if you have had drugs on you in the previous few days or you have been around people who have been using drugs, particularly those smoking cannabis, there is the very real chance that you could be subject to a search if the dog smells that on you. You cannot be charged for having the smell of illicit drugs on you, but do you really want to be subjected to a search just because of the people you hang around with?

Travel insurance

Even if you're not travelling overseas it is wise to have travel insurance.

Something unexpected may happen and you may be prevented from travelling to your destination as planned, or circumstances may arise that require you to return home early. Some examples of how travel insurance could be useful include the following - severe weather that closes roads to accommodation, transport strikes affecting flights, bags that go missing and lost cameras or mobiles. Remember, it is better to be safe than sorry!

Accreditation at Schoolies' Week

If you are attending 'official' Schoolies' Week celebrations where special events are put on by the government or local council, you will usually need to register, pay a fee and get official accreditation. This usually involves providing a photo ID and sometimes proof that you have just finished Year 12. You then receive a pass that enables you to attend official events, this is usually a wristband that you need to look after for the rest of the week. This system is to ensure that it is only school leavers that attend these events and not older young people (often referred to as 'toolies') out to cause trouble.

Things to consider if you're travelling overseas for schoolies

If you have made the decision to travel overseas to destinations such as Bali, Fiji, Thailand or Vanuatu for Schoolies' Week it is imperative that you take some basic precautions to make sure your trip is as safe as possible. As well as all the things that have been mentioned above, such as where you are staying and who are you travelling with, make sure you have considered the following:

Do you know the laws in that country, particularly around drinking and partying?

Even if you have travelled to the country before, it is imperative that you do some research to find out as much as you can about the laws that relate to you as a Schoolie. The best place to go is the Australian

Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) website (www.smartraveller.gov.au).

This site will give you information about the safety and security situation in the country, local laws and customs, and there is also a special section on partying overseas that could be useful.

The laws and penalties of the country you are visiting apply to you while you are there, even though they may appear harsh by Australian standards. The legal drinking age may not be 18 years and the laws for physical altercations can be much harsher than they are in Australia. A fight, even between friends, can result in days in prison, even while investigations are taking place. There are strict limits on what the Australian Government can do for young people in trouble with the law in another country.

Register your trip with DFAT

Once you have locked in your travel plans, it is important to register your destination and contact details with DFAT. It's quick, free and easy to do and will assist the Government in knowing where you are and how to contact you if something goes wrong, like a natural disaster, civil disturbance or family emergency. It is even possible to register a group – so if you're travelling with friends, contact **DFAT** on **1300 555 135** and request a group registration form.

Travel insurance

Put really simply, if you can't afford travel insurance you can't afford to travel.

You will need to take out comprehensive travel insurance, this will cover your medical treatment for illness or injury while overseas, as well as lost valuables or theft. This is best taken done when you book your trip and can be looked after by your travel agent. If you're booking your holiday via a website specialising in Schoolies' holidays most of them offer insurance at the time of booking.

Wherever you decide to purchase travel insurance, make sure you read the fine print to find out what you will and won't be covered for. The most important thing to look for is to ensure that all medical expenses are covered, as treatment for a simple accident in a foreign country can cost you thousands of dollars. You also need to be aware that excessive alcohol use, illicit drug use and dangerous behaviour can be legitimate grounds for an insurer to invalidate your cover and reject a claim.

Emergency plan

Things can go wrong when you travel and it is important to plan ahead. Although most of the warnings we give Schoolies are around drinking, drugs and partying, there are so many other things that could go wrong when you are travelling overseas. A simple accident, such as falling over and cutting your arm, can become a major incident in a foreign country.

Whatever plan you come up with, discuss it with your family before you travel.

They should have all the details of your flights and accommodation, just in case they need to contact you should something go wrong at home. You should also provide them with a contact number for at least one of the friends you are holidaying with, just in case they're not able to get through to you. Make sure you take a list of emergency numbers with you and ensure that the people you are travelling with have access to these at all times. Remember that many countries do not have access to an emergency services number like 000, so it may be helpful to collect information on medical services close to where you are staying before you leave.

Schoolies Week is a high-risk time so it is especially important to make sure you have the contact details for the consular section of the Australian Embassy, High Commission or Consulate-General at your destination. You can get these details from the DFAT website before you travel and you can also contact the **24-hour Consular Emergency Centre** in Canberra on **+61 2 6261 3305**.