

Can you change specialties while traveling?

Many nurses have written me about gaining experience in different departments while traveling. While the questions are phrased differently, the basic question remains the same: can you change specialties while traveling?

Initially, I have to tell you that travel companies and hospitals require at least 1 year of recent experience in the specialty you intend to work. Therefore, the majority of the time, I would have to say that new specialties require a temporary halt in traveling to gain additional skills.

On the other hand, I have never been one to give up too easily. I believe that most anything is possible. You have to be patient, creative, flexible, willing to look for opportunities and negotiate. For example, while researching a solution to this dilemma, I spoke with a recruiter who told me about a medical surgical nurse, Susan, who fits this description. Susan wanted to gain experience and work in the emergency room while traveling, but nobody was willing to take the time to train her. Finally, while on assignment in Colorado, she saw an opportunity and negotiated with them. The hospital really wanted her to float from the Medical Surgical floor to Telemetry when needed. They also had continuous needs for a nurse. Susan told them if they were willing to train her in the ER, she would extend her assignment and float to the other departments. They bought the idea and she got her experience in the Emergency Room. I love this kind of attitude.

In summary, I would have to say that changing specialties while traveling is virtually impossible. Yet, I am a believer that sometimes the impossible is possible. As they say, "that is my answer and I'm sticking to it."