

Here are my favorite packing tips to help you prepare. Happy Travels!

- 1. Pack Your Carry On Wisely** - Pack important medications or toiletries and two changes of clothes (one casual and one dinner-appropriate plus a swimsuit for warm destinations) in the bags you will personally transport onboard the plane, ship, train, etc.. This is important for two reasons: First, if your luggage gets lost by the airline, at least you'll have some essentials with you. Second, in case your suitcases are delayed in being delivered, you'll have a bathing suit or dinner attire on hand and can enjoy activities right away, rather than waiting for your bags. Finally, never pack valuables in your checked bags. Carry all cameras (and memory cards), electronics, jewelry and prescription medicine in your carry-on.
Pro Tip: Apple iTags or Tile electronic tags can provide peace of mind. Put them inside your checked luggage and track your suitcases' location on your smartphone. I put mine in each bag I carry, checked or carry-on.
- 2. Be Smart About Your Checked Bags, Too** - If you tend to over pack, lay out all the clothes you think you'll need, then only pack 1/2 the clothing and 3/4 of the shoes. If you're traveling with family, consider packing half of your things in one suitcase and half in a separate one (and have your spouse and kids do the same). That way, if one bag gets lost, then everyone will have some clothing -- rather than one person having nothing. To save space, roll your clothes rather than fold them. Compression bags are exceptional for keeping things protected and neatly packed.
- 3. Embrace the Layered Look** - Think in layers when you pack your clothing. You will want a rain jacket and sweatshirt in tropical destinations for those less-than-perfect island days. Travelers near mountains have been known to need everything from bathing suits and short-sleeve tops to warm fleece jackets, hats and gloves. Rather than pack clothes for multiple temperatures, bring cardigans or jackets to wear in multiple layers if it gets cold. Remember a hat for warmth or sun protection plus sunglasses. Scarves are extremely useful and fashionable, so bring at least one. They can provide warmth or sun protection, and when added to your evening outfit, they can distract your dinner companions from realizing that you are still wearing the same tee and pants you wore all day!
- 4. Toiletries** – Your room will have basic toiletries like soap and shampoo or pack your favorite brands if you are particular. Same goes for hair dryers. Most rooms come with weak dryers, so if you're picky, pack your own.
- 5. Pack an Extra Bag** - You'll likely pick up at least a few souvenirs during your trip, so you'll need room in your luggage to bring them home. A foldable duffel, tote or backpack won't take up much space in your suitcase, and you can fill it up and check it for the flight home. It can be useful to carry maps, water bottles, etc. on day trips or to the pool.
- 6. Keep All Important Documents with You** - Always make sure you bring your passport and confirmation documents -- and never pack them in your checked luggage. Bring your driver's license if you will be renting a car. Make sure your name on your passport EXACTLY matches your reservations. If you need visas or immunizations for your destination, carry those with you, as well. Email a copy of your passport to yourself so that you can access it remotely in an emergency.

My Favorite Essentials:

- Apple [AirTags](#)
- Binoculars
- Sunglasses
- Travel power strip with usb ports in case you need extra outlets
- Phone and camera charger cords plus spare batteries
- Extra camera memory cards (take photos on multiple cards so that you can't lose all your trip photos if your camera or camera bag gets lost)
- Day pack or tote – great for heading to the pool or on day trips and can double as a dirty clothes bag
- Reusable water bottle – perfect to fill in the airport and carry during tours
- Motion sickness bands or meds (just in case!)

Money Matters

Cash

You can exchange dollars for foreign currency at a bank at home before your trip, exchange cash dollars upon arrival, or make an ATM withdrawal upon arrival at your destination. Credit cards are accepted most everywhere, but you will want some small denominations for cash tips, cab fares and small purchases. How much you carry depends on your own spending habits and confidence in carrying cash. As a rule of thumb, plan on carrying about as much cash in your travel wallet as you might carry in your own currency when at home. Most foreign currencies use a coin for denomination of 5 or less instead of a paper bill (picture a US \$1 bill as a coin the size of a quarter instead), so please be prepared to utilize a coin purse.

Credit Card or Debit (ATM) Card

All major card networks are widely accepted across the globe. Just make sure your card has no foreign transaction fees, otherwise, you could pay a fee up to 3% of every purchase made abroad. If you're looking to make cash withdrawals, consider using a debit card to avoid cash advance APRs and fees. You could also try withdrawing money with a prepaid travel card, but only if it's loaded with foreign currency. Otherwise, you'll pay a foreign transaction fee, which is higher than what debit cards incur. Make sure transactions are made in the local currency NOT converted into dollars or you risk paying a worse conversion rate than your credit card back will offer.

To avoid hassles:

- All bank cards and credit cards have a 4-digit PIN number, even if your bank or card issuer has not given it to you. Ask for one for each of your cards before traveling. Then you'll be able to use your card in an ATM or swipe it at a point-of-sale terminal and authorize the transaction with your PIN number.
- Bring more than one card in case one should become lost or compromised on your trip
- Notify your bank and credit card company of your travel plans before leaving the US

Staying in Touch

Your Smart Phone

Please check on foreign service charges with your cellular service provider before you leave home. You may keep in touch with people back at home by utilizing any of the dozens of popular wifi communication apps (Facebook, What's App, iPhone's FaceTime or Message, WeChat, etc.). I recommend making sure you have some ability to send/receive text messages and phone calls should you need to communicate with a driver or guide or confirm any of your travel plans while in your destination.

Helpful Links to Learn More about Your Destination

<https://voyagesbyjeni.com/tools/>

US Department of State <https://travel.state.gov/>

Lonely Planet <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/>

Fodor's Travel <https://www.fodors.com/>

Rick Steves (for Europe) on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/c/ricksteves/featured>

Viator – a great source for local activities, guides, tickets, etc.

<https://www.viator.com/?pid=P00003710&uid=U00032778&mcid=58086>

Some of My Favorite Gear

[Apple AirTags](#) or [Tile](#) or similar tracker devices. Put one in each bag for peace of mind!

[Amazon Basics Packing Cubes](#) and how to use them <https://youtu.be/ZsmninUZqro> (This video is geared towards women, but the advice is solid for all travelers).

[Travel Power Strip with USB Ports \(any brand will do\)](#)

[Neck Wallet \(any brand will do\)](#)

[ChicoBag Packable Tote](#)

[Lonely Planet Phrasebooks](#)

[Travel Journal for Kids](#)