

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD



Backpack that holds a lot, but fits in tight spaces.



Comfy slippers



portable phone charger

PACKING LIGHT WITHOUT ABANDONING NECESSITIES

Lessons from living out of a backpack

By Jessica Teich
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Packing light without abandoning necessities is a daunting task for most people. Still, I lived comfortably out of a backpack for more than two months, and I'm usually an overpacker.

While the term "backpacking" implies some degree of roughing it, I wasn't. I simply chose a backpack for the hands-free ease. I knew I'd be spending some days exploring cities before I could drop off my belongings, and I wanted to be able to easily tote my bag through the often hilly and cobbled streets of Europe. Additionally, I wanted to skirt checked-bag fees.

After nine weeks abroad, I've learned exactly what and how to pack. The trick is planning around a few staples.

Backpack, Porter 46 by Osprey

A travel-savvy friend recommended this 46-liter pack, and it didn't disappoint. It's the largest carry-on size allowed by most airlines, and compression straps enabled me to

squeeze the bag into overhead compartments on all of my flights, even on the budget airlines with notoriously stingy carry-on specifications. The list price is \$130.

Unlike most backpacks, this model flips open like a suitcase and can be carried either like a duffel bag or a traditional backpack. The padded shoulder straps and two support bands eased the physical burden of lugging around nine weeks' worth of belongings.

Here's what I learned: It's best to make sure you can lift the whole pack with one arm, distribute the weight as evenly as possible, and take the time to adjust your shoulder and support straps each time you put it on.

Portable charger, iSunnao 10000mAh external battery charger

Smartphone batteries die quickly, especially if you're using them to navigate new terrain and take photos all day long. To make sure I was never slowed down by my short battery life, I invested in a long-lasting portable charger — not the lipstick-size models you can find at the checkout of any discount store. (It sells for \$69.99 on Amazon.)

My iSunnao external battery has two USB

ports, so my travel partner and I could both power up at once, if need be. The charger lasts for days (I charged my dead phone at least three times without recharging the pack), and has an LED display that shows when it's time to juice up again.

Tote bag

Don't waste your "one personal item" on a small bag. Bring a big, zippered purse in a flexible fabric, like cotton or canvas, so that you can either roll it up and stow it in your backpack, or stuff it full of the additional souvenirs and clothes you'll accumulate.

I tucked my everyday purse, a small cross-body bag with a chain strap, into the bigger bag on travel days. That way, once we arrived, I was able to explore the destination hands-free and safely without worrying about my giant bag, which I always hid back in our room.

Packing cubes

I doubted the usefulness of these zippered bags, but now, I can't imagine traveling without them. The nylon and mesh pouches keep clothes separated and neat. I was able to quickly locate exactly what I needed instead of

rifling through my bag and unfurling all of my clothes. Afterward, I just replaced the cubes and was good to go. It cut my packing time in half, and kept my clothes organized and fresh. You can find these anywhere from Amazon to TJ Maxx.

Blanket wrap

The key to keeping your travel bag slim is to bring multipurpose clothes and accessories. Traveling from December through February, I knew I'd need a thick sweater.

I chose a wrap as my heaviest layering piece. I curled up beneath it like a blanket back in my room, rolled it up like a pillow on planes, and of course, layered it beneath my jacket on cold days. I made sure to wear it on travel days to save space in my bag.

Slippers

I bought comfy footwear in France after a few weeks of tiptoeing around my accommodations barefoot. Choose a flimsy pair with a rubberized sole so that you're able to roll them up and stow them inside shoes on travel days.

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HERE

DINNER SERIES AT BRINE

Calling all foodies: The Culinary Opus Dinner Series is a 15 demi-course dining extravaganza — with five wine pairings — taking place in Newburyport on the fourth Friday of every month through May. Each evening is designed to showcase the personality of chefs Justin Shoults and Dave Urwin of Brine, and Jeremy Glover and Lowell Connors of Ceia Kitchen + Bar. These prix fixe dining events, all hosted at Brine, feature a different theme each month: Vegetarian (March 25), Childhood Favorites (April 29), and Psychedelic Dinner The-

ater (May 20). The only rules of the night are no substitutions, no special requests, and no phone use. (Sorry, Instagram-lovers.) Reservations are required and seating is limited to 40. \$130 per person does not include gratuity, tax, and other beverages. 978-358-8479. brineoyster.com

WINE FEST ON NANTUCKET

It's never too early to snag tickets for the popular Nantucket Wine Festival (May 18-22). Join vintners, sommeliers, chefs, and wine lovers from around the world who arrive for more than 50 wine-centric tastings, seminars, cooking demonstrations, lunches, dinners, and

special events led by luminaries such as Eric Asimov, chief wine critic for The New York Times, and Boston chefs Lydia Shire, Michael Scelfo, Ken Oringer, and others. The historic, waterfront White Elephant Hotel hosts many festival events, including the signature Harbor Gala, with tastings prepared by 40 chefs (\$250) and The Grand Tastings, featuring more than 600 wines from 150 global wineries (from \$125). This year's La Fête wine dinner, one of the festival's most prestigious evenings, will benefit No Kid Hungry (\$500). Other ticket prices range from \$50 for Breakfast on the Harbor to \$2,975 for First Growth Bordeaux Dinner. 617-527-9473, www.nantucketwinefestival.com

THERE

NEW MUSEUM AND SPA AT WHISTLER

Those heading to Whistler, British Columbia, for late-winter skiing or springtime hiking and biking can be the first to experience the new Audain Art Museum and expanded ScandinaVe Spa. Debuting this month, the 56,000-square-foot museum — the newest in Canada — displays works from the personal art collection of Michael Audain and his wife, Yoshiko Karasawa. Designed as a visual journey through coastal British Columbian art, from the 18th century to present day, the collection includes Northwest Coast First Nations masks; works by painter Emily Carr; postwar modernists such as E.J. Hughes, Gordon Smith, and Jack Shadbolt; as well as contemporary British Columbian artists. Temporary exhibitions, featuring work from around the world, open with Mexican modernists Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco. audainartmuseum.com Just minutes from Whistler Village,



a new building at the Nordic-inspired ScandinaVe Spa Whistler adds 4,144 square feet of space for steam room, sauna, yoga studio, relaxation room, and sun deck, all surrounded by a peaceful spruce and cedar forest with stunning views of Whistler, Blackcomb, and Sprout mountains. www.scandinave.com/en/

HAWAIIAN LUXURY RETREAT

Say aloha to the Four Seasons Resort Lanai, a brand new Hawaiian resort on a pristine island a few miles west of Maui. The 217 guestrooms (including 51 suites) are set within lush grounds that feature verdant botanical gardens; koi ponds; a lagoon-style, free-form central pool with cascading waterfall; spa; multiple dining options — including Nobu Lanai — and an 18-hole ocean-view Jack Nicklaus Signature Manele Golf Course. Set apart is the adults-only Retreat pool, whose waterfalls and lava rock grottos echo Lanai's iconic cliffs and offer stunning views. Rates from \$1,075. 800-321-4666,

www.fourseasons.com/lanai/

EVERYWHERE

TRAVEL BAGS WITH BUILT-IN BATTERY CHARGER

Zip through airport security with lightweight and stylish snap-closure messenger bags from IVoice. The shoulder bag comes with a padded laptop compartment and two easy-access pockets for your phone. The best part? You can stop worrying about running out of power on long flights, or when you are out and about all day, because each bag comes with a built-in lithium-ion battery charger to keep your gadgets fueled no matter where you are. Fits laptops up to 14 inches. Adjustable length and removable straps. 100 percent cotton canvas, available in blue, gray, tan, brown, and cream. \$159. www.Ivoicenyc.com/charging-bags

TRAVEL ATTIRE FOR MEN AND WOMEN

You'll find casual and classic

travel styles for men at women at Territory Ahead, a company dedicated to making "clothing for life's adventures." The collection of comfortable, easy-to-pack shirts, chinos, jackets, dresses, skirts, jeans, and accessories feature unique fabrics, patterns and designs influenced by textures and colors from around the globe — from the rugged coastlines of the Atlantic to the island life of the Caribbean to the jungles of South America. www.territoryahead.com

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