

Champion Services Travel: *International Travel Tips*



How to Pack

- Stack your clothes in piles on your bed/sofa. 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 dress shoes at home. Keep your wardrobe simple, casual and versatile. Bring Woolite, and wash clothes either in your hotel room or at a local Laundromat.
- In order 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 laundry bags.
- Save space by stuffing 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 European countries, taxi drivers charge for every piece of luggage.
- Mark suitcases with a color ribbon or sticker.
- 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.
- For trips less than two weeks in length, purchase toiletries such as shampoo, saline solution and toothpaste in sample-size containers.
- 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 anybody what you do and don't wear what you will and won't use. Keep this in mind as you pack things, but aim for a diverse arrangement something 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 slacks.
- Khakis or jeans. Keep in mind, however, that khaki is a lighter color, and in some regions it will brand you as a tourist. Darker colors are usually safest. If you opt for jeans, make sure they are a clean, respectable pair; you want something that looks put together but is functional as well.
- 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.
- If you have space for even more, try to pick more shirts instead of more pants. Shirts are smaller, and the extras will take up far less space while still offering a wider selection.
- Pack no more than three pairs of shoes (including the ones you wear on the plane). They take up far too much space. Make sure you bring something appropriate for your own trip; if you plan on extensive sight seeing, make sure you have a clean looking pair of comfortable loafers or similar. Remember that tennis shoes usually scream tourist. For evening, pack a low-heeled dress shoe, or choose a sandal you can wear in both daytime and night. (Close toe is best, as many churches and other locations do not permit open toed footwear).
- A large scarf and/or a sarong. A colorful scarf takes up almost no space and can add just what you need to brighten an outfit. In addition pack fun, inexpensive jewelry and accessories to spice up your outfits. Clip-on earrings make a wonderful addition; you can put them on anything, from your collar to your sandal straps, and voila, instant dressy!

With all of these items, make sure that everything you pack matches virtually everything else! That is to say your jacket matches both your jeans and your dress pants, and your sweater works with both the jacket and any pants. You want to keep your colors simple and basic; darks, which hide dirt and stains, are a traveler's best friend. Pick one of these items in a fun color or pattern (but be tasteful) that you can use to spice things up.

HOW TO BLEND IN ABROAD

1. Step out of your glaring, white shoes and into stylish, yet comfy shoes (unless your podiatrist requires special shoes for your knees or back). For foreign city trips (Paris, Rome, etc.) walking around in a nice pair of leather sandals or closed toed shoes makes all the difference. Nothing targets a tourist like bright, white sneakers.

2. Be culturally sensitive. You're on foreign turf. Respecting local customs, culture, and services offered by this particular country is a must. Find out if wearing shorts in a church is acceptable or forbidden. When in doubt, cover your skin. I found this out the hard way in Israel when I was nearly tackled by an Arabic man in an Arabic village for wearing shorts in a Christian church.

3. Learn 10 basic phrases (hello, goodbye, thank you, passport, please...) in a language before traveling there. What better way to make the trip more exciting than practicing speaking a new language. Even go beyond the basics and take a class in a foreign language for a few weeks or months prior to traveling. I've done this and it makes the trip all the more enjoyable (not to mention my travel pals appreciated my knowing how to quickly and politely ask where to find the nearest restroom). Berlitz classes are perfect.

4. Respect their language. If a foreign word sounds funny or like a "bad" English word "don't laugh. When someone is communicating in their native tongue in their native country, remember who the foreigner is. Even in countries where English is prevalent, some people may not speak it. Best not to assume they do and politely ask if they speak English.

If you're going to a country where English is spoken secondarily or a little, accents or local phrases can still throw you off. Be prepared to speak clearly and think of simpler or different ways to say the same thing, so they can respond to you in a different way. It's amazing how many things are lost in translation. Don't assume anyone speaks American slang, ya dig? For that matter, Americans have widely different pronunciations depending on their home region and you may have an accent to someone and not realize it.

5. Keep the volume down. Nothing makes me cringe more when I'm traveling abroad than hearing an obnoxious group foreign to the country. Because I'm American, I'm especially sensitive to other Americans being insensitively loud. I distinguish from Canadian and British English speakers because they don't seem to be as loud, or perceived as crass as Americans. Keep it cool and use your "inside voices" 24/7. Unless, of course, you're 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. Don't ask the hotel staff where to go "they likely have a deal with a restaurant. Ask someone in a shop or just stroll the streets until you find an eatery filled with local patrons. Discover a tradition new to you but common to locals. Flamenco in Spain? Wine-tasting in Italy? Siesta in Mexico?

7. Study up on the city/region/country. Read books, look online and talk to anyone who's traveled there "get insights on best and worst experiences so you know what to do and what to avoid before you go. Even 30 minutes of prep can help you avoid pitfalls, save you money or time, and make the trip more enjoyable.

8. Be sensitive with camera in hand. While the country may look like a fairytale to you, this is other people's home. If you take photos of people not in your group, be as inconspicuous and nonchalant as possible. If you sense someone is uncomfortable with your attention on them, take heed and respect their privacy.

9. Handle money matters smoothly. Don't fumble around with money or forget where you placed it and do the pocket pat. Organize your money and documents in private (hotel room, etc.) before you walk out in public. Buy a money pouch that can go around your waist and under clothing for your essentials like passport, bulk of cash, cards, etc. Diversify with an ATM card, credit card, foreign currency, and a couple of travelers' checks. You can keep each of these in different locations (suitcase, socks, money pouch) for security.

10. Group travel abroad has its special consideration. By nature, you are likely a group of like-minded individuals excited for the journey and happy to be traveling together at last. It can be extra easy to be a little careless in group mentality. In addition to all of the above tips, if you're the designated trip planner, it's best to work with a travel professional. For additional travel tips, visit the US travel tips with: <http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips>

