

Packing Tips for Family Travel Abroad

Traveling overseas with the troop? Try these packing tips on for size, and you'll never have to struggle with bulky luggage again! | By Rowena Carr-Allinson

Travel Tips



Follow these packing tips for no-hassle traveling with the kids. (Flickr: Katsuhito Nojiri)

Some say that packing for a family vacation is the most stressful part of traveling, and in many ways, they're right. It's tricky to know just what to bring and what to leave behind. Some of us tend to bring everything including the kitchen sink, while others, who are blessed with the travel-light gene, somehow know just how to keep it simple.

Here are our top 16 tips to pack for your family vacation abroad.

1. Start early and sleep on it.

When packing for your family vacation, always start a week before leaving, that way I can sleep on it, ponder, wonder and wait for various brainwaves to hit, or just have time to absorb the various reality checks like "No, I will not need those heels because I may only wear them once, if at all."

2. Choose the size of your bag wisely.

One always fills whatever space one has, so be cruel to yourself to be kind and pick a bag a bit smaller than the one you would ideally have. This will automatically help you to pack lighter. Less space = less stuff.

3. Roll stuff.

A classic trick. Somehow rolling your clothes reduces their volume. It's also a good way to keep things from getting too crinkled. Jeans and t-shirts are ideal candidates, as are kid's clothes and accessories such as scarves or belts. Use ribbon or rubber bands to keep them in place.

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4. Ditch the beach towels.

They take way too much space! You can either buy some on the spot as a souvenir (who knows how you will bring them back though?!) or the place you are going to will provide them.

5. Stuff every teeny tiniest corner.

Don't leave any corner unused. Shoes are ideal hideaways for underwear or socks.

6. Forget liquids and toiletries.

If you are travelling with hand luggage only (not likely), you will be aware of the restrictions on liquids. Regardless, if you are checking the luggage in, you must be aware that those bottles of shampoo and conditioner are worth their weight (and then some) in gold. Buy some on the spot, use the hotel's amenities or decant into smaller bottles but don't lug around products that will probably come back with you.

7. Check the wrinkle factor.

Some fabrics travel better than others. Linen is lovely and lightweight but does not fare well in a scrunched up suitcase. Check your fabrics before you pack so you don't end up with useless items on arrival!

8. Go barefoot.

Well, perhaps pack flip-flops? Shoes are bulky and heavy, making them a double disaster in the packing stakes. Be realistic about which shoes you are actually going to wear. Party shoes are a nice idea, but think about the weight/space/to wear ratio and it will all make sense.

(MORE: [How to Avoid Baggage Fees When Traveling with Kids](#))

9. Invest in Ziplocks.

Ziplocks can serve many purposes when packing. Whether you want to bring along a little detergent powder, to act as an extra waterproof barrier for your decanted cream container, or if you want to keep junior's socks together or even day by day baby outfits so it's all to hand...

10. Color code.

When picking clothes, stick to one range of colors. Pick items that match each other so you can maximize the combinations while minimizing what you bring.

11. Use your tech.

Leave the guidebooks behind and download apps or guidebooks to your phone so it's all there in one device, which you were going to carry in any case!

12. Emergency Kit

Do bring a small bag of kit in case of emergency. Especially for kids, it's always useful to have their regular medication on hand.

13. Buy disposables.

If you're traveling with a baby, look into the wonderful world of disposables – from bottles to bibs and mats, you can find all sorts of kit you can use and bin as you go along!

(MORE: [Invaluable Travel Tips for Large Families](#))

14. Check into the laundry situation.

Some hotels charge crazy rates to do your laundry, so check into the situation before packing. Going somewhere with an on-site laundry room? Pack less and schedule a load.

15. Wear it until the bitter end...

Traveling for several weeks with a growing toddler? Bring stuff that's almost too small and leave it en route, creating space for souvenirs!

16. Think inflatable.

Space for toys is always an issue. Inflatable toys are great for the beach, ideal to carry (so light and airy!), and won't be missed if they are left behind...

Rowena Carr-Allinson contributed this to MiniTime. Since the arrival of her son in 2011, she has taken him everywhere from Bangkok to NYC, writing family friendly articles en route.

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