

Checklist

International Travel Packing Checklist

THOUGHT CATALOG®

When it comes to traveling out of the country for any period of time, there are a lot of things to keep track of. Make it easier on yourself and read the international travel checklist below to make sure you've got everything you need for your next trip!

Step 1: Investigate the Country You're Traveling to

Taking an international trip to a foreign country is a lot different from traveling domestically. Here are some things to look for while investigating:

Cultural Norms (clothing, tipping, traditional gestures, etc.): Think ahead and be prepared for a different way of life. It seems obvious, but it's a crucial step in understanding where you're going and who you're going to be surrounded by. If you're going to be in a location for some time, it might benefit you to buy a book that shares background information on that country or region.

Useful Phrases: Part of the fun when traveling is hearing other languages and attempting to understand them! Get yourself a small dictionary of the native language if you're planning on staying in one place for a while or look-up simple phrases such as "hello" or "how are you" if you're staying a short while.

Currency Exchange Rates: You want to be aware of how your money is being converted into the local currency of your destination. Whether it's through ATM withdrawals or credit card transactions, the cost of items will be different and the value of your currency will change.

Travel Tip: Having a photo or screenshot of these things can be useful, especially if you're planning on not having unlimited phone service.

Step 2: Safety First!

This step embodies what your teachers meant when they told you, "better be safe than sorry." You are going to be in a whole new sector of the world with different legal proceedings and health measures, so it's important to prepare now vice worry later.

The State Department's Travel Advisories: Be sure to look these up and subscribe to their STEP alerts. STEP stands for "Smart Traveler Enrollment Program," and its goal is to provide free travel alerts to travelers about areas of possible travel restrictions, natural disasters, or areas of political unrest. It connects your trip with the local U.S. Embassy so that if an emergency or conflict occurs while you're abroad, they have the ability to contact you and keep you safe.

Travel Insurance: Travel insurance can ensure that anything from a broken laptop to a broken bone will be taken care of while you're overseas. Not to mention, it will save you money in the event of something going wrong!

Get Vaccinated: You may be exposed to new kinds of conditions when traveling to a different country, so be sure you are up to date with the vaccines required for your trip. The CDC has a list of recommended shots for travelers depending on where they are going. A travel clinic can

also help you keep track of which vaccines or medications you may need. Be sure to keep your vaccination certificate handy as well in case customs asks you to present it when entering a country.

Medications: Talk to your doctor to make sure you have enough of your prescription(s) to last you the duration of your trip.

Food and Water Intake: Be sure to check in on the quality of water and food in the country you're traveling to. You don't want to end up sick with a parasite! You can validate information like this through websites like Travel Health Pro.

Step 3: Important Travel Documents

Visas: Depending on where you are going and how long you are staying, your trip may require a visa. Check-in on those travel visa requirements here.

Passport(s)– make sure any and all are valid passport(s) and up to date!

Insurance Cards: Travel insurance cards, medical insurance cards, etc.

Boarding Passes and Airline Tickets or Reservations: Critical to have in preparation for your flights or other forms of travel.

Hotel/Hostel/Airbnb Reservations

Activity Reservations for when you're at your destination

Identification Cards: Be sure to carry a couple different forms of identification while traveling.
Credit Cards and Debit Cards: Be sure to alert your banks and credit card companies of your trip so they don't hinder your transactions overseas. Also, travel trip, you may not be able to view your bank account on your mobile device overseas so be sure to ask your bank. If you are not able to, it could be important to ensure that where you're staying has access to a computer (most hotels, hostels, etc. do). Lastly, research your bank's policies on international withdrawals and ATM fees before leaving because some require Foreign Transaction Fees.

International Driving Permit: Depending on your destination country and how long you're staying, you may want to rent a car while overseas. Research where your going and whether or not they require an International Driving Permit. If they do, you can apply for one here through AAA.

TSA Precheck: This could be a valuable investment of your time and money if you plan on traveling overseas regularly.

Travel Tip: Keep a scanned copy of these documents with you at all times in case something important like your passport or visa gets stolen or lost. It seems ridiculous, but it happens

more often than you may think.

Step 4: Good Technology to Have

Outlet Converters and Adapters: The outlets in the country you are traveling to will be different than those you have at home. There are all kinds of adapters/converters out there so be sure to investigate and buy the one that's best for your trip!

Portable Charger: This can save you especially if you're planning on doing some long nature excursions like hikes or trips to the coast where you will be away from electricity.

Translating Apps: If you're heading to a country that practices a different language than you speak, it can be handy to download a translating app like Google Translate. Apps like these even allow you to take a picture of a sign or map and highlight the portions of text you want to be translated! Pretty handy.

Download movies or music: These are awesome to listen to and keep you busy while traveling between countries.

Headphones

Step 5: International Phone Plans

I'll be honest with you, these can be a real headache to figure out but, if you want to keep in touch with friends or family back home, they are essential. Here are some things to look into:

Your cell phone company may already have a great option for international travel plans so definitely be sure to check in with them first.

In the event that your phone company elicits crazy fees for international travel or doesn't have an option you like, research local phone companies in the area you are traveling to. Many times, it's easy to switch out the SD card in your phone and phone companies overseas often have plans that are more accessible for the area you are traveling in.

Travel Tip: carry a paperclip in case you need to swap out your SD card; many phones require you to insert something into a tiny hole to eject the card

My Personal Advice: DO NOT trust the vendors inside airports to provide you with valid SD cards. In my experience, this has gotten me scammed and lost me a good chunk of money. Communicating with local phone companies once you're in your destination has proven much more reliable and cost efficient even if you are planning on going to multiple countries. For example, when I studied abroad in Spain I was using a local phone provider that remained operational in other European countries with no extra charge. Do your research!

Step 6: Take Care of Your Home

Before you leave you may want to appoint a family member, friend, or neighbor to take care of your house for you while you're gone. Think through your daily tasks and assess how long your trip is. Who will take in the mail? Who will feed your animals? Who will water the plants? You want to make sure all is taken care of at home before sitting on plane over the ocean and realizing you forgot to hold that package you ordered.

Step 7: You're Ready to Pack!

The clothing and items you need while you're at your destination vary on where you're going and for how long. Be sure to make your own packing list for things such as clothing, jewelry, etc. but, read the list below for some suggestions on good packing investments to help when it's time to fill your luggage!

Packing Cubes: These little organizational cubes come in all shapes, sizes, and materials. Especially if you are packing a carry-on, these help you to make the most of the space you have in your bag and keep your garments organized.

Waterproof Toiletry Bag: You never know when your lip-gloss, contact solution, face wash, etc. is going to pop open and leak during travel. Due to this, a great travel tip is to get yourself a waterproof toiletry bag and put any liquid items into sandwich baggies or other plastic bags you might have. Also, if you're packing carry-on, remember that all liquids need to be 3.4 ounces or less and kept in a clear container!

Locks: Especially if you're planning on staying in a communal living space like a hostel, it's smart for you to think ahead and purchase a couple of locks. One larger style one for if the hostel provides lockers for your belongings, and smaller ones to lock the zippers of your bags closed if they have that option. It's great to stay in places like hostels because they are cost-efficient and allow you to meet new people, but don't be too trusting.

Travel Tags: These are so helpful and allow you to easily identify your luggage after long flights. Not to mention, if your baggage gets lost or delayed, these can be incredibly useful to airport officials when making sure they're returning the luggage to its proper owner(s).

General Medications: Things like Tums, Advil, Melatonin, Band-Aids, Neosporin, etc. can help you through things like stomach issues, minor headaches, or trouble sleeping that happens due to travels. International flights, jet lag and a change in schedule can confuse your body so general medications like these are handy to have just in case of minor discomfort.

Ear Plugs and Eye Mask: If you're staying in a hostel or communal living space, these can be crucial to getting a good nights rest. You could end up sharing a room with loud folks or end up in a room with no curtains; you never know and they're handy to hang onto.

Personal Alarm: Especially if you're traveling alone, having a personal alarm linked to your purse or bag could be helpful. Again, it's better to be safe than sorry.

Hand Sanitizer or Antibacterial Wipes: These are great to have in times when you are traveling on public transportation such as planes, trains, subways, etc.

All of this may seem overwhelming to take in at first but, don't stress! Remember, you are about to go explore a beautiful, new country. Just take your time, prepare thoroughly, and double-check your international travel checklists and other packing lists for personal items you don't want to forget. Be sure to have fun with it too and plan fun activities for your trip, read up on local monuments and great places to eat! Overseas travel is exciting. Whether it's international business travel or a family trip, it's going to be an incredible journey through an unforgettable destination.