

Packing List for Winter Trips

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I'm really stingy with my vacation time and hate to spend time replacing I forgot to bring. It's so time consuming - asking, getting directions, finding, buying and getting back to vacation. To me, it's easy to have everything you need, so you don't waste any time doing what you want to do, not replacing something you have at home. A little time before you leave is good insurance to make sure you have a great and unencumbered trip.

NOTE: Most of the items listed below are available at: www.RandysFavoriteThings.com.

PACKING LIST

ATM Card

- If you think you'll need it, take it. Can't hurt. I don't like spending time searching for ATMS, but some people like to operate this way. It's your choice. One tip: Europe ATMs often require 5 or 6 digits, but you're card may be set-up for only 4. The trick is to use zeros for the remaining digits. Clever, huh?

Batteries

- Make sure the batteries you're taking are good, but if all else fails, you can buy some. Cameras and other things that require special batteries might be best purchased before leaving home. To me, the last thing you want to deal with is searching for something like batteries. It cuts into your travel time and isn't always a fun way to spend time.

Battery charger for camera batteries

- If you're taking a camera (or other device that needs special batteries or charger) and you forget this, you're screwed. Or, you'll have to spend time and money shopping for a new one.

Camera

- Or a great smart phone. Last year, I took my big, expensive camera with a big expensive lens and took photos with that, and my iPhone 6. When I got back to my room, I transferred photos to my computer and I had a very difficult time telling which ones were from the camera and which ones were from the phone. Now, I'm not sure if I'll take the camera, which will lighten my load a LOT.

Coats

- I take a variety, but all of them fit into small spaces - a thin white hooded down jacket, a black nylon Burberry raincoat that folds and rolls into a small cylinder, a Monclear that's thick and warm down, a casual SuperDry jacket that's thin and also rolls into a small cylinder. I wear the Monclear, because it's the bulkiest, then stow it in the overhead on the plane.

Computer

- I use a MacBook Air, because it's very light. If you don't need a whole computer with software you'll use on your trip, leave it home and go with an iPad, tablet or smart phone.

Credit Cards (with gold chip)

- Most US credit cards now come with the gold security chip, which has been standard issue in Europe for years. They are far safer than the cards that use only the magnetic strip. Also, CALL your credit card companies and give them the dates you'll be gone, so they honor charges in foreign countries. Otherwise, they might block your card, thinking it's been stolen. Then you'll spend a lot of time dealing with that issue, which is a challenge with the big time difference.

Day pack or small messenger bag

- I have a wedge shaped Diesel bag I bought years ago that's perfect for all the items I need during any day trips while traveling - camera, wallet, passport, Advil, wipes, small map, etc. It's also handy to carry things I might purchase on my outings. It can be worn in front or back, depending on where I am. If I'm in a crowded space, like the Paris Metro, I pull it around to the front, and if I get nervous about pick pockets, I also put my hand inside it. I've never had a problem, but I tend to dress like a local and appropriate for the situation.

External Hard Drive

- Most people won't need to take one of these. If you're carrying a big camera and want to transfer your photos of the day to your computer or hard drive, it could be handy. If you use Apple products for photography (iPhone, iPad or iPod Touch), you can use the iCloud to save your photos which is a casual photographer's dream come true. That we, every shot you take is saved to the cloud, BUT, it's always wise to back-up all your photos onto an external hard drive also. You never know what might happen, but you don't have to bother with it on vacation, unless you are completely paranoid about losing photos. I tend to save them on my computer on my trips, BUT, even that is a bit risky, if for some reason my computer crashes or gets stolen.

Flash Memory Cards for Cameras

- These are also best purchased at home. Amazon always has great deals: www.RandysFavoriteThings for the starting point of your search. Don't go for the smallest or cheapest. Check my site for more on these.

Global Entry Card

- This is a great card to have, so when you arrive back home, you don't have to stand in line to talk to the US Customs officers. Typically, when we arrive, there are hundreds of people flocking to the customs officers, but we head over the the machines off to the side where there might be one or two people. All you do is insert your card, give you finger prints and out pops a slip that says you're done. Then you just leave! For more on this, check out my TIP about American Express Platinum benefits.

Hats

- I usually take a baseball cap, a newsboy hat or two, a Kangel Manhattan Fedora style hat and a worm watch cap. I like variety and again, try to fit into the local people's way of dressing.

Gloves

- I take one pair of good black leather gloves. Make sure they're lined so they're warm, and thin is best.

Headphones

- Frankly, I'm not big on the Beats headphones or sound canceling ones. I'm OK with cheapo ones that fit IN the ear. They cancel all the noise I need and if I loose one, it's not a big loss ... AND, they fit in a pocket and I don't have a need to look like a DJ.

International Driver's License

- Technically, you might need an international driver's license, but the one time I had one, no one asked for it. Ask the rental car company you plan to use and if you need one, the Auto Club issues them with only a small fee and a copy of your regular driver's license. I think I paid \$10.

iPad or tablet

- Load with books, maps and travel needs

- Check out Hoopla from the local library for free audiobooks and more

iPhone or other smartphone loaded with books, translator apps, maps and travel needs

A list of apps I use for travel (some are free, others are not, but they're all good, just in case):

- Converter - converts money, weight, length, and more.
- iTranslate
- Farvo

- Bravolo - Phrases in various languages, with the ability to HEAR the correct pronunciation, and you can save favorites.

- Duolingo - Learn most any language with this easy-to-use app that's fun. And, it pushes you a bit, but in a good way.

Hair trimmer

- This won't be something most people will take, but my partner and I cut each other's hair, so we take a battery charged hair trimmer to touch up our cuts while we're away. Haircuts in other countries are fun, but often expensive, and take too much time out of the day. I can go either way on this, so use your own judgement.

Lunch Kit

- OK, this is a crazy thing I love to do. When I travel, I love to pop into shop selling things I can't find at home - foods that sound good and might make a nice snack or picnic in my hotel room, on a long train ride or a nice spot off the road with a nice view. We also get wine at grocery stores, "just in case".

Money

-Some people choose to take a small amount of cash for the country (or countries they're visiting), then exchange money when they arrive. Or, another common theme is to use ATMs. BUT, over the years, I've found it's far easier to get the cash you need at home, so you don't have to find a good exchange rate (often saving only a few dollars) or searching for an ATM. To me, it's all time lost that you can use sitting in a café having a coffee or glass of Champaign, which is a lot more fun (to me). I try to use my American Express Platinum card for everything I can, but it's usually only good at hotels and larger restaurants. I choose it because they're no fee to convert the currency. That said, they recently included the Gold card too. And, there are a few other cards that don't charge a conversion fee.

IMPORTANT: It's best to make sure your credit card has the gold chip. In Europe, for example, it's very old technology to "swipe" a credit card, which isn't convenient to some businesses. They might have to "go in the back" and get the old machine, which is a bit embarrassing. Also, if you happen to be getting gas for a rental car on a Sunday, you might be out of luck, as most gas stations become self serve on Sundays and there's no way to pay without a chip credit card. Be prepared.

Passport

- Obviously, BUT check the expiration date EARLY. One year, I had a business trip and didn't think the renewal date was close. When I check, it was very touch and go getting it in time, plus extra fees to expedite it. Not fun.

Pen

- I take a nice pen and make sure it's got a new refill. Not a huge deal, but again, I like to be prepared. I'm always the one people ask, "Do you have a pen?"

Power plugs (converting US power plugs to other country's receptacles)

- Get these online. Amazon has a deal on all of these. Start with my site: www.RandysFavoriteThings.com. I usually take several and often end up leaving one or two behind by forgetting to check each outlet.

Power converter

- Most appliances these days don't need converters, but CHECK to make sure. All my Apple products are OK to simply plug and play. Apple computers come with Euro and UK adapters, which is nice, but other countries may need something more unique. Check before going.

IMPORTANT: Most power in countries outside the US is 220V. US is 110V. If your device doesn't run on 220v, you WILL need a converter. I found that out years ago when my partner and I were going to cut our hair with our US clippers. We plugged it in, turned it on, it made a very loud BUZZZ and the power went out. We put

the power out in a whole section of our hotel. Check before you leave and make sure you have what you need. Again, these are available at my website: www.RandysFavoriteThings.com (via Amazon)

Power strip

- Most people won't need this, but if you have more than one phone, one computer and a tablet, you might want to consider a small power strip to plug into a central location and then use your US plugs, rather than have so many adapters.

Scarves

- I take a classic black which goes with everything, but sometimes add one with flair, or buy one on the trip. You can never have too many options. I wear a lot of black, so I use them to create an outfit that has a bit of understated flair.

Shaver charging cord

- Only if you have an electric shaver, but if you forget it, you'll be sorry.

Tickets

- You think I'm joking, but people sometimes forget the simplest things. I put mine in a folio with my passport and all the tickets, train passes, car rental paperwork, reservations, etc. I often add these documents to my iPad, but usually, it's far faster to use printed paper items. Sometimes being too techie slows things down.

Travel Insurance

- You may or may not need travel insurance. Generally it's not needed, but I have older parents at home and take longer trips, so just in case, I want to be able to jet home without losing money. CSA is a company I use and it's a relief to know you're covered for things that come up and could ruin your trip. You can choose the number of items to be covered, so you have some control over the cost. Call and explore, the people there are great and very helpful.

Travel Speaker

- We have a small Bluetooth speaker that has great bass and sounds awesome. I think it was about \$100 and is at my site, but get whatever you like. It's not a huge deal, but it's nice to play music from your phone or computer. Personally, I like to use my app for my favorite classical radio station here in San Francisco - KDFC-FM. It's broadcast, commercial free and they have an app, so you can listen to great classical music anywhere in the world from your phone, tablet or computer. Using the speaker, it will brighten any moment in any hotel room. Just don't bother the neighbors, unless they like classical music too.

Tripod

- Maybe yes, maybe no. One little tool I do take is a Joby "tripod". It's a crazy little device that wraps around a handrail, fence or post so you can take low light photos that will come out crystal clear. It'll help you look like a pro photographer and it's small enough to fit into a tiny back or purse. And, it's light. See www.RandysFavoriteThings.com

Umbrella

- Over the years, I've had a lot of umbrellas and the best I've found (all things considered - weight, durability and price), H&M are the best. They're cheap, so if you lose one, it's not big deal and you can probably pop into a store anywhere in the world and get a new one. The cool thing is they are VERY LIGHT. They're not fancy, but they're good for the money - under \$10.

Vitamins-Chinese pills, Wellness Formula, RxEmergen-C, Melatonin

- The Chinese pills (Yin Chao) are like Wellness Formula and both tend to strengthen your immune system, when you "think" you might be feeling run down. They're both great, so you can ward off getting sick, which is a bummer on any vacation. Emergen-C is another great travel helper. They're available on my site in a variety of flavors. Vitamins are easy. I get mine from Vitamins on Demand. It's a service that

packages what you need into little daily pouches. They're cheaper than buying jars and making your own too. I love that service. If you're on a prescription medication, be sure you have enough for your trip and plan ahead if you need doctor's approval. Melatonin helps with jet lag. It's like a vitamin and helps you sleep naturally and "re-sets" your internal clock. I take one on the plane to sleep, then another one every night for several days. It helps.

Wine opener

- Choose something light. Everything adds up and the goal is to have everything, but not have a hard time managing your suitcase. I like the plastic version of Screwball (http://www.amazon.com/Screwpull-S1115-31-Pocket-Corkscrew-Black/dp/B0001UZOF0/ref=sr_1_71?ie=UTF8&qid=1447292205&sr=8-71&keywords=plastic+wine+opener ... ADD TO RANDYS)

Yellow Pad

- I like having a yellow pad of paper handy for all kinds of things. I like to do written meditations (see my site www.AFewLittleWords.com ... I developed a meditation technique called Meditation Q&A and I use my yellow pad for it). I also like to think with pen and paper, but that's me.

For most of the clothing I take on a trip, I think in "outfits" for different events. And, I like to remember, I don't need a lot of changes of sweaters, shoes, belts, and underwear.

Make a short list of the type of activities you plan to do after you arrive:

Train rides, flights, boat rides or car trips

Clubs, opera, fancy meals, museums, plays, concerts, cocktails, hikes

Metro, cabs, Uber, walking, boats

Cold weather - walking around or rushing to get back indoors - dressy or casual or both

Snowing - avoiding it or getting in it - being dressed up or sloshing around

Raining - light or heavy rain - being in it or watching it from inside a cafe - again being dressed up or sloshing around

Underwear - I usually take only 4-5 changes, but I use silk, nylon or microfiber fabrics, so I can do "sink laundry" every few days and everything dries overnight. If it's going to be really cold, I add a very lightweight pair of long underwear and a pair of wool sox.

Sweaters - I take 3 or 4 versions - casual, dressy and in between ... and all in black, so they all go with everything else. For variety - round neck, v-neck, button up and turtle neck ... just choose your favorites. I usually take

Pants - 2 or 3 is enough - I use Diesel jeans, which can be dressed up or down. If I'm planning to go someplace super dressy, I'll take dress pants and a jacket, white shirt and tie, but generally, I don't do much in the way of uber dressy events. I take black, tan and a mottled gray and black (hard to explain, but they look like the seat cover fabric in an old Plymouth convertible my grandfather had back in the 50's.)

Jackets - I have a very thin "plastic-like" black Diesel jacket that looks like a leather jacket. It's perfect for light rain and a very casual look. The style is intentionally wrinkled, so I stuff it in a shoe in my back, which takes up only a couple of inches square. My Burberry mid length rain coat is a kind of "rubbery" fabric and the perfect rain coat. It's rolls into a small tube and never looks wrinkled. My warmest jacket is a shiny black down Moncler with a fur trimmed hood. It's perfect for a variety of situations and is really, really warm, but

looks great. I also have a white hooded down jacket that's lighter and also handy. I use jackets and shoes to "look different" and saves a lot of packing space.

Shirts - Armani Exchange makes (or made) shirts made from a micro fiber with snaps instead of buttons. They came in a variety of colors. They are the perfect travel shirts, because they can easily be washed in a hotel room sink and be dry by morning. I take white and black. They work great with any of the sweaters.

Shoes - The two pair I take on most every winter trip - black boots with waffle bottoms and a classic wing tip toe. They work for moderately dressy occasions in wet or snowy weather. I also like a pair of white boots I got from Kenneth Cole years ago. They look like tennis shoes with black soles. They're perfect for rain or snow. I don't always take them if there's no snow on the horizon. Then I'll take a pair of some type of water proof or water resistant casual shoe. I have a pair of black Vans that are working well. I also spray them all with waterproofing spray (also from Vans stores or online).

Scarves - I usually take one or two - usually black or black and gray - one lightweight and one heavier

Hats - I take several. Again, these are ways to look different and fit into any situation - newsboy hat in gray/black, casual black havana style (Kangol is the best ... can be smashed into the suitcase and it pops back and looks great) a baseball cap and a warm skull cap.

Odds and ends:

I'm not really a germaphobe, but here's an article that might give you a heads-up about how things might be at your hotel: <https://www.yahoo.com/health/7-things-you-should-never-touch-1322049932976182/photo-where-you-re-safe-1450452983010.html>

Disinfecting wipes

Laundry plastic (from your dry cleaning ... to put onto pillows, then replace the pillowcase) I got this tip from an ENT (ear, nose and throat doctor who claims that you can easily catch a cold from the previous person sleeping on that pillow. The plastic blocks any germs. Just a thought. Maybe a hassle, but just in case.)

Zip Locks for remote and other things

Small Swiss Army knife with scissors, toothpick, tweezers, small blade and nail file, but don't take it though TSA. Vitronex has one that's supposedly TSA safe with no blade, but I've heard people still get them taken away. Best to keep it in your checked bag.

Sewing kit - just keep one from a hotel. A lost button or small hole can be fixed in a jiffy.

Germ Spray - for hands after metro rides or places where people sneeze or blow their noses.

Fragrances - I usually take at least 5 or 6 different fragrances, but decanted into small 10 ml. sprayers. No big bottles. They're too heavy and I don't need that much.

Poo porri - this is a great little bathroom spray that's perfect when you're sharing a hotel room.

Netipot and Salt - cheap insurance against airplane air and anytime you feel a little sore throat coming on

Nail clippers - I take the large ones instead of 2 - the ones with a sheath to prevent clipping contained.

The best way I've found to quickly decide which items to take, I like to think ahead about what I might want to wear for a variety of activities. Spending a little time on this makes it so easy to pack the right things. You don't have to wear exactly what you thought about. It's just a guide, but it helps to make sure you don't overpack. I find that I usually need 3 or 4 "outfits" and I can easily pack in one average suitcase and still leave a bit of room, just in case I buy something I want to bring back home. Here's my list, which changes, based on the weather forecasts I read a few days before leaving.

Plane - the long ones

Diesel jeans

AX Stripe white shirt

Moncler jacket

Wingtip boots

-hat

- Backpack with computer, camera and other things I don't want to pack in case of loss

- Toiletries to freshen up in the AM ... and shaver

OR

- Get a hotel room at the arrival airport & freshen up there. A hot bath after a long flight is heaven

Really cold casual

-Diesel jeans, hightop boots, thin neck zip-up or turtleneck

-Black or White down coat

-Diesel knit cap

-black jeans, zip sweater w/white shoes, black jacket

-scarf

-hats

-gloves

Dressy cold

-Black slacks

-Wingtip boots

-Gstar Jacket or DKNY B&W sweater with simple white shirt

-scarf

-hat

-gloves

- Moncler or Burberry

Sightseeing

-Light jacket, Moncler or white down coat

-Diesel wedge bag or small Tumi backpack

- Camera and all the camera stuff (OR, just use iPhone or Smart Phone)

-Diesel jeans

-Long underwear - if it's really cold

-Wingtip boots or hightop white shoes/boots or Vans

Driving

-Long underwear - if it's really cold

-Microfiber tee shirt

- Light jacket, Monclear or white down coat
 - Diesel wedge bag or small Tumi backpack
 - Camera and all the camera stuff (OR, just use iPhone or Smart Phone)
 - Diesel jeans
 - Wingtip boots or hightop shoes
- or
- jeans
 - sweater or
 - Diesel jacket
 - white boots

Celebrations

- black slacks
- AX shirt
- G-Stat jacket
- Dress shoes