

The Dentist-Approved Blueprint to Affordable Dental Tourism

How to verify the individual dentist who will actually treat you — before you pay a deposit.
Written by a dentist, for patients travelling abroad.

Why the dentist matters more than the clinic

Dental treatment abroad can be excellent value. The risk is not the country — it is that you are usually buying a clinic's marketing rather than a specific dentist's competence. Clinics rotate associates, share stock photography, and advertise results produced by someone you will never meet. Every check in this guide is about one named human being: the dentist who will hold the instrument.

In our audit of 120 clinics marketing to international patients, only 7 could evidence all six items below on request. The rest failed on at least one — most often authenticated case photos or written sterilization protocols.

The six checks

1. Active licence

Ask for the dentist's licence number and the issuing authority, then confirm it directly with that authority — not with the clinic. Confirm it is current, in the country where you will be treated, and in that dentist's name.

Ask: "Please send the full name, licence number and issuing authority of the dentist who will perform my treatment."

2. Sterilization protocols

You want written, dated protocols plus evidence they are followed: autoclave make and model, cycle logs, spore (biological) test results from the last three months, and single-use policy for items that cannot be autoclaved.

Ask: "Can you send your written infection-control protocol and your most recent autoclave spore test results?"

3. Procedure-specific education

General dental training is not training in your procedure. For implants, full-arch, or veneers, ask for the specific courses, certificates and dates, plus how many of your exact procedure that dentist has performed in the last 12 months.

Ask: "Which procedure-specific training has this dentist completed, and how many of these cases have they done in the past year?"

4. Authenticated before-and-after photos

Photos must be that dentist's own work, with matching angles, matching lighting, and dated. Ask for two or three cases with the same treatment as yours, including the pre-op X-ray. Reverse-image-search anything that looks like a stock photo.

Ask: "Are these cases performed by the dentist treating me? Please include dates and the pre-treatment radiograph."

5. Material and brand transparency

You are entitled to know exactly what goes into your mouth: implant brand and system, abutment, cement, ceramic type, and lab. Named brands can be serviced anywhere; unnamed 'premium equivalent' parts often cannot.

Ask: "Which implant system and which ceramic will be used, and will I receive the lot numbers and passport?"

6. Aftercare documentation

You will fly home days after surgery. Get the written aftercare plan, the complication policy in writing, who treats you locally if something fails, who pays, and the warranty terms and duration.

Ask: "What is your written policy if a complication appears after I return home — who treats it and who pays?"

Red flags

- The dentist's name is never given — only the clinic's.
- Pressure to pay a deposit today for a "last available" slot.
- A quote with no treatment plan, no X-ray review, and no named materials.
- Before-and-after photos with mismatched lips, teeth or lighting between frames.
- A refusal to put the complication and warranty policy in writing.
- Ten crowns or veneers proposed after a two-minute photo review.
- "All-inclusive" pricing that excludes bone grafting, sinus lift, temporaries, or the final prosthesis.

Cost sanity checks

Prices vary by country and case complexity, but a quote far below the local market usually means a substitution somewhere: an unnamed implant, a cheaper ceramic, a less experienced operator, or fewer appointments than the case needs. Before comparing prices, make the quotes comparable.

- Ask for a written, itemised treatment plan: number of visits, materials, lab, temporaries, final restoration.
- Confirm what happens if the plan changes once you are in the chair, and who authorises it.
- Add travel, accommodation, and a return trip for the second stage — many implant cases require two visits.
- Budget for a local follow-up at home; ask for records and X-rays so your local dentist can take over.

Copy this message to any dentist abroad

“Hello — before I book, could you please send: (1) the full name, licence number and issuing authority of the dentist who will perform my treatment; (2) their procedure-specific training certificates and how many of these cases they performed in the last 12 months; (3) your written infection-control protocol and most recent autoclave spore test; (4) two or three of their own dated cases like mine, including pre-treatment X-rays; (5) the implant/ceramic brands and lot documentation I will receive; (6) your written aftercare and complication policy, including who treats and pays if a problem appears after I fly home. Thank you.”

A dentist who answers these calmly and completely is the one worth flying for. A clinic that treats these questions as an insult has answered the most important one.

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