

“Five Easy Pieces” Europe Packing List

The secret to easy travel is packing light. Whether you're away for two weeks or two months, never take more than you can carry up two flights of stairs or easily bench press into a plane's overhead compartment. This packing list covers most everything you'll need for your European trip, including what to wear and carry with you on the plane. I'm a woman, so men please adjust accordingly. In fact, everyone has unique requirements, so I encourage you to print this list and modify it to create your own personal Europe packing list.

My packing list is built around the “five easy pieces” I take with me on every trip to Europe:

1) A BACKPACK FOR MY CARRY-ON BAG: I use a fashionable black backpack large enough to hold my 13-inch laptop, electronics, power cords and anything I don't want in my checked bag. This includes prescription medications, vitamins and a change of clothes.

2) ONE PERSONAL ITEM — A LIGHTWEIGHT FOLDABLE TOTE BAG: Be sure it has a zipper, so you don't lose anything when going through security. This contains everything I'll need during the long flight. And it makes a great shopping bag. Some airlines are restricting the size of personal items, so check your airline's website before you fly.

3) SMALL CROSSBODY PURSE: I used the Baggallini Everyday Crossbody Bag in black. It's elegant for any occasion and has a built-in wallet. Crossbody bags stay safe and secure by your body. Since I can take only one personal item on board, I put the crossbody bag into my tote bag before going through security. Once I'm on the plane, I take the purse out and put it over my body.

4) NECK WALLET: I prefer a slim neck wallet that I can wear under my shirt or jacket, but there are many options for securing your passport and valuables from pickpockets, including money belts you wear around your waist or loop around your belt. I don't use it every day, but it works well in large cities where pickpockets are prevalent and when traveling in busy airports and train stations.

5) CHECKED BAG: I use a standard-size carry-on bag with wheels, 22" x 14" x 9". Anything more would be too heavy for me. It expands to accommodate last minute shopping.

IF YOU WANT TO GO CARRY-ON ONLY:

If all your liquids fit into 3.4 ounce containers in a one-quart plastic bag, and your bag meets the airlines carry-on size limits, I encourage you to go carry-on only. You won't have to worry about losing your luggage or paying checked baggage fees. I need to bring special creams that are not available in Europe and I don't like lifting 40 pounds over my head, so I choose to check my bag. That said, most toiletries and cosmetics can be purchased in Europe. However, if you choose to bring your carry-on-sized suitcase onboard, you'll be limited to one personal item.

Here's what I pack in each of my five easy pieces:

1) A BACKPACK FOR MY CARRY-ON BAG

Since you'll be carrying this on your back, keep items to a minimum. The question to ask is, could I live without this item for a few days if my checked bag were lost? If not, then put it in your carry-on.

Electronics:

- Laptop and power cable
- European adapters (This is just a plug adapter, not a converter. So be sure any electronics and appliances you pack are dual voltage, meaning they work on both 110-120V and 220-240V. Bring at least two as they are not readily available in Europe.)
- Two 64 mb flash drives (To back up photos and docs on laptop)
- SanDisk microSD to SD Memory Card Adapter (To transfer photos from smart phone)
- Other electronics and their power cables
 - _____
 - _____

Personal items:

- Change of clothes: One t-shirt and undergarments.
- Computer glasses
- Prescription sunglasses
- Eyeglasses cleaner and cloth
- Photocopies of all credit cards, international driver's license and passport

Clothes to wear during the flight:

- Comfortable shoes: I usually wear my heaviest pair, which are black Asics walking shoes.
- Extra pair of thin socks, which I take off after walking through security, unless I'm lucky enough to get a pre-TSA boarding pass.
- Compression socks (Do not go on a long flight without them.)
- Pants or a skirt that is not too tight
- Business casual top
- Raincoat with removable hood or light jacket depending on the weather

2) ONE PERSONAL ITEM — A LIGHTWEIGHT FOLDABLE TOTE BAG:

Fill your tote bag with items that will make you more comfortable on the plane.

- One quart-size plastic bag to put all the liquids you will need during the flight.
Remember the 3-1-1 rule: 3.4 ounces or less in one quart-size plastic bag. I like to carry:
 - Toothpaste
 - Face cream
 - Hand cream
 - BB cream or liquid makeup
 - _____
 - _____
- Travel documents:
 - Trip itinerary and reservation print outs
 - Boarding pass

Travel Tip: Clothes for Europe

- Color coordinate around two neutrals that you can mix and match and layer easily, such as black and grey, black and tan, or brown and tan. Be sure your shoes can coordinate with any outfit.
- Europeans generally dress conservatively and in neutrals and a little dressier than the average American. If you want to stand out to pickpockets and others as an American tourist, wear loud colors, t-shirts with logos, shorts and a baseball cap. If you want to blend in and feel more like a local, stick to solid colors and add a colorful scarf. Why not buy one as a souvenir after you arrive?
- Packing cubes are a great way to organize your clothes, electronics and toiletries. They also minimize wrinkles in your clothes.

- Passes for airport lounge (if applicable)
- _____
- Medicine and vitamins (I fill up a pill case with anything I'll need for the next 48 hours.)
 - Prescription medications (bring full bottles if not over 3.4 ounces of liquid)
 - Sleep aid
 - Vitamins
 - Over the counter medications
 - _____
- Sleep mask
- Water bottle
- Toothbrush
- Headphones (Earbuds or noise cancellation headphones)

3) SMALL CROSSBODY PURSE

- Smart phone
- Driver's license
- AAA card
- A few dollars
- A few euros
- Lipstick

4) NECK WALLET

- Passport
- Visas (if needed)
- International driver's license
- Credit cards
- Euros

5) CHECKED BAG

Clothes:

- Bras for one week
- Lightweight, quick-drying underwear for one week
- Swimsuit
- Lightweight PJs that don't take up a lot of space. If you're cold, you can always add a layer. I prefer the type of PJs that are shorts and a top. They are modest enough that if the bathroom is down the hall, I won't need a robe.

Travel Tip: Edit Your Clothes

Clothing is the area where most of us over pack and lug around far more outfits than we need.

Lay out everything you want to take and then remove 20 percent. Trust me, you won't need it.

Even if you're seeing the same people every day, there are many ways to make the same outfit look different — throw on a scarf or layer two tops.

And if the weather turns cold and you need an extra sweater there are plenty of places to buy one.

- Enough pairs of your favorite quick-drying black socks for one week
- Second pair of comfortable shoes. I bring black Dansko Mary Janes or sandals depending on the weather. (Be sure your shoes are so comfy you can walk five miles in them. And break them in before your trip.)
- Flip flops (I wear these as slippers when I'm in my home away from home. Also great for wearing at the pool, beach or public shower.)
- Four additional tops suitable for the season.
- One additional pair of pants (In hot weather it would be capri pants.)
- One skirt or dress (One you can wear during the day or dress up for evening wear. I prefer a modest length, either just below the knee or maxi.)

- Cardigan sweater
- Blazer or jacket in a neutral color
- Warm weather clothes if traveling in winter, early spring or late fall:
 - Isotoner gloves
 - Hat
 - Warm scarf

- Raincoat liner depending on the weather. (The liner makes my raincoat warm enough to wear in 32-degree weather when paired with a sweater.)
- Another option is a light down jacket that can fit into a small packing cube. But be sure to bring an umbrella.

Toiletries:

- Sunscreen
- Makeup
- Skincare
- Other toiletries
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
- Tweezers
- Cuticle scissors
- Nail file
- Nail polish (I keep it simple by bringing one bottle of clear polish so I don't have to pack nail polish remover, unless it's summer and I need to polish my toes.)

First aid, medicine and vitamins:

- Advil or your favorite pain reliever
- Band-Aids
- Antibiotic ointment, such as Bacitracin
- Sleep aid
- Prescription medicines
- Vitamins (It takes up a lot of space to pack three-months' worth of vitamins, but vitamins are not that easy to find in Europe. However, I pare it down to the essentials for traveling.)

Personal items:

- Glasses repair kit
- Tiny sewing kit
- Eyeglasses prescription (If I lose my glasses, I can splurge on a new pair of Euro frames.)
- Small shopping or laundry bag (Or pick one up in a European grocery. They make great souvenirs.)
- ~~Hair dryer/curling iron/hair straightener~~ (I crossed this off my list because most Airbnbs have a hair dryer and I don't bother styling my hair when I travel.)
- Sarong (I use this as my yoga mat and as a picnic blanket, but it can also be used as a beach coverup or skirt.)
- Laundry soap (A tiny package of Travelon laundry soap sheets for doing hand laundry. Or a 2 oz. bottle of Bronner's Pure-Castile Liquid Soap, which can be used to wash clothes, as a shampoo and as a body wash.)
- Tide to Go pen (for spot removal)
- Portable smoke detector/carbon monoxide detector (I highly recommend you pack at least a carbon monoxide detector. Most Airbnbs in Europe do not have carbon monoxide detectors, and many don't even have a smoke detector.)
- Magnifying makeup mirror
- Foldable wide-brimmed visor or hat

Final Thoughts on Packing

Don't be tempted to pack every gizmo on the market or anything I've suggested if you're not going to use it. Less really is more when you travel. I'd rather have to buy something I forgot, than drag something around for two months that I never use.

Don't worry if you don't get it right the first time — nobody does. Packing is a matter of trial and error. And thus, we continue the quest for the ultimate packing list.

Enjoy the journey!

