

Essential Packing Tips

1. Choose clothing in cotton. Cotton breathes and absorbs body moisture. It's the number one clothing material when backpacking in Asia! Also choose light colors to absorb heat and minimize attacks from mosquitoes.

Try not to choose your favorite top or your favorite pants. You should choose clothes which you are comfortable throwing away after you're done backpacking. Remember they're going to get filthy and outworn. Out with the old clothes, and in with the new! :-)

Every clothing should fit together, as in match together, to save space. You should use every item you pack into your backpack. If they still haven't been used after a month on the road, you've brought the wrong items or you packed too much. Period.

2. **Don't bring:** jeans. The weather in Asia is pretty much hot AND humid. Your body will be bloated, and won't likely fit into the jeans. If they do fit, it'll be very hot in there!

I received an email from an Australian reader who said that he had *almost* followed all of my advice on my packing list page on the website ;) Except that he brought jeans when he traveled in Southeast Asia.

He told me on Facebook: *"Amanda, you were right about the packing list. But I didn't follow your advice on the jeans. Big mistake though, because I haven't worn them once"*.

Instead he had gone to the night market in Chiang Mai (Thailand) and bought fisherman pants :-)

3. **Pack light! This is what can you buy in SE Asia and India and don't need to bring extras:**

Lots of cheap clothing (t-shirts, tunics, tank tops, loose and fit pants, undies, socks, bikinis, hoodies, sarong, dresses, scarves, Aladdin pants), flip-flops, sports sandals, backpacks, sling bags, books, pain killers, Tiger Balm, motion sickness tablets, antihistamine tablets, antiseptic wipes and liquid, aloe vera gel and cream, shampoo, conditioner, soap, razors, Gillette razor cream, tooth brush, tooth paste, mosquito net, soap, mosquito repellent, sleeping bag, sleeping pad, hammock, money belt, sun lotion, after sun lotion, tissues, menstrual pads, some sell tampons, batteries and much much more...puh!).

ALL sharp items (scissors, Swiss Army knife and alike) must be packed in the backpack, not in your hand-luggage. You don't want to risk being pulled over by customs officials, and forced to throw it away (items are money). This way, you will save time as well.

If you're traveling with someone, and you know that you will not split up during your trip (hard one though) -- avoid bringing the same travel guide, or both carrying a bunch of spare candles. Larger mosquito tents fit two people.

4. **Put the heavy and big stuff nearest the bottom and closest to your back.**
Use every crack, and fill it with undies, bikinis and alike.
5. **Bring multipurpose items** like convertible cargo pants, more bikini tops (instead of a bra), bandana, sarong (use it as a skirt, beach mat, sheet, tube dress, scarf, curtain, sun and dust protector), universal adapters, Swiss knives (contains between 1-80 different functions) and safety pins (secure bandage, use as hooks, use as a locker for your daybag if it hasn't got one) and duct tape.
6. Bring small bottles of toiletries. Like deodorant, toothpaste, shaving cream, hair mousse, shampoo, shower cream etc.

Packing list for female travelers

Below you'll find a packing list for female backpackers, suitable for traveling between **3 weeks to 2 months**. Does this list sound too short on clothes? I have focused on lightweight backpacking, and as I mentioned earlier you can buy clothing, toiletries and essentials in Asia. There's really no need to bring your whole wardrobe.

If you're traveling for **3-5 months**, *double* the amount in the clothing-section below (**except** hoody/fleece sweater/thin jacket (1), pajama pants (1) and sarong (1)), and bring two towels and not only one.

If you're traveling for **6-8 months**, *triple* the amount in the clothing-section below (**except** hoody/fleece sweater/thin jacket (1), pajama pants (1) and sarong (1), long-sleeved shirts (2), shorts (2), bras (3-4), undies (8)). No need to bring three towels, two is enough.

First, what to pack your things in:

- ☐ Backpack with rain cover
- ☐ Daybag/small rucksack
- ☐ Transparent plastic zip-lock bags
- ☐ Money belt (it should be ready to be worn when you arrive in Asia, in the mean time store it in your daybag)

Money and documents (daybag):

- ☐ Passport (with visa)
- ☐ (Electronic) Flight tickets or travel itinerary
- ☐ Cash (☐ Some in foreign currency and ☐ 50 US-dollars).

PS: Watch the import limits of local currency. For instance: for non-residents it's not allowed to bring Indian rupees into India. Small amounts in your pocket are usually not a problem like Rs 100-150. Other foreign currencies is allowed as long they don't exceed US \$5000).

- ☐ Debit card ☐ Credit card ☐ Travel Cheques
- ☐ Travel insurance card ☐ Vaccination card
- ☐ 4 passport photographs (for visas, you can take more pics at photo shops in Asia)

- ☐ Photocopies of passport (first page with picture + visa pages)
- ☐ Copies of flight ticket/itinerary, travel cheques, insurance card and vaccination card
- ☐ Address book (for postcards)
- ☐ A note with travel cheque numbers, important phone numbers (insurance company, bank, family, doctor)

Clothes:

- ☐ 2 t-shirts/tops
- ☐ 1 long sleeved shirt
- ☐ 1 shorts with zipper or button pockets/capri pants (loose)
- ☐ 1 skirt (should reach to at least your mid calf, for visiting temples)
- ☐ 1 sarong
- ☐ 1 dress
- ☐ 1 warm hoody/fleece sweater/thin jacket (for cold nights)
- ☐ 1 thin pajama pants
- ☐ 2 bikini sets (if you decide to use a bikini top as a bra, add 2 more bikini sets)
- ☐ 4 undies
- ☐ 2 bras
- ☐ 1 pair of socks (for cold nights in the mountains, as well as trekking)

Footwear:

- ☐ Flip-flops
- ☐ Sports sandals/solid walking sandals

Accessories:

- ☐ 1 pair of sun glasses with case
- ☐ Bandana/small scarf
- ☐ One small pack of wiping tissues/pack with wet wipes
- ☐ Travel sewing kit with safety pins

Essentials:

- ☐ 1 large towel of microfiber
- ☐ Swiss Army Knife
- ☐ Flashlight
- ☐ Padlocks (1-2 for backpack) and ☐ Padlock wire (for train rides)
- ☐ Travel first-aid kit
- ☐ Extra money purse (to keep foreign currencies separated)
- ☐ Money belt
- ☐ Ear plugs
- ☐ Plastic tape for bottles (so they won't burst in your backpack)
- ☐ Travel duct tape (to fix holes in backpack, to hang up clothesline if no where to hook it)
- ☐ Deck of card/travel games (for between flights and long bus/train rides)
- ☐ One toilet paper ready
- ☐ Very thin duvet cover/cotton travel liner
- ☐ Mosquito net/travel tent for mosquitoes (recommended for India, optional for Southeast Asia)
- ☐ Notebook and ☐ Pen
- ☐ Travel laundry bag
- ☐ 'Rape' whistle or ☐ Pepper spray

Toiletries:

- ☐ 2-in-1 shampoo and conditioner
- ☐ 1 small bottle of shower cream/citronella soap (mosquitoes don't like citronella)
- ☐ Deodorant
- ☐ Travel tooth brush/tooth brush with ☐ Cap or case

- ☐ Facial products
- ☐ 1 sun lotion for body, ☐ 1 sun lotion for face ☐ 1 After-sun lotion
- ☐ Q-tips
- ☐ Cotton pads
- ☐ Tweezers
- ☐ Tampons and/or ☐ 1 small pack of pads
- ☐ Basic make-up (mascara and blush powder, preferably NOT foundation)
- ☐ Razor ☐ 1 small bottle razor cream
- ☐ Pain killers
- ☐ 1 bottle of mosquito repellent with DEET
- ☐ Stomach tablets or ☐ Medical charcoal tablets
- ☐ Pure Aloe Vera gel (for potential sunburns)
- ☐ Hair accessories (☐ Hair pins ☐ Hair rubber band)

If not already included in the first-aid kit, pack:

- ☐ 1 tube/bottle of anti-septic cream or liquid
- ☐ Oral re-hydration powder bags (after diarrhea)

Electronics:

- ☐ Camera with ☐ Case/bag ☐ Camera charger ☐ Camera cleaning rug
- ☐ Mobile phone ☐ Mobile charger

Additional items to consider:

- ☐ Thin rain jacket or poncho (practical during the wet season)
- ☐ Thin cargo pants

- ☐ Trekking shoes
- ☐ 1 pair of glasses with ☐ Case and ☐ Cleaning rug
- ☐ Daily/monthly contact lenses with ☐ Case ☐ Contact lenses solution
- ☐ 1 small bottle of hair mousse
- ☐ 1 small bottle of hair spray
- ☐ Mosquito bracelets
- ☐ Malaria tablets
- ☐ Motion-sickness tablets
- ☐ Antihistamine drugs
- ☐ Nose spray
- ☐ Eye drops
- ☐ Water-purifying tablets/kit
- ☐ Travel washing powder ☐ Universal sink plug and ☐ Clothesline
- ☐ Prescribed medicines
- ☐ Prescriptions for important medicines ☐ Prescription from eye doctor
- ☐ Medical note from doctor which says you're fit for diving if you have medical issues
- ☐ Multivitamins
- ☐ Birth control pills or ☐ Other birth control methods
- ☐ Cranberry tablets (for urine infection)
- ☐ Tiger Balm (you should buy it in Asia)
- ☐ Tattoo cream
- ☐ Condoms
- ☐ Blister kit (for trekking)
- ☐ Binoculars (bird-watching)

- ☐ Basic make-up
- ☐ Low-key jewelry (beach necklaces, rings, toe rings, wooden or plastic ear rings)
- ☐ Blow-up travel pillow
- ☐ Photos of your family, friends, boyfriend
- ☐ 1 ordinary reading book ☐ 1 Travel Guide
- ☐ Extra memory card for camera ☐ Extra battery pack for camera
- ☐ Tripod
- ☐ MP3-player with ☐ Headphones/in-ear earphones ☐ Charger for MP3
- ☐ Universal adapter (whether you should bring one or not depends on where you come from and where you're heading)
- ☐ iPad ☐ iPad Charger ☐ iPad case
- ☐ Laptop ☐ Laptop charger ☐ Laptop cover
- ☐ Snorkeling equipment (only if you're going to snorkel a lot and want to save money on rental)