

By Sierra Suits

One of my favorite parts of traveling? Packing!

No really, it's true! But that wasn't always the case.



Me on the England & Scotland tour last year!

In my early travels, I found that I would mentally start packing months before I departed. Which was great, because by the time I actually packed, I had a pretty good idea of what I wanted to bring. But it also meant I re-lived the decision-making process over and over and over - no thank you!

So I started fine-tuning my process a bit, with a focus on getting things done early and creating peace of mind along the way.

Here's how I make packing stress-free for my travels today, and feel confident that I haven't forgotten something along the way.

45-30 days before departure: Make a list

Like any good planner, I love lists!

A month or so before departure, I'll open up a standard list I've created on my computer (I used Excel in this example) and start updating it for my next long trip.

Trip	England & Scotland 2017						
Departure Date	4-Aug-17						
Length of Trip	12 days						
	Packing Notes: Carry On, Luggage, Etc.	# I Have	# I Need	# to Buy	Estimated Cost	Actual Cost	Notes on Purchasing
Clothing							
Tanks							
T-Shirts							
Long Sleeves							
Softshell							

My packing list in Excel

Items are grouped together by type, and there's a place to capture packing notes, keep a tally of how many of each item I'm going to bring, and budget for items I may need to buy.

I may even get super specific and list the colors of each item I'm bringing so I can grab them quickly when I start packing.

30-7 days before departure: Stock up

A list is only effective if you use it!

During this time I start buying all those miscellaneous items I've identified on my list - a couple new pairs of socks, travel size toiletries, etc.

I mark the items off as I buy them, and track expenses as I go. This is particularly helpful for trips requiring specialty clothing or equipment where I may need to prioritize my spending.

7-5 days out: Pack clothing

This is where the rubber meets the road!

I start by making sure anything I want to take has been washed and is good to go - that usually means doing a tub or two of laundry.

Next, I lay everything out. Each type of clothing goes in its own little stack (tank tops, shirts, pants, etc.) to help me visually see how much I'm trying to pack. It's also a helpful way to plan which outfits will work best for different activities.



Clothing piles!

Once everything's all laid out, the real fun starts - weeding stuff out!

When deciding what to take, I factor in the number of days I'm traveling, the number of times I practically think I'll do laundry, and then I leave a little room for fun. I also try to create easy variety by choosing clothing items of complimentary colors that will mix and match well.

When I'm happy with my stacks, I pull out my packing cubes and start folding. Packing cubes are a somewhat recent discovery for me, and they have been a serious game changer.

The cubes go in my suitcase of choice (usually a duffle bag), and I'll throw in non-packing cube items like shoes. Usually during this process I've also figured out what I'm wearing for the long plane ride, and have those clothes set aside on my dresser.

2-1 day out: Pack carry on

Things I need in the airport or on the plane

A couple days before departure, I begin collecting items for my carry on - a smaller packing cube with a few extra layers for the plane, airplane snacks, any trip paperwork, medications, plane toiletries, transformers/adapters, etc.

I'll keep a handwritten list next to my carry on (more lists!), crossing things off as I go. This helps me know I haven't forgotten anything, without my actually having to go back through and double check a million times.

Night before or day of: Pack misc. toiletries and chargers

The last minute stuff

This is the time to add in all those last minute items we can't live without - electronic chargers, electronic reading devices, last minute toiletries, passport, wallet, etc.

And with a quick zip of a pack, I'm ready to go and stress-free!



Here I am on a recent scouting trip in San Diego with Guides Dan and Scott