

Packing Tips and Baggage Information

The following is taken from the VISA Team Manual. Although the tips are geared for shorter assignments, many of them pertain to longer assignments as well.

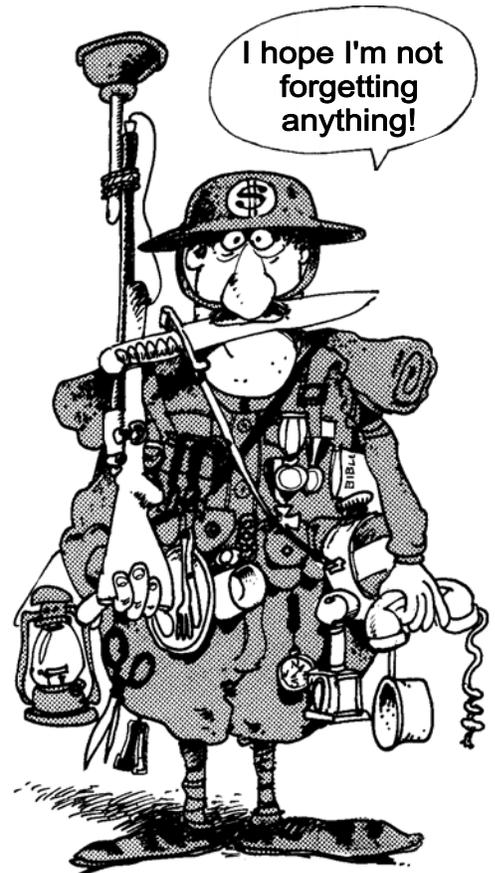
- ◆ Keep valuables and passports safe and carry only enough money for anticipated expenses. Carry passports, tickets and money separately.
- ◆ Be sure to pack according to the weather of the host country. A small umbrella might be handy depending on location and time of year.
- ◆ Don't take anything you can't afford or wouldn't want to lose.
- ◆ Don't put your most valuable stuff in your checked luggage. Airline liability for loss is incredibly low and filled with exclusions.
- ◆ Think through what it will be like if you're separated from your luggage for several days. What must you have with you in your carry on?
 - Prescription medications in their original pharmacy supplied bottle. Taking a copy of the prescription (generic rather than brand name) can help in replacing or refilling the medication if needed.
 - Extra pair of prescription eyeglasses if you'd be blind without your glasses
 - Essential toiletries
 - Change of clothes
- ◆ If you're taking toilet paper, make it more packable by taking out the cardboard core.
- ◆ Pack a small sewing kit with safety pins and a bunch of zip top plastic bags.
- ◆ If you're carrying laundry detergent powder in your suitcase, buy a small package and bring it in the original container. If foreign customs opens your luggage and finds white powder in a bag, you might find your newly studied language skills a bit taxed.
- ◆ A travel clothesline might be useful and takes up very little room.
- ◆ Avoid taking wrapped gifts for security reasons. Pack gift wrapping supplies to use once you arrive if needed.
- ◆ Don't take anything you can live without. Traveling light is the best plan. Airline baggage rules are complex and vary from one leg of a trip to the next. When returning from abroad or after a stopover, you may have to pay extra charges at the check-in counter for the same amount of luggage you originally brought along.
- ◆ Go through your wallet or purse and purge unnecessary items.
- ◆ Couples traveling together should each pack one change of clothes in the other's bag in case one bag goes astray.

- ◆ Pack liquids in a zip top plastic bag for protection in case of leaks.
- ◆ Bring snack food durable enough to pack. After a hard day's work, teams often enjoy fellowshiping together during a break with granola bars or a favorite snack.
- ◆ Check with your Team Leader for baggage limitations. Pack personal belongings in one suitcase and one carry-on bag. Your second piece of baggage will likely be for team supplies.
- ◆ Keep an eye on your baggage in public places 100% of the time. Do not allow anyone to carry it unless you know the person or the Team Leader signals you that it's okay.
- ◆ If the voltage or electric plug shape is different in your host country, take a voltage converter and plug adapter with you.
- ◆ Wear your bulkiest clothes on the day of travel to save space in your luggage. Airlines don't consider coats as over-the-limit carry-on items.
- ◆ If you're taking clothes, tools, or supplies to leave behind, pack them in a collapsible bag you can bring home inside your other suitcase or in a plastic storage container which you can leave behind.
- ◆ It is a good idea to use an address on your baggage tags other than your home address. You never know what unscrupulous people may do with your address.
- ◆ For easier identification of team members' luggage, tie a bright colored piece of fabric or ribbon on each bag.
- ◆ Distribute your VBS and other ministry supplies among the luggage of several team members so you're not faced with disaster if a single bag is lost.
- ◆ For trips to "closed" countries where evangelistic media is forbidden, talk very specifically with the experts receiving you on the other end about what to do.
- ◆ If you're planning to carry in potentially hazardous materials (chemicals, gases, solvents, paints, supplies for a hospital lab), check well in advance with the airline's cargo department.
- ◆ Bring your own medical supplies. Suggested items include aspirin or Tylenol, decongestant, liquid antiseptic, band-aids, sunscreen, medications for diarrhea, constipation, colds, sore throats and sunburn. Also bring along extra contact lens solution or spare glasses as appropriate.

In recent years the airline industry has made great progress in the speed and care of baggage handling. While the number of bags damaged, lost or delayed is small, this is no consolation when *your* luggage does not accompany you or arrive in good condition. If problems occur, here are steps to take to ensure your claim is processed promptly, thoroughly and fairly.

Coping with Luggage Problems

1. **Go directly** from your flight to the baggage claim area. Make any necessary phone calls there, keeping your eye on the luggage carousel.
2. **Immediately report** any damage or loss to the airline's baggage service office. If your bag was irregularly shaped or fragile, it may have arrived in another section with specially handled bags.
3. **Ask** when the next flight from your departure city is scheduled to arrive. Most bags that were overlooked or checked too late for loading will be immediately forwarded.
4. **Complete** a Damaged or Missing Article or Delayed Baggage Report before leaving the airport or, for international flights, before leaving the baggage claim area and heading into the customs area.
5. **Note** the name of the airline representative handling your claim. If possible, keep in touch with this person daily until your claim is settled.
6. **Make** a list of what's in your luggage while you are packing at home and include a copy with your other traveling papers. **Put your name, address, phone number, flight number, destination, and sponsoring organization's name, address and phone number inside each piece of luggage.**
7. **Retain** the passenger coupon of your airline ticket, your baggage claim checks and copies of all claim forms. **Do not give them up** until your property is returned or your claim is settled.
8. **Don't jeopardize** your entire claim by inflating the value of your possessions. If you purchase luggage or clothing for your trip, keep receipts in a safe place at home. This will save haggling later if your luggage or possessions must be replaced.
9. **Be patient.** The average tracking time for lost luggage is 30-45 days from the date of travel to the date of settlement.



Many of these ideas came from [The Essential Guide to the Short Term Mission Trip](#) by David C. Forward and [Successful Mission Teams: A Guide for Volunteers](#) by Martha VanCise.