

Champion Services Travel: *International Travel Tips*



How to Pack

- Stack your clothes in piles on your bed. After assessing your inventory, remove half of what you think you need because the truth of the matter is, you really don't need it. Unless you are going on a formal cruise or business trip, leave your suits, evening gowns and shoes at home. Keep your wardrobe simple, casual, comfortable and versatile. Use hotel shampoo/body wash or bring travel size detergent to wash clothes either in your hotel room or at a local Laundromat. To save on luggage weight, consider using the hotel's toiletries that are replenished daily!
- To avoid excess creasing or wrinkling, roll your clothes instead of folding them. Another alternative is to wrap clothing in tissue paper or in plastic. Plastic laundry bags are great also.
- Save space and use packing cubs! Stuff socks in shoes. Utilize all pockets in clothing and compartments in your luggage.
- Do not pack valuables in suitcases/backpacks. In fact, valuables should be left at home.
- **Traveling light is key;** stick with one carry-on and one piece of check-in luggage, preferably with wheels. You will ultimately save on skycap tips and taxi fares. In some countries, taxi drivers charge for every piece of luggage.
- Mark suitcases with a color ribbon or sticker. Make sure your name is visible on your luggage when arriving at your hotel for room delivery convenience. Today, due to the extensive amount of lost luggage, we invest in trackers. Place them in your luggage and track your luggage everywhere.
- Pack underwear and an extra set of clothing in your carry-on. Just in case your luggage is lost, you will have an additional outfit on hand.
- If traveling as a twosome, pack half your belongings in your suitcase, and the other half in your travel companion's suitcase. If your luggage doesn't arrive on time, you will still have some of your belongings until the airline tracks down your lost article. Sometimes this may take a day or two, especially if you fly on connecting flights and/or are traveling internationally.

Clothing Couture

Winning the War on your Wardrobe

You know better than anyone what you do and do not wear, and what you will and will not use. Keep this in mind as you pack, but aim for a diverse arrangement along the lines of the following:

- A blazer or jacket. You want something that is comfortable yet will dress an outfit up or down depending on accessories.
- Dress pants. Nothing too fancy, just a good pair of comfortable slacks.
- Khakis or jeans are acceptable. However, khaki is a lighter color, and in some regions, it may identify you as a tourist. Darker colors are generally safer. If you choose jeans, ensure they are clean and presentable, appearing put-together yet functional.
- A simple, neutral-colored shirt or turtleneck (depending on the expected weather).
A button-up shirt or blouse.
If space permits or you desire more variety, include a narrow, knee-length skirt to save packing space.
- A nice, simple shirt or turtleneck (depending on expected weather). This should also be a neutral color.
- A button up shirt or blouse.
- If you have the space (or want more diversity) add a skirt to the mix. Stick to ones that are narrow and shorter (knee length rather than full length) to save on packing space.
- Pack no more than three pairs of shoes, including those worn on the plane, as they occupy significant space. Ensure your footwear is appropriate for your trip. For extensive sightseeing, bring a clean pair of comfortable loafers or similar. Avoid tennis shoes, which often identify tourists. For evenings, pack low-heeled dress shoes or versatile sandals suitable for both day and night. Closed-toe shoes are recommended, as many churches and venues prohibit open-toed footwear.
- A large scarf or sarong can brighten an outfit and takes up almost no space. Pack fun, inexpensive jewelry and accessories to spice up your outfits. Clip-on earrings are a versatile addition; they can be attached to anything, from a collar to sandal straps, for an instant dressy look.

Ensure all packed items are interchangeable. For example, your jacket should complement both jeans and dress pants, and your sweater should work with the jacket and any trousers. Consider a simple, basic color palette, as dark colors are practical for travel due to their ability to conceal dirt and stains. Select one item in a tasteful, fun color or pattern to add visual interest.

HOW TO BLEND IN ABROAD

1. Be culturally sensitive. You are in a foreign country, and respecting local customs, culture, and services is essential. Ascertain if wearing shorts in a church is acceptable or forbidden. When in doubt, cover your skin. This was learned the hard way in Israel when nearly tackled by an Arab man in an Arab village for wearing shorts in a Christian church.
 2. Learn ten basic phrases (hello, goodbye, thank you, passport, please) in the local language before traveling. This is an excellent way to enhance the trip by practicing a new language. Consider taking a foreign language class for a few weeks or months before traveling. This can significantly enhance the trip experience. For instance, knowing how to politely ask for directions to the nearest restroom can be very helpful. Berlitz offers suitable classes for this purpose.
 3. Learn ten basic phrases (e.g., "hello," "goodbye," "thank you," "passport," "please") in the local language before traveling. Practicing a new language enhances the travel experience. Consider taking a foreign language class for a few weeks or months before your trip. This can significantly enrich your journey; for instance, my travel companions appreciated my ability to politely ask for directions to the nearest restroom. Berlitz classes are an excellent option.
 4. Respect the local language. Avoid laughing if a foreign word sounds amusing or resembles an "inappropriate" English word. When communicating in a foreign country, remember that you are the visitor. Even in countries where English is prevalent, some individuals may not speak it. It is best not to assume they do; politely ask if they speak English.
- If you are visiting a country where English is a secondary language or spoken by a minority, accents and local phrases can still be challenging. Be prepared to speak clearly and consider simpler or alternative ways to express yourself to facilitate understanding. It is remarkable how much can be lost in translation. Do not assume familiarity with American slang. Americans have widely different pronunciations depending on their home region, and you may have an accent to someone without realizing it.
5. Keep the volume down. Nothing makes me cringe more when traveling abroad than hearing an obnoxious group of foreigners. As an American, I am especially sensitive to other Americans being insensitively loud. I distinguish them from Canadian and British English speakers because they do not seem as loud or perceived as crass as Americans. Keep it cool and use your "inside voices" 24/7, unless, of course, you are at a sporting event and the local team wins.
 6. Absorb the culture using all five senses. Breathe in the air. Taste spices and culinary combinations. Step outside of your safe hotel and eat where the locals do. Do not ask hotel staff for recommendations, as they may have agreements with specific establishments. Instead, ask a local shopkeeper or explore until you find an eatery popular with residents. This allows you to discover local traditions, whether it's flamenco in Spain, wine-tasting in Italy, or a siesta in Mexico.
 7. Research your destination thoroughly. Read books, browse online resources, and speak with experienced travelers to gather insights on positive and negative experiences. Even 30 minutes of preparation can help you avoid common pitfalls, save money and time, and enhance your trip.
 8. Be discreet with your camera. While the country may appear picturesque, it is also other people's home. If photographing individuals not in your group, be as inconspicuous and nonchalant as possible. If you sense someone is uncomfortable with your attention, respect their privacy.
 9. Manage money matters efficiently. Avoid fumbling with money or patting pockets to locate it. Organize your money and documents in private before going out in public. Use a money pouch worn around your waist and under clothing for essentials like your passport, bulk cash, and cards. Diversify your payment methods with an ATM card, credit card, foreign currency, and a couple of traveler's checks. Keep each of these in different locations (suitcase, socks, money pouch) for security.
 10. Group travel abroad has its own special considerations. By nature, you are likely a group of like-minded individuals excited for the journey and happy to be traveling together. However, it can be easy to become careless within a group mentality. In addition to the tips above, if you are the designated trip planner, it is best to work with a travel professional. For additional travel tips, visit the US travel tips with:

<http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips>

