

Packing Tips for Women

These packing tips for women are courtesy of current and former Rick Steves tour guides Joan Robinson, Ann Neel, and others.

If you're not going to wear it more than three times, don't pack it! Every piece of clothing you bring should complement every other item or have at least two uses (e.g., sandals double as slippers, a scarf as a shoulder wrap).



Shop selectively: It's worth splurging a little to get just the right clothes for your trip. For durable, lightweight travel clothes, consider [ExOfficio](#) (tel. 800-644-7303), [TravelSmith](#) (tel. 800-770-3387), [Tilley Endurables](#) (tel. 800-363-8737), and [REI](#) (tel. 800-426-4840). In general, the color black dresses up easily and can be extremely versatile.

Tops: Bring two T-shirts (or buy overseas), one or two short-sleeved blouses, and one or two long-sleeved shirts. Long-sleeved shirts with sleeves that roll up easily can double as short-sleeved shirts. Look for a wrinkle-camouflaging pattern or blended fabrics that show a minimum of wrinkles. Synthetic-blend fabrics (such as Coolmax or microfiber) often dry overnight.

Pants and shorts: Dark-colored pants don't show dirt or wrinkles. Get a pair with a loose-fitting waistband that accommodates a money belt (and big Italian meals). Few European women wear shorts; consider bringing a pair of Capri pants instead.

Skirts: Some women bring one or two skirts because they're as cool and breathable as shorts, but dressier. And skirts make life easier than pants when you're faced with a squat toilet! A lightweight skirt made with a blended fabric will pack compactly. Make sure it has a comfy waistband or drawstring. Skirts go with everything, and can easily be dressed up or down.

Shoes: Bring one pair of comfortable walking shoes. Mephisto, Ecco, and Rieker look dressier and more European than sneakers but are still comfortable. For a second pair, consider dark leather flats in winter (can be worn with opaque hose and a skirt to dress up). Before you leave home, walk several miles in any footwear you'll be taking to be sure they're broken in.

Underwear, Pajamas, and Swimsuit: Try silk, microfiber, or stretch lace underwear, which dry faster than all-cotton, but breathe more than nylon. Bring at least two bras (what if you leave one hanging over your shower rail by accident?). Shorts or lightweight pajama bottoms with a T-shirt will get you modestly to the bathroom down the hall.

Jacket: Neutral colors (black, beige, navy) used to look more European than bright colors, but now everything from azure blue to pumpkin orange has made its way into European wardrobes. If your waterproof jacket doesn't have a hood, take a mini-umbrella or buy one in Europe. These are easy to find — umbrella vendors, like worms, appear with the rain.

Toiletries: All feminine products (even familiar brands) are sold throughout Europe, but it's easier to figure out how many tampons, pads, etc you'll need and bring them with you rather than having to buy a box in Europe. If you bring any timed-dosage prescription, take the time difference into account. If you usually take a pill with breakfast, take it with lunch or dinner in Europe. Remember to carry the pills onto the plane each way to take at your home-dosage time, too.

Accessorize, accessorize: Scarves give your limited wardrobe just the color it needs. They dress up your outfit, are lightweight and easy to pack, and, if purchased in Europe, make a great souvenir. Some women bring a shawl-size scarf (often a fine cashmere wool version called a pashmina) to function as a sweater substitute, scarf, head wrap, or even a blanket on a train. Functional, cheap, but beautiful imitation pashminas can be found all over Europe if you forget yours. Sleeveless vests and button-up cardigans can be worn alone or mixed-and-matched with other clothes to give you several different looks as well as layers for cold weather. Most women feel safe wearing engagement/wedding rings while traveling, but leave other valuable or flashy jewelry at home. A few pairs of inexpensive earrings are fun to bring. Remember that your most important accessory is your hidden money belt.