

# Overseas Travel Checklist & Tips

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## Prepare Your Documents

- Make sure your passport is valid for 6 months past your return date (many countries require this).
- Make two photocopies of all your credit cards and your driver's license and passport. Keep a copy at home. Take a copy with you and carry separate from the originals.
- If you will be driving in Italy, get your IDP (International Driving Permit). I advise this for all other European countries, but in Italy it is required by law. Check with your Automobile Association for more information.
- Get all your booking documents organized for the trip. I make a file folder with all my documents for each booking and keep them in the order we will need them.
- Print out the information from your country on what to do if your passport is lost or stolen:
  - US State Department (Lost and Stolen U.S. Passports Abroad)Check with the Transportation Authority to read the regulations for carryon items. Many of these changed recently.
  - United States - [www.tsa.gov](http://www.tsa.gov): Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

## Make a Very Detailed Itinerary

- I write a complete itinerary with all the addresses, directions and contact numbers that I will need for every place I am going. This way you will always have all the important information you need in one place. Be sure to carry this with you at all times (do not put in checked luggage).
- Give a copy of the itinerary to each person traveling with you and leave an abbreviated copy for the person who will be looking after things for you at home.
- Before you leave home, email yourself and all of your travel companions a copy of your vital information such as rental property address, whom to call, where to meet. Make sure this email is kept on your email server (don't download it to your computer) in case you need to find an internet and look up the information.
- Go to [www.viamichelin.com](http://www.viamichelin.com) or another trip planning website and print out driving directions for all your main drives for the trip. Do this as backup even if you have a GPS. Always have good driving maps with you. I always buy my maps when I get to Europe at a local gas station. They are much more detailed and you can narrow down to the area you are traveling.

## Make Sure Your Money Works!

- You do not need traveler's checks; most places stopped accepting traveler's checks a few years ago. I now rely on ATM cards for cash on our trips.
- Contact the bank that issued your ATM cards and tell them you will be traveling so they don't put a freeze on your account when foreign purchases starting being charged.
- Be sure your ATM cards will work in Europe. Check with your bank to see if the ATM card and PIN will work in Europe.
- Use each ATM card once before you leave to be sure they are working and you have your PIN. I always travel with ATM cards on at least two separate accounts in case one gets misplaced or stolen. ATM machine keyboards in Europe do not have letters as

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well as numbers, so if you use an alphabetic version of your PIN, be sure you know the number version too.

- Contact your credit card companies to tell them you will be traveling.
- Order foreign currency from your bank so you don't arrive without any cash; just in case we can't find an ATM immediately.
- I also travel with about \$500 of US currency (in \$100 bills) as emergency money.

### **Before You Leave - Reconfirm Everything!**

- A couple of weeks before you leave reconfirm all your travel arrangements.
- Call the airline 72 hours in advance to make sure your flights have not changed, to verify your seating and request any special meals.
- Email, phone or fax all your hotels and vacation rentals to confirm your dates. Remember that some businesses do not check their email every day. If you do not get a reply in two business days, phone or fax them.

### **Odds and Ends not to Forget!**

- Arrange care for your pet, lawn, and plants
- Let the neighbors know that you will be gone and for how long
- Put your lights on timers to make your home look lived-in
- Make sure your bills are up to date. (I have automatic bill pay)
- Have your newspaper discontinued
- Have your mail held
- Make copies of your passports, itineraries, vouchers, etc, along with the numbers to call in case your credit card is lost or stolen (see below)
- Send a copy of your itinerary, including hotel phone numbers or websites to your family and interested friends

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## GOOD TO KNOW BEFORE YOUR GO

### EUROPEAN HOTELS

Europe's hospitality industry is centuries old and its hotels often reflect the varied traditions and standards of their respective countries. While comfortable, be prepared for differences and do not expect European hotels to be the same as home. Single rooms in European hotels are often smaller than in USA hotels. Also, when booking a triple room, the third bed may be a rollaway cot.

In most European countries, including a continental breakfast is the norm, consisting of tea/coffee, rolls and butter, jam/marmalade; some may include an assortment of cheese and luncheon meats.

### HOTEL CHECK OUT

Each time you check out of a hotel, check your room prior to leaving. Open every drawer, look under the bed and door, including the bathroom. The return of items forgotten is nearly impossible.

### SUGGESTED TIPPING WHILE ON YOUR OWN IN EUROPE

TAXI FARE ON METER 10 - 15%

RESTAURANT - TOTAL BILL 10 - 15% (if not already included, check the menu)

TOUR DIRECTOR/MOTORCOACH DRIVER \$2.00 PER PERSON/PER DAY

LOCAL SIGHTSEEING GUIDE \$2.00 PER PERSON

### PASSPORTS

Carry your passport with you at all times to ensure against loss or theft in hotels. For added protection, keep a photocopy of your passport in your suitcase. Also, please send me or a family member a copy of your current passport so that if you have a loss you can contact them and they will fax a copy to you.

Note: Don't be alarmed if the hotel asks for your passport. Hotels are sometimes required to hold your passport overnight to comply with local regulations. You should ask when you could expect it returned.

### PHONE CALLS

Almost all hotels will add a service charge to the cost of any phone calls you make from your room. This charge can be high, especially for international calls. It is always cheaper to use public telephones, pay phones or an international calling service such as AT&T USA Direct. Also, many countries now sell calling cards. I have found them to be very economical and easy to use. If you purchase your phone cards in the U.S. make sure you contact the phone company, before you leave, to find out what the dialing access codes are for each country you will be visiting.

### ELECTRICAL VOLTAGE

Electrical currents vary in Europe. Some appliances have dual voltage, but if not, it is suggested that you carry a converter for electric shavers, traveling iron, hair appliances

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and other small appliances. Also, pins, holes and plugs differ everywhere, so it is best to have a universal electrical travel adapter before you go to prevent accidents and damage to your appliances.

Note that laptops and cell phone chargers will require a different converter than what you would use for a hair dryer. Please check the converter to be sure you have the correct one for your appliance. Otherwise, you risk frying your appliance.

### **PACKING TIPS**

Make sure you have your medications packed in your carryon bag in case your luggage is delayed. Keep all copies of prescriptions, tickets, passports, etc. separate from originals in case of loss. Keep these types of important documents with you or in your carry-on bag - do not pack these in your luggage in case of loss.

Make sure your toiletries are packed in your checked luggage. (You can only take items that fit in a quart sized, zip-lock bag and contains less than 3 oz each of liquid, in your carry-on)

Remember to pack warm clothing, particularly if you are traveling to alpine regions. Weather in Europe, especially in the mountains, can be colder than most people think. Check the weather channel or newspaper to see what conditions to expect.

Rather than bringing one umbrella to share it is better for everyone to have his or her own fold up umbrella. If the rain occurs with mild weather it will eliminate the need to carry a raincoat.

Wear comfortable clothes, which are mixable with other pieces. Remember that your clothes are new to the other people on the tour who have never met you before. Mixing and matching helps to pack light. If you wear clothes that you are comfortable in you will be more relaxed. Men only need one tie and women one dress or skirt if you plan to dine in more upscale restaurants.

There is nothing worse than aching feet at the end of the day. Make sure to bring a pair of comfortable, broken-in shoes for daytime walking. In many cities in Europe, parking is restricted, and you may have to walk several blocks to see the major sites. Remember, when you visit museums and other sites of interest, you will be on your feet for long periods of time.

Costume jewelry travels beautifully. You should leave items of monetary and sentimental value at home. This will allow you to be more carefree and doesn't encourage theft.

Washcloths are not standard in most hotels in Europe. Cut an old bath towel from home into squares to use as washcloths. When done with them you can just throw them away.

Pack the right attitude - try to forget about the stock market and other news at home; try to make your vacation the experience of a lifetime.

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## **SURVIVING THE RED-EYE**

As a rule, carbohydrates make you sleepy; proteins and fats keep you awake. Bananas and milk are especially effective sleep-inducers.

### **Alcohol and caffeine**

If you're trying to sleep, neither alcohol nor caffeine help the cause. Avoid both.

### **Water**

Water helps the flier's cause in all cases. However, if you're trying to sleep, chugging a quart of water just before takeoff is going to require a mid-flight trip to the toilet. Moderation is the answer here; drink enough water to stay hydrated, but not so much that you're traipsing up and down the aisle of the plane all night. One of the best ways to overcome jet lag is to stay hydrated during your flight.

### **Layovers**

Eating is not advised, (see above) but you should drink plenty of water to stay hydrated. My approach is usually to brush my teeth, then head toward the gate, sit near a speaker or the agent, wrap my luggage handle around my wrist or ankle, and put my head back and try to sleep some more. You might ask a gate agent to make sure you don't sleep through the flight departure.

### **Skip the Movie**

Most movies won't put you to sleep, but rather keep you awake. Pass on the headphones, and close your eyes.

### **Sleep Aids**

An eye mask, inflatable neck pillow, ear plugs, and other devices can help the cause greatly. Don't worry about looking funny; bloodshot eyes at your morning meeting look much worse.

If you can fall asleep without the use of pharmaceutical sleep aids, you'll be much better off upon your arrival, as drugs can cause lingering drowsiness or sluggishness that make it hard for your body to reset its internal clock. Gentle aids, such as the motion sickness treatment Dramamine, can dramatically assist you in falling asleep, however, if you have serious difficulties sleeping on planes.

### **When You Arrive**

#### **Raise the window shade when the plane lands**

On an west to east flight, that first burst of light will have you blinking hard and miserably, but it will help mightily to reset your internal clock. The last few minutes of shuteye aren't worth stumbling off the plane into an unfamiliar airport before you wake up.

#### **Reset your watch**

You need to start living by your new time zone. Reset your watch before you get off the plane. In fact, I prefer to reset my watch immediately after I board the last leg of my itinerary, as arrival times are always published in the destination time zone, and I know how long to my destination if I wake up and check the time. This can permit me to grab a few extra precious minutes of sleep.

#### **Begin your day with familiar routines**

Rather than indulging your body's clock, live by your watch.

If it's 7AM after an eastbound flight, have breakfast, coffee, whatever you usually do at 7AM. Grab a newspaper if you typically read one every morning. You probably won't feel hungry yet, and the coffee might not go down as smoothly, but soon enough you'll be glad you're on schedule.

If it's 2AM after a westbound flight, head straight for your hotel or home and go to sleep.