
The Perfectly Prepared Post-Pandemic Packing List for Slow Traveling Europe

How to use this packing list

That title is a mouthful, but I like alliteration. By no means is this list perfect, and yours doesn't have to be either. The important thing is to have a list. A good packing list not only makes packing easier, but helps make your journey easier and more enjoyable. In this publication, I share my packing list and what has worked for me after much trial and error. Everyone has unique requirements, so I encourage you to print this list and modify it to create your personalized packing list for slow traveling Europe. I've left some empty lines for you to fill with your own travel necessities. This list covers 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.

Unfortunately, the Covid virus is here to stay. Although, with more people vaccinated and boosted, I've felt more confident to travel. I still take every precaution to protect myself and others, and I hope you will too. The last thing we want is to get sick while traveling in another country. I've included the health and safety items I pack for every trip.

My packing list is built around the "five easy pieces" I take on three-month trips to Europe where I am renting a car at the airport. I've tried many types of luggage, carry-on bags, and personal items. It really comes down to personal choice and how you plan to travel. Always check with your airline for their specific restrictions on the size and weight of carry-on bags, personal items and checked bags, which can vary by airline, the destination, and seating class. The first rule of packing starts with one basic question:

How are you traveling?

If you're an American reading this, you'll most likely be flying from the US into a European city. How you pack will depend on how you travel once you arrive.

Traveling by train, bus, and/or subway

My rule of thumb: Do not bring more luggage than you can haul up and down stairs. I've learned from experience that not all train stations and subway systems have elevators or escalators. I've encountered train stations and Paris Metro stops where I had to drag my bag up and down multiple staircases. My recommendation is to pack one 21-inch, carry-on bag. If all your liquids, gels, and aerosols fit into 3.4-ounce containers in a one-quart plastic bag, bring that bag onboard. You can always buy additional toiletries, skin care, shampoo, etc. when you reach your destination. But if you need to bring special creams or skincare over 3.4 ounces, you'll have to check your bag, unless you have a prescription for those liquid/gel/aerosol items. If you do, be sure to bring the liquids/gels/aerosols in the original containers along with your prescription.

If you check your bag, don't bring a second bag with wheels as your carry-on. When you are boarding trains and subways it's best to only have one suitcase on wheels. You might think you can stack one bag on top of the larger one. However, it's nearly impossible to roll two stacked bags along cobblestone streets. Stick to one small suitcase and use a backpack or a tote bag with an over the shoulder strap to carry everything else. This will leave you with one free hand to hang on to something when the train, bus or subway gets moving. You could also bring a small crossbody purse or waist bag. Just be sure you can handle the weight of all these pieces. Remember the number one rule for easy travel: pack light.

Renting a car

If you're picking up your car at the airport, you have the luxury of bringing a larger suitcase and even a carry-on with wheels, preferably one with a strap that can slip over the handle of your suitcase so you're only pushing one bag. Airports have smooth floors to glide your bag along and they have elevators and escalators. For my checked bag, I take either a 21- or 24-inch bag depending on how long I'll be traveling. For my carry-on, I usually take a small, lightweight, under-the-seat bag with wheels, which I can easily lift and fit into the overhead bin. I also bring a backpack purse for my personal item, which allows me to keep one hand free.

Recently I've been bringing items to my home in France. So to maximize my load, I bring a 20-inch carry-on onboard, which is slightly smaller than my 21-inch bag, along with a large tote bag with a cross-body strap for my personal item. The tote bag fits easily over my carry-on, so I don't have to lug the tote. I keep the smaller carry-on light enough to heft into the overhead bin.

Many of the items mentioned on my packing list are available in [The Bringing Europe Home Travel Boutique](#). As an Amazon Associate, I earn a small commission from qualifying purchases made through links to Amazon, at no additional cost to you. I only recommend products I have personally used or which are similar in nature.

My "Five Easy Pieces"

1) MY PERSONAL ITEM: A backpack purse or tote bag with a shoulder strap

I've tried everything, and I find a backpack purse provides the best even distribution of weight across my body. Crossbody bags put stress on one side of the body. Tote bags stress the shoulder. There are so many fashionable and good-looking backpack purses to choose from. A backpack purse also makes a great daypack while traveling. If you want to carry more, bring a larger, regular-sized backpack that fits within the airline's personal item size restrictions and pack your purse inside it.

2) SOMETHING TO SECURE YOUR VALUABLES: A waist bag worn as a crossbody bag

It's imperative to secure your most valuable items while traveling: your passport, your money, and your credit cards. However, don't keep all your valuables in one place. More on this later. A waist bag, also known as a fanny pack, belt bag or bum bag, fits around your waist, ties into your belt loops, or is worn across your body.

This 80s trend is experiencing a revival with more aesthetically pleasing designs and is now considered fashionable — even in Paris. I keep my most valuable items in my waist bag. Going through security I take it off, place it in the bin and cover it with my jacket. Since the bag is attached to you, the airline should not count this as your personal item. But if they do, you can easily slip it into your personal item or carry-on bag.

Another option to secure your valuables is a neck wallet or money belt. I've found these to be cumbersome and blatantly obvious when you have to reach into your pants or shirt to pull out your passport. However, when traveling by train, subway, or bus, or knowing you'll be in a crowded tourist area, these are a good option. In these instances, I either wear a neck wallet or my travel pants, which have six built-in, pickpocket-proof pockets. But don't make the mistake I did and wear travel pants at the airport because you'll have to empty all those pockets when you go through security and the last thing you want to do is throw your most valuable items in the bin where anyone could grab them.

3) CARRY-ON BAG: An under-the-seat-sized bag with wheels

This bag is light and small enough at 15 x 13 x 8 inches to easily slip into the overhead bin. It holds my 13-inch laptop, power cords, jewelry, and other valuables I don't want in my checked bag. The question to ask yourself 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. But remember, you'll have to bench press that puppy over your head to get it in the bin. So, keep it light. For more tips on packing light, see my post [*Do This at the End of Every Trip.*](#)

Another advantage of an under-the-seat-sized bag is that you can take it on the low-cost, intercontinental airlines like EasyJet and Ryan Air. Be sure to check the carry-on (or in-cabin) bag size restrictions for each airline. They are strictly enforced.

4) CLOTHES, COATS, AND EXTRAS

Read on for how to legally bring a few extra pieces onboard.

5) CHECKED BAG: 24-inch hard-sided case

I use either a standard-size, Samsonite, hard-sided, carry-on bag with wheels, that's 22 x 14 x 9 inches, or my new DELSEY Paris St. Tropez hard-sided suitcase that's 23.75 x 16.25 x 10.75 inches. Both suitcases are expandable to accommodate my European purchases.

Here's what I pack in each of my "Five Easy Pieces"

1) MY PERSONAL ITEM: A backpack purse

These are the items I store under the seat in front of me. It's everything I need to feel comfortable during the flight.

- One quart-size plastic bag with all liquid, gels and aerosols needed during the flight. Remember TSA's 3-1-1 rule. All your liquids, gels and aerosols must be in travel-size containers that are 3.4 ounces or 100 milliliters or less, and they must all fit into one quart-size plastic bag. I like to carry small containers, generally way less than 3.4 ounces, of the following:
 - Toothpaste
 - Face cream
 - Hand cream
 - BB cream
 - Bacitracin
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- Extra disposable masks

Travel Tip: I feel strongly that the most important thing you can do to keep yourself safe while traveling is to wear a mask while at the airport, in the plane, and on any public transportation. And not a cloth mask, but an N95 or KN95 mask. Bring a couple extras in your personal item, as you could easily be traveling as long as 24 hours door-to-door on an overseas trip.

- Medicine and vitamins: I fill a tiny pill box with any over-the-counter medications I might need for a few days. I fill another tiny pill box with my vitamins for the day. If you are taking prescription medications, put those in your personal item or carry-on bag in the original bottles.

- Antibacterial wipes: Use these to wipe down your seat, tray table and headrest.
- A pen
- Sleep mask
- Water bottle
- Noise cancelling earbuds
- Kindle
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2) SOMETHING TO SECURE YOUR VALUABLES: A waist bag

- Smart phone
- Driver's license
- Passport
- Boarding pass
- AAA card
- Vaccine card
- Visas (if needed)
- International driver's license
- Credit card
- Euros or other currencies
- Facial tissue
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Travel Tip: Don't keep all your money or credit cards in one place. Put some in your carry-on bag and/or your personal item. Do not put anything of significant value in your checked baggage.

3) CARRY-ON BAG: An under-the-seat-sized bag with wheels

Even though it's an under-the-seat-sized bag, I place it in the overhead bin, so I have ample leg room.

Electronics

- Laptop, power cord, mouse, and computer glasses

Travel Tip: I keep the above items in a neoprene computer case, so if I want to use my laptop during the flight, I can easily pull it out of my carry-on bag, either before or during the flight. If your personal item is large enough to hold your laptop, I would recommend keeping it there for easy access during the flight. The newer hard-sided carryon bags with a front pocket are great for easy access to your laptop.

- Power cords for cell phone, Kindle, electric toothbrush, and any other chargeable devices
- External hard drive
- Two 64 mb flash drives: For quick backups or sharing of photos and docs.
- SanDisk microSD to SD Memory Card Adapter: Used to transfer photos from smart phone.
- European plug adapters with USB ports: This is just a plug adapter, not a power converter.

Travel Tip: Be sure any electronics and appliances you pack are dual voltage, meaning they work on both 110-120V and 220-240V. Different countries in Europe have different types of plugs, so select an adapter for the countries you will be visiting. Bring at least two adapters in case you lose one, as they are not readily available in Europe.

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Travel documents

- Trip itinerary and reservation print outs: I keep these in a slim folder.
- Passes for airport lounge: If applicable
- A printed copy of my passport, vaccine card, driver's license, and all credit cards: You can also email it to yourself.
- Eyeglasses prescription: If I lose my glasses, I can splurge on a new pair of Euro frames.
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Clothes and personal items

- Change of clothes: One top, one pair of jeans and undergarments.
- Prescription sunglasses
- Eyeglasses cleaner and cloth
- Electric toothbrush
- A week's worth of vitamins
- A large, light-weight tote bag with zipper

Travel Tip: Why the tote bag? Airlines are busier than ever and if the plane is full, you may be forced to check your carry-on bag, especially if you're bringing the maximum-size, 21-inch carry-on. If this happens, you can quickly throw your laptop, jewelry, and other valuables into the tote bag. I've had this happen on more than one occasion, just as I'm about to step on the plane.

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4) CLOTHES, COATS, AND EXTRAS

Clothes to wear during the flight

The temperature on planes can run from roasting hot to extremely chilly. Dress in comfortable layers of loose-fitting clothes.

- Loose fitting pants or a skirt
- Business casual top
- Cardigan sweater
- Comfortable shoes

Travel Tip: Wear your heaviest shoes to save weight in your carry-on and checked bags. And be sure they are comfortable as in large airports you may be walking a mile or more. For me, they're my Asics walking shoes.

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. Bring shoes that coordinate with all your outfits.
- Although European fashion isn't as conservative as it once was, Europeans, especially in big cities, are generally more toned-down and dressier in their attire than Americans. If you want to stand out to pickpockets 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 neutral 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.

- Extra pair of thin socks, which you can take off after walking through security.
- Compression socks: Do not go on a long-haul flight without them.
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Extra items you can take for free

In addition to a personal item and a carry-on bag, airlines let you bring the following (and more) without additional charge, which you can wear, hold, or clip to your carry-on or personal item. That said, we only have two hands, so don't burden yourself with too many separate items that you might lose track of. For me, the first four are necessities. Before traveling, check your airline for their specific carry-on policies.

- A jacket, raincoat or even a heavy coat depending on the time of year: You can use it as a blanket during the flight or store it in the overhead bin.
- Neck pillow: Tie it on the outside of your personal item or carry-on bag.
- An umbrella: I usually put this in the side compartment of my carry-on bag.
- A scarf: If you don't feel like wearing your scarf, tie it around your personal item.
- A hat: But you'll need to wear it as you board.
- Reading material or your Kindle
- Food or merchandise purchased in the airport: Be sure they give you a bag with handles.
- Camera/camera bag: Why not strap it around your neck? The airport is the one place I don't mind looking like a tourist.
- And many more items specific to your requirements, such as a child safety seat, diaper bag, and medical devices such as a collapsible wheelchair, cane, or CPAP machine.
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Travel Tip: As of July 2023, the TSA is still allowing one 12-ounce liquid hand sanitizer container per passenger in your carry-on bag. However, these containers will need to be put into a bin and may require extra TSA screening time. Instead, I suggest you bring a small, portable bottle of hand sanitizer (under 3.4 ounces) which can be attached to your personal item or your waist bag. Just be sure to put it in your quart-size liquids/gels/aerosols bag before going through security.

5) CHECKED BAG: 24-inch hard-sided case

Clothes

These are in addition to what I am wearing and what is in my carry-on bag. Whether I'm going for two weeks or two months, I take the same amount of clothes.

- Four to five tops suitable for the season
- Two pairs of pants/jeans and a pair of shorts if the weather is warm
- One dress that I 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
- Bras for one week
- Lightweight, quick-drying underpants for one week
- Swimsuit: Depending on the time of year
- Lightweight, quick-drying PJs that don't take up a lot of space: If I'm cold, I 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.
- Enough quick-drying socks for one week
- A second pair of comfortable shoes: Depending on the season, this could be my Dansko Mary Janes, loafers, or Birkenstock sandals.

Travel Tip: 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 my Birkenstock Gizeh Eva's as slippers when I'm in my home away from home as they have great arch support. Any plastic flip-flops are great for wearing at the pool, beach, or public shower.

Additional warm weather clothes if traveling in winter, early spring, or late fall

- An additional sweater or two
- Gloves
- Hat
- Warm scarf

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, such as throwing 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.

Raincoat with a liner: A liner can make a raincoat warm enough to wear in 32-degree weather when paired with a sweater.

Traveling in the summer, I like to bring a lightweight Columbia rain shell that I can roll up in my day pack.

Another option is a down puffer jacket or coat that can be compressed into a small packing cube: But if you wear it in the rain, be sure to bring an umbrella.

Toiletries

Sunscreen

Makeup

Skincare

Deodorant

Body cream

Tweezers, cuticle scissors and nail file

Nail polish and nail polish remover

Health and safety

N95 masks. Be sure to leave some for the plane ride home.

Portable smoke detector/carbon monoxide detector: Most Airbnbs in Europe do not have carbon monoxide detectors, and many don't even have a smoke detector.

Seat belt cutter + car window breaker: They make travel-size ones you can tie around your rearview mirror and easily detach if your car is ever submerged in water.

First aid, medicine, and vitamins

- Over-the-counter medications: Most of these would be easy to buy in Europe, but I still take small bottles of my favorites so I don't have to run out to a pharmacy, which may or may not be open, and struggle with translating the package directions.
- Band-Aids, antibiotic ointment, and other first-aid supplies
- Vitamins and supplements: Packing three-months' worth takes up a lot of space, but certain vitamins and supplements are not easy to find in Europe.
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Miscellaneous items

- Glasses repair kit
- Tiny sewing kit
- Small shopping bag: Or buy one at a European grocery. They make great souvenirs.
- Hair dryer/curling iron/hair straightener: Be sure any electronics you bring are dual voltage. They will be labeled 110/220. I don't travel with hair styling tools as I prefer to air dry my curly hair.
- Sarong or Turkish Towel: I use this as my yoga mat and as a picnic blanket, but it can also be used as a beach coverup, skirt or beach towel.
- 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.
- Plastic bag: A plastic bag is handy for carrying wet swimsuits, and they are hard to find in Europe.
- Tide to Go pen: For immediate spot removal
- Magnifying makeup mirror
- Rollable wide-brimmed visor or hat
- Portable luggage scale
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Final Thoughts on Packing

As I mentioned before, many of the items on my packing list are available on [The Bringing Europe Home Travel Boutique](#). As an Amazon Associate, I earn a small commission from qualifying purchases made through links to Amazon, at no additional cost to you. I only recommend products I have personally used or which are similar in nature.

However, 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 used.

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!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joni', written in a cursive style.