



## Smart Traveler

We encourage you to enroll in the Smart Traveler program with the US government website below. This is a free service that sends you emails with the latest security updates on international travel alerts. They send fast notifications from the nearest US embassy or consulate.

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/step.html>

## Packing

We HIGHLY suggest using packing cubes. They are great organizers and make moving from hotel to hotel easy! If you're only going to be in a hotel for just a night or two, pack a cube with everything you need in that one cube and keep it at the top of your suitcase and easy to get to. That way, you won't have to unpack your whole suitcase at every hotel, just the one cube. You can get them easily on Amazon!

## What to Bring

- Have a **map** of your destination before you leave and have an idea where your hotel is in relation to the city.
- Bring **comfortable shoes** to walk everywhere. As one of the best ways to explore a city, you will do lots of walking during your European vacation, therefore having a pair of comfortable walking shoes is a must. After a long day of walking around the city, your feet will thank you!
- Have a GOOD **external charger** for your phone. My phone dies fast when I'm using it a lot on trips, and I always need at least one of them tucked in my bag.
- **Travel umbrella:** It's always a good idea to pack a small travel umbrella — especially during the winter and spring. We also like reusable ponchos that can easily fit into a backpack.
- There are no wash cloths in most hotels in Europe, so you'll want to bring a **scrubby** for shower gel.
- Don't forget to purchase an **adaptor/convertor** for US electronics (hair curlers, flat irons, phone chargers). You'll need one that does both adapting and converting, not just an adaptor! You can get one for your destination by doing a search on Amazon!

## Data & Wi-Fi

Contact your phone provider and find out what you need for International calling and/or data plans. If you have international data, you should get a translating app. We recommend "SayHi Translate."

A lot of European cities have public Wi-Fi that you can access when you're out and about and then there are always cafes and hostels/hotels that will also have internet access. So, you shouldn't have too much trouble by relying on Wi-Fi. There are several apps allowing you to download maps and use them offline.

## Timing & Restaurants

Be flexible with your time. Most European countries have a very laid back time schedule. Of course, flights and tour times are going to be predictable, but you might find that shops and restaurants will close at odd times of the day for long lunches, etc.

Don't expect to be in-and-out of restaurants quickly unless you specifically tell your server. They expect you to stay for a couple of hours, and they will not check on you as much as American servers do.



## General Travel Tips

- Drink lots of water on your flight over - this helps with jet lag.
- Once you reach your destination do your best to get on their time schedule as soon as possible, so get to bed at a normal time for you. It's a killer the first day or two, but your body will get used to it.
- Talk to your hotel concierge on different things you can do in the city or what is near you within a walkable distance. They will have the best local tips and suggestions.
- Learn some basic words and phrases of each country you will be visiting. Even if you can't speak fluently, ATTEMPTS at speaking the host country's language go a long way! Nothing is more rude than for Americans for visit a country and expect that everyone speaks English. Most times, they do, but trying to speak their language will give you a much greater service experience at hotels, restaurants, and taxis.
- If you don't know something, or are lost or want to find something, ASK!
- Eat at local cafes and restaurants. That is where you are going to get the best traditional foods from those areas.
- If you need to call for help, you can reach Emergency Services (police, fire, ambulance) by dialing 112.

## Money

### Currency Exchange

You can get Euros ahead of time from your bank (recommended) OR through an exchange company like Travelex OR you can get Euros at the airport (the most expensive place to do this). You can also get them from ATMs once you are in destination.

Make sure you check with your bank and credit card companies to get a PIN for that kind of transaction and be sure you understand if you can or can't. We had trouble with American Express in Spain so just call the credit card company and talk with them. I usually start out with some currency but end up needing more when I get there. Have at least 2 forms of payment with you.

### Payment Methods

Don't plan on using credit cards everywhere. While it seems that most of the world now accepts credit cards, it's not uncommon for places in Europe to only accept cash. Having euros on hand for tips, taxi rides, restaurants, purchases at local markets, and daily activities will make your transactions go smoother, and it will save you money on foreign transaction fees.

When you make purchases with your credit card, it may ask you if would like to convert the Euros to USD. Always click NO. This is an additional fee for something your bank with do automatically.

### Gratuities

When tipping, we give a Euro or two per person. You will also want some Euro coins (1 and 2) for baggage handling at the airport. Gratuities and tips are not as widespread in Europe as they are in the US, but I tend to tip about the same in Europe as I would in the US for good service. For tipping your restaurant server, you do not want to leave the tip on the table; be sure to hand the tip to the server directly.