

# Preparing for World Championships

By Janet Naylon and Stuart Paterson

*You have decided to enter the World Championships! What next? You may have been before or this maybe your first time. Whatever your background, here are some tips for planning the trip and getting the most out of the competition.*

We started writing this article on the return trip from 2014 World Indoors in Budapest and it is the result of travelling to multiple world championships since 1997 for Stuart and 2001 for Janet. The aim is to provide answers to most of the questions that are often asked. We hope you find the article helpful.

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## Competition Goals

Check the results of previous championships to get an idea of what it might take to make a final or win a medal. This then helps with the setting of realistic goals. Competitions in Europe tend to have more athletes and therefore the standard is often higher than elsewhere. However, this should not deter you from entering. Instead come prepared to do your best and enjoy the camaraderie.

## Choosing Events

Be prepared to compete in multiple rounds with heats, semi-finals and the final taking place over 2-3 days or qualifying rounds and a final over 1-2 days. Keep this in mind when choosing and entering events. This is especially important at indoors where all events take place over six or seven days while at outdoors the events take place over 12 or 13 days with two rest days. Competition is more intense than at home and season best performances are often required to progress through each round.

If entering two events that are scheduled for the same day on the event grid in the entry booklet, be prepared to choose one event over the other if, on the final timetable, they end up scheduled at the same time or in different stadiums. WMA does its best to avoid clashes between normal event doubles such as 100m and long jump but unusual doubles such as discus and high jump may require the athlete to make a choice as to which event to pursue.

## Venues

The Stadia (outdoor) Championships use several venues to cater for the large number of events, age groups and athletes. The Technical Information Centre (TIC) is at the central or main venue and this is where the majority of track events take place plus some field events. The multi events, longer distance track events and remaining field events are usually scheduled at the other venues.

At indoors there is generally only one stadium with the long throws usually held nearby.

The out of stadia events at both championships also add an extra dimension with a further three venues for the cross country, road walks and half marathon/marathon.

Access to training facilities before or during the competition is rare, while warm up facilities are often limited. Athletes often need to improvise, especially at indoor events. That said there is normally sufficient time at the event site prior to events starting to complete run throughs/warm ups and get a feel for the track, take off board or throwing circle.

Cleanliness at venues varies and what is normal is sometimes quite different to at home. Consider carrying a loo roll, toilet seat covers (available in camping/travel stores or airplane toilets) and a small bottle of hand sanitiser in your day bag.

## Travel and accommodation

Getting there and accommodation choice is the responsibility of individual athletes. Whether you choose to use the AMA appointed travel agent or make your own plans, it is best to do your own research and decide what works best for you. Team managers are not responsible for individual's concerns with travel and accommodation.

Comprehensive travel insurance, which covers medical emergencies (including the cost of getting home) and lost luggage is highly recommended.

### Flights

Think laterally as to the best route to the destination. Sometimes the most common routes are more expensive, with more flight changes and take longer. If the final destination is not a capital city, having an overnight stop and using a fast train to the final destination can be more time and cost efficient with the added advantage of arriving refreshed.

### Accommodation

Do you want to be near/walking distance to the main venue or do you prefer to be in the city centre or close to a range of restaurants and sights? To help decide firstly check out the local transport:

- Is the LOC providing access to their local transport system or supplying shuttle buses?
- Is there a good metro/tram/bus system?
- Do services run regularly, even in off peak times? Check the timetables on the transport provider's websites for various times of day.
- Does it look easy to get around?
- What is the taxi cost?
- Is it worth hiring a car – if so, what are the local driving and parking conditions?

Next look at hotels in the desired area - [bookings.com](http://bookings.com) and [tripadvisor.com.au](http://tripadvisor.com.au) are good starting points.

Finally, look at Google maps or similar and map the route to the main venue using the walk, public transport and drive options from the short listed hotels.

Other things to consider when choosing a hotel are – Wi-Fi access, air conditioning, laundry facilities, kitchenette, hotel restaurant, safety of the area, proximity to supermarkets and so forth.

While it is nice for Australians to all stay together, people have different budgets and preferences and therefore make decisions, which best suit them.

### How long beforehand to arrive?

The million-dollar question! It all depends on how well one travels and acclimatises to their destination. We work on three sleeps prior to our first event as the minimum; four is better! It is a fine balance between training up till we leave versus having enough time to adjust at our destination knowing we might not be able to train.

Other things to consider are choosing a flight which arrives at night so one can go straight to bed or if arriving early in the day, have a short nap to then be able to stay awake till normal bed time.

Wearing compression garments on long haul flights and using saline nasal spray to keep airways moist aids with recovery.

### Phone/Internet Access

Free Wi-Fi is more widely available overseas than in Australia – ask for the password at restaurants or bars and look out for free connections on public transport and at hot spots in tourist areas.

Also check for free Wi-Fi (at least in common areas) at hotels and consider using apps such as Viber, Skype, or WhatsApp for calling home for free or to other team members when on Wi-Fi.

If phone/3g/data access is needed look into the roaming packages offered by your ISP. These are continually becoming more cost effective depending on usage requirements. We have used local sim cards a few times and they have turned out to be not very good value and unreliable.

## Language

While the official language of WMA competitions is English and the key officials will speak English, it is worth learning greetings and thank you plus some phrases associated with your events in the local language and have these written down so they can be shown to someone if necessary.

Options for language tips include:

- Online language courses through local council library membership
- Local community college courses which usually coincide with school terms
- Some high schools offer language courses for parents
- University of the Third Age
- Continuing education programs at local university

## Budget

[www.numbeo.com](http://www.numbeo.com) is useful for comparing costs such as taxis, eating out and so on at the destination to those at home and allowing one to budget accordingly. Keep in mind that in many places it is possible to buy beer and wine in the supermarket!

## Communications

### Pre-event

Information received from the LOC is posted on the AMA website.

Once team managers have been appointed by AMA they will endeavour to prepare 2-3 team newsletters, which are emailed to entered athletes and also made available in the team Facebook group.

Two Facebook groups exist - one for indoors and one for stadia (outdoors). These are closed groups and membership is restricted to those Australians genuinely intending to participate in the next

championship. These groups are a good way for team members to interact and share information about their research ahead of the approaching competition. To join, search Facebook for “AMA Track and Field Team” or “AMA Indoor Track and Field Team” and send a request to join. Once entries have closed membership of the groups is restricted to those people attending the upcoming championship.

It is possible to be on Facebook and a member of these groups without sharing any personal information or being friends with anyone.

Both groups are currently maintained and managed by Janet Naylor and the appointed team managers for each championship.

### During the event

Each country has a designated space in the Technical Information Centre for a notice board. Team managers post updated information and notices on these boards throughout the championships. Team members can also use the notice board to communicate with the team and with team managers.

With most people now travelling with a smart phone or other device, the Facebook group is also used to provide updated information and the team managers aim to ensure the information is the same on the team notice board and Facebook.

Team managers attend daily technical meetings and disseminate information from those meetings to team members via Facebook. **If** printing facilities are available a copy is also posted on the team notice board.

The LOC also posts items for all participants such as timetable changes, transport schedules and function details on a central notice board in the TIC area.

### Post event

Team managers seek feedback from team members for inclusion in a report, which is prepared for AMA. Copies of the report are available from the AMA secretary.

## IAAF and WMA Rules

WMA Rules General - <https://world-masters-athletics.com/documents/competition-rules/>

WMA Appendix A-K - <https://world-masters-athletics.com/documents/competition-rules/>

If there is no variation to a rule, then the normal IAAF rule applies. The above sections should be read and understood in conjunction with the IAAF Competition Rules 2014-2015. Chapter 5 deals with all competition rules with indoor rule variations are covered in Chapter 5, Section 6 -

<http://www.iaaf.org/about-iaaf/documents/rules-regulations#rules>

## Competition Procedures

### Registration

On arrival visit the Technical Information Centre to collect your registration pack. Photo identification is required. Packs typically contain athlete pass, competition bib numbers, Championship Handbook and sponsor products, coupons and flyers. Safety pins, of varying quality, are usually supplied.

### Championship Handbook

The Championship Handbook contains the final timetable, rules and procedures for the competition, competitor lists and progression to next round, and local information.

Any changes to the timetable or championship procedures will be posted on official notice boards in the TIC area and advised via Technical Meetings. The Handbook is sometimes available on the LOC website prior to the event starting.

Declaration / confirmation of entry procedures vary so it is essential to read the Championship Handbook to know what is required.

Callroom and arrival at event site times are usually included in the Championship Handbook. Callroom is where the athletes are assembled and taken to the event site. All athletes must go through the callroom to be able to participate. Singlets, competition bib numbers and sometimes spikes are checked at this point. Generally track events require athletes to present at the callroom 20 minutes beforehand while field events vary. The time schedule will show how long to expect at the event site to complete warm-ups, work out run-ups and so forth.

## **Protests and Appeals**

It can be useful to understand the difference between a protest and an appeal - see IAAF Rule 146.

If an athlete believes that he/she has been disadvantaged or that the officials may have incorrectly ruled, an immediate oral protest needs to be made to the event referee. In the case of field events this can include requesting that the performance be measured and recorded for later use.

Where there are multiple venues in use, the team manager/s might not be at the event site. Therefore, it is paramount that the immediate oral protest is made by the athlete concerned.

If the protest is unsuccessful and the athlete wishes to make an appeal, this usually involves payment in the order of US\$100 and the requirement to fill in an appeal form at the TIC. Team Management assist with this task. It normally needs to be done within a specified time of the referee's decision regarding the protest (details will be in the Championship Handbook). If an appeal is successful, the payment is refunded.

An appeal needs to quote the IAAF/WMA rules that have been contravened and further evidence is also required to prove the case. An appeal is not normally successful unless further evidence can be provided. Video is considered useful for further evidence but not photos.

## **Equipment**

Implements vary considerably in standard. It is possible for athletes to use personal implements provided they are checked in and made available for other competitors. If an athlete is planning to take implements it is worth having them checked by an accredited Athletics Australia official prior to departure to make sure the implement meets the technical specifications.

Equipment such as hurdles, take off boards and landing areas also vary. Venues in Europe typically have a 3-metre board for the long jump with distances for other boards taped or chalked on the runway.

## **Uniform**

WMA rules stipulate that all athletes must wear the approved vest of their nation and this is something that WMA is keen to improve so as to show our sport is more credible and attractive to sponsors. As uniforms are purchased by the individual, WMA realises that several designs of a national vest may be in circulation.

AMA orders uniforms periodically so order early to get desired size, and especially to allow time for alterations if needs be. AMA encourages team members to wear the most recent Australian uniform.

Uniform details - <http://www.australianmastersathletics.org.au/australian-competition-uniforms/>

## **Medical**

The LOC provides first aid at each venue and medical data is often collected via the entry form. There is also usually access to massage/other services on a booking and user pay system at the main venue.

## **AMA Relay Policy**

At World Championships the Australian relay teams represent our nation and are chosen to achieve the best overall medal success for Australia, e.g. three teams with good chances of a bronze, silver and a gold

is better than three teams with a high chance of only one gold medal and nothing else. The aim is to place as many athletes as possible into competitive teams.

The final selection of teams is based upon performances at the championships, current season form and past performances where relevant.

It is important that all athletes who would like to be considered for relays inform team management of their availability via the entry/validation paperwork AND then confirm their availability via the sign up lists placed on the Team noticeboard at TIC during the competition prior to the advertised deadline. Only sign up if you actually intend to run.

In fairness to other potential relay runners, athletes need to inform team management if injury occurs, or if you simply change your mind. This needs to be done before teams are announced.

It is the aim for the draft list of teams to be posted on the team Facebook and emailed to all team members two (2) days prior to the event. Should an athlete have any queries regarding the team selections this should be directed to team management by the end of the day (TIC close time) in which the draft teams are on the team Facebook/email.

Team management submits the teams to the LOC according to the schedule set by them. At this time the final teams will be posted on the Team noticeboard / Facebook and no further discussions will be entered into.

AMA calls for nominations for relay selectors after the close of entries. AMA appoints the selectors.

## Team Camaraderie

While there is no designated area, Australians do tend to congregate and sit together in the grandstand, however this does fluctuate throughout each day depending on the competition program and the venue.

For stadia events, a social gathering is normally organised on a night when not too many athletes are competing the next day. This is usually later in the competition and at a central/easy to reach location. Suggestions of venues are welcome from team members. The LOC also organises an athlete party on an evening prior to one of the rest days.

At indoors, a dinner is held on the final night after the relays. Again, suggestions of venues are welcome from team members.

The Australians usually also attend the British-organised party on the last night of the Championships.

## Pre-Departure Tasks

### Medications/TUE

Check medication/s on the ASADA website ([www.asada.gov.au](http://www.asada.gov.au)) for their status with regard to in-competition and out-of-competition testing. It is up to the individual to work with their doctor for alternatives if something required is on the banned list. Also refer to IAAF Rule 34.

If a TUE (Therapeutic Use Exemption) is needed, allow sufficient time for the paperwork process. The details of what is required is on the WMA website (<https://world-masters-athletics.com/>)

Please direct any questions to Dr Roger Parrish. He is the designated Oceania Medical Officer with whom medical matters and TUE issues may be discussed.

Dr Roger Parrish - Oceania Masters Athletics Medical officer  
17 Brentwood Avenue, Figtree Heights, NSW 2525  
Telephone: 02 4275 1800 (work), 02 4228 6260 (home)  
Email: [roger@parag.com.au](mailto:roger@parag.com.au)

## Vaccinations

If the host city is in an exotic location check the requirements for vaccinations well in advance of departure. Some vaccines require a course of several injections.

## What to pack?

A colour copy of your passport should be carried at all times - you will need identification if selected for random doping control or if being a representative for a fellow team member who has been selected (anyone can be the representative - friend, coach, fellow athlete). Sometimes when making credit card transactions you may be asked for your passport.

### Hand bag/travel pouch

- Passport and travel documents
- Credit cards, travel cash card - have several methods of accessing money as not all cards work in all destinations
- Local currency

### Hand luggage

- Competition uniform, warm up gear and relevant shoes for first event (remove the screw in spikes - you can buy or borrow from someone at the destination if your check-in bag is delayed)
- Camera, phone, other mobile devices, chargers, cables, power adapter/s
- Medications
- Copy of travel documents and spare passport photos (keep these separate from the originals)

### Check-in luggage

- Rest of competition clothing and competition shoes, spikes, spike key, safety pins, etc.
- Toiletries and first aid kit
- Casual clothes, shoes, party gear relevant to destination - check online weather websites so you know what conditions to expect
- Wet weather gear
- Shopping bag/s
- Tea bags (very hard to find normal black tea in most destinations)
- Vegemite tube (meal saviour if caught out...)

## Leave at home

- Copy (paper and electronic) of travel documents with a family member or friend

## Consider

Consider saving a copy of travel documents (passport, tickets, credit cards etc.) in a password protected online location, such as drop box, so it can be accessed via the Internet if everything is lost.

## And finally

- Contact your bank and let them know what countries you are visiting.
- Obtain copies of your prescriptions, including glasses, and ensure you have sufficient medications with you.
- Get a dental check up
- Leave a copy of your itinerary with family/friends
- Register your travel plans with Smart traveller ([www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au))

**Most of all have fun planning the trip and importantly; enjoy yourself!**