

PACKING 101

He who would travel happily must travel light. ~St. Exupery

Across the country, Athena Study Abroad students are busy preparing themselves for what is likely to be one of the best semesters of their college careers: fall semester abroad! By this time, one of the only things standing between Athena's fall students and the start of their international experiences is the daunting task of packing. Following these tips can help students master the art of packing and put them one step closer to boarding the plane for destination amazing!

Lug Less Luggage

Remember that you will have to carry your own luggage – do not pack more bags than you can carry! Also, if you need to take a taxi from the airport upon arrival, keep in mind that your bags will need to fit in a SMALL European car/taxi trunk. You are likely to accumulate additional possessions while abroad so try to limit yourself to one checked bag on the way over and pack an empty duffle bag to fill with your overseas purchases for the way back. If you must take two checked bags, at the very least leave space in the bags so that you'll have room for your semester purchases.

Lighter is Better

Packing light is not only a good idea, it is a requirement. Check with your airline about weight restrictions for checked luggage and stay within the limit so you don't get hit with extra charges for oversized or overweight bags. A few days before you leave, pack your bags and then practice walking around the block with them – realizing in practice how heavy & cumbersome they can be should help you quickly decide what items really are not necessary to take!

Keep it Simple

Challenge yourself to pack like an experienced world traveler: keep it sensible and light! While overseas it is perfectly acceptable to wear the same outfit a few times in one week. Choose clothes that you can mix and match in order to utilize a minimum number of items. Keep in mind that you probably won't need your four favorite pairs of jeans or different shoes for every outfit – we have never had a student complain about taking too little!

Think Backpack

A common mistake novice travelers make is assuming that a suitcase on wheels will be easier to travel with than a large backpack or duffle bag. Yes, wheeling the suitcase through the airport may be relatively easy but once you hit the cobbled streets of your overseas destination or have to navigate the public transportation system and its many stairs, you will be wishing for a bag you can lift and carry comfortably.

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10 MUST-DO'S BEFORE YOU GO!

1. **Read** the contents of your Athena Study Abroad Handbook (and all other Athena information as well as any materials provided by the overseas school and your home university).
2. **Read** information on the history, culture, and economy of your host country.
3. **Make** copies of all important documents you will take with you (passport, student visa, insurance cards, tickets, etc.). Leave one copy at home and take one with you.
4. **Talk** to your bank about using your check/debit card while abroad. Ask for details on any international transaction fees that will be assessed when you withdraw cash or use your check card. Do the same with your credit card company!
5. **Register** yourself with the U.S. Embassy in your host country by creating an account on the U.S. Department of State "Travel Registration" homepage at <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/home.asp>. Be sure to also check out their students abroad website for great tips: <http://www.studentsabroad.state.gov/>.
6. **Pack** some pictures of your hometown, family, campus, etc.
7. **Buy** an inexpensive watch and battery operated alarm clock – your cell phone may not be a reliable time-keeper overseas.
8. **Don't forget** to pack comfortable walking shoes – you will need them!
9. **Insure** your valuables. While Athena encourages you to leave your valuables at home, if you do choose to take expensive items such as your laptop, you should make sure you have insurance on these items in case of theft/damage while abroad.
10. **Buy** a journal – or set up a blog – so that you can chronicle your overseas experience.

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Remember the Weather

Keep in mind the climate of your study abroad location when packing – consult a guidebook to see what kind of weather you might expect. Weather can vary quite a bit throughout the day and from town to town, so take clothes that are good for layering.

Roll, Don't Fold

Roll your clothes when you pack them – you'll be able to fit more in your suitcase and they will be less wrinkled than if folded.

Protect Your Clothes

Toiletry items will be readily available overseas; however, if you have preferred or trusted brands that you feel most comfortable/confident using, pack them along. Just be sure to put any shampoos, lotions, etc. in plastic bags (double bagging recommended) in case of leaks to protect your clothes and pack them in your checked luggage.

Leave Electrical Devices Behind

In most foreign countries, the voltage is different than in the U.S.; this means that you will have to purchase a convertor set (available at Target, Walmart, etc.) to use your electronics. Even with an adaptor, you still run the risk of overcharging (“frying”) your electronics so they are better left at home. If you can't face the world without your blow dryer or flat iron, consider purchasing an inexpensive one once abroad.

Carry it On

Pack any valuables in your carry-on bag. This includes passport, visa, i.d. cards, traveler's checks, cash, laptop (if taking one) and prescription medications. Keep prescriptions in their original, labeled containers. Also pack a light change of clothes & toothbrush in your carry-on bag in case your checked luggage is lost.

Identify Your Belongings

Don't forget your Athena luggage tag! It will help you notice your bag and other Athena students at the airport. Display your name and permanent address, as well as your overseas contact address, on labels outside and inside your luggage – if your outside label is lost your belongings can still be identified. If you are using a bag of common color (black/dark blue/gray) tie a colorful ribbon around the handle to help make your bag quickly distinguishable from hundreds of look-alike bags.

Additional Resources

The web site [journeywoman.com](http://www.journeywoman.com) provides country-specific packing recommendations for women. The U.S. Department of State also has also developed a packing list specifically for students traveling abroad: <http://www.studentsabroad.state.gov/pdfs/Packlist.pdf>

Attitude is Everything

Most importantly, don't forget to pack an open mind, flexibility, and your sense of humor!

General Packing Suggestions

Clothes: Clothing depends largely on the climate of the country to which you are traveling. In general we suggest that you pack the following, omitting any seasonal items not relevant to the climate of your host country:

1 warm coat/jacket * 3 pairs of jeans/pants * 2 skirts or dressier pants * 8 shirts/blouses/cardigans * 1-2 sweaters/sweatshirts * 2 pairs of shorts * 1 dress outfit for theater/formal events * a few t-shirts * 1 swimsuit, gloves, hat, scarf * 1 pair of pajamas * 10 pairs of socks and underwear * 2 pairs of comfortable, durable walking shoes * 1 pair of dressier shoes * 1 pair of slippers * 1 pair of flip flops/shower shoes

Toiletries: Most of these items will be available to you overseas but if you have preferred brands you feel most comfortable using, take some with you:

Comb/brush * toothbrush/paste * sunscreen * contact solution * glasses/extra contacts * prescription medicines * deodorant * basic supplies (i.e. shampoo, conditioner, soap, etc) * hand lotion * shaving gear * over-the-counter medicines such as Advil and Dayquil (for headaches & colds) * contraceptives * tampons * 2 towels & 2 washcloths (or purchase overseas) * Woolite (to handwash small pieces) * small first aid kit

Miscellaneous:

Alarm clock w/extra batteries * small flashlight * sunglasses * journal * copy of travel itinerary * travel guidebook * compact umbrella * camera * extra film/memory card * address book * combination lock * iPod/walkman * pictures of loved ones * open mind/flexibility/sense of humor

TIPS FOR THE PLANE

Whether going to Australia, England, Greece, or Italy, Athena Study Abroad students will all share in common at least one thing: a long international flight! Some suggestions for making your flight as comfortable and manageable as possible include:

- Dress in comfortable layers to accommodate changes in airplane temperature.
- Pack a toothbrush/paste, lip balm, lotion and contact lens supplies in your carry on so that you can freshen up periodically. Just remember that any carry-on liquids must comply with TSA's 3-1-1 rule: <http://www.tsa.gov/311/>
- Airline food tends to leave a lot to be desired and comes in small portions so bring some of your own snacks (Cheerios, gummy bears, granola bars). Bring gum to chew to help relieve ear pressure problems.
- Stay hydrated – drink lots of water and non-caffeinated beverages on the flight. Avoid soda and alcohol before and during the flight.
- Move around. This is especially important on longer flights to prevent your body from aching due to low circulation. Take a stroll up & down the aisle a few times mid-flight and participate in the in-flight exercise video if one is shown.
- Bring something entertaining with you: magazines, crossword puzzle book, novel, iPod (with some soothing music to help you relax), etc.
- Get some sleep before you travel. The idea of pulling an all-nighter before your flight so you will sleep is good in theory but rarely works in practice. You don't want to arrive overseas more exhausted than necessary so get a full night's sleep the night before you leave.

Preparing for Cultural Adjustment

An inevitable part of any semester abroad is the challenge of adjusting to a new and unfamiliar environment. Often this challenge includes dealing with negative feelings about your new host culture and accompanying emotional homesickness. One good way of coping with lows of culture shock is to remind yourself of the excitement you had for experiencing a new culture prior to beginning your study abroad program. Take some time now to capture the positive excitement you have for your upcoming program abroad and to set some personal goals for your experience. If you find yourself feeling frustrated with the new culture and/or homesick in a few weeks/months, re-reading over these notes can help you recapture your enthusiasm and motivation for making the most of your semester abroad:

1. The thing I am most excited about for my semester abroad is _____

2. I can't wait to see _____
3. I can't wait to try _____
4. When I think of my study abroad destination, I think of _____
5. 3 things I want to accomplish while abroad are _____

6. I chose to study abroad because _____

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DID YOU KNOW???

About 25% of all people living today in London were born in another country.

Venice is also known as "La Serenissima" (the most serenely beautiful one) and "Queen of the Adriatic."

Rome has a museum entirely dedicated to pasta.