

The Politics of Packing

You've booked your next cruise. Your tickets have arrived. Now what? Dust those suitcases off, mates: It's time to pack! Although packing for a cruise has always been a bit difficult -- what with formal wear, beach wear, country club casual, and all the shoes to match -- it is even tougher now due to recent terror plots and new carry-on regulations. So to gain some insight (and perhaps some great advice), we thought we'd ask: What's your packing strategy?



Nearly 3,350 of you were so passionate about packing that we ended up having to extend our poll hours! When asked what you simply can't leave home without, most of you cited essentials -- toiletries and medications -- as well as plenty of books and music. But there were a few respondents that preferred little luxuries. MessyJessy will not leave home without her earplugs: "I love my husband, but I can't sleep a wink when he snores! I learned that lesson the hard way on our honeymoon cruise!" Meanwhile, straughn smuggles "two bottles of booze for the in-suite Manhattan every evening."

Our personal favorite? All of you who said you refused to leave for your vacation without your significant other. As LARGIN says, "I can get most anything else either on the ship or in the first port." How sweet.

So what's the one thing even the savviest packers forget to pack? Ironically, toiletries (specifically toothpaste) popped up again, and underwear, bathing suits and formal wear accessories round out the list. Luckily, the majority of the essentials that our members have forgotten were easily replaced by stores onboard or in port ... but often at a cost. Jim B has forgotten "shorts, (dress type) on our cruise in Tahiti. Had to pay almost \$40 for a pair of ugly ones that would be about \$5 in a discount store. Wore swim trunks the rest of the time." Buccaneergirl says she forgot conditioner for her hair: "Went shopping in Nassau and paid \$7 for a small bottle!" And we're sure there's one thing on flseagal's list she won't ever forget again: hairspray. She "bought some in Mexico that cost \$12 and smelled like bug spray!"

Then there are others that are so organized they never forget a thing.

Anonymous says, "Forget? No, no, no! I make a list of what I'm going to wear every day including jewelry. Then I package the jewelry according to the date. I check off each thing as it goes into the suitcase! Last trip was a 24-day cruise. I had 13 pairs of shoes. My husband was NOT pleased!"

As for packing techniques, here's a recap of our questions ... and the results.

★ **What kind of suitcases do you use?**

Just fewer than 3,000 respondents, or 88 percent, favor the popular soft-side luggage, whereas 277 are holding onto their hard-sided suitcases, and 103 would rather sling a duffle bag or backpack over their shoulders.

★ **When do you typically pack for a cruise?**

The bulk of these results harbored between 1,867 travelers packing one week before and 1,064 packing the night before they sailed; 341 of you methodically planned one month before, and just 39 quickly packed 20 minutes before dashing out the door.

★ **If you've ever found that you've shopped so much on the trip you can't close your suitcase, how have you solved the problem?**

A suitcase is a souvenir too, right? At least 1,702 shopaholics think so: 798 of you stashed your shiny new things in an extra suitcase bought from the onboard gift shop, and 904 bought one at a port store. Just 15 didn't have to lug them home at all: You shipped them home! But an overwhelming 2,642 of you didn't respond, which means your shore excursions led you far away from stores.

★ **Would you rather lug along an extra suitcase or visit the laundrette/send items out?**

Just about split down the middle, 1,376 voters (43 percent) lug along an extra suitcase as a holding cell for their laundry, but 1,854 (57 percent) would rather wash their clothes themselves or send them out.

★ **When it comes to wearing pants or a skirt more than once on one cruise....**

Cruise Critic members are smart packers: A whopping 2,170 respondents say recycling clothes is an integral part of their packing strategy, and 922 will wear something twice if they absolutely have to; 167 members will not re-wear their clothes.

★ **What do you consider country club casual?**

There's not much of an argument here; 3,180 members, or 97 percent, agree that khakis and a collared shirt represent country club casual best. Forty-four sport a T-shirt and low-rise jeans, whereas 40 feel more comfortable in the exact opposite: a silk gown and a tuxedo.

As always, the real fun begins with the fill-in-the-blank portion of the poll. Read on for the down and dirty details ... and a few hilarious anecdotes.

What My DH Forgot...

We're hoping the "DH" here stands for "Dear Husband" and not anything detrimental.

- ▶ "DH 'forgot' his only dress shirt and tie. He tried to buy one onboard, but there was truly nothing in his size (he has a VERY large, short neck -- genetics). Luckily we were seated just inside the dining room with no one else at our table. He made lots of use of his serviette and we avoided public areas after dinner." -- anonymous
- ▶ "DH forgot to pack any long pants other than the tux! So we ended up buying him pants in Cadiz -- where no one speaks English! We can laugh about it now, but at the time I was envisioning all meals on deck (other than formal nights) since he had no long pants. He thought he could just wear the tux pants (black) every night! I thought the stripe down the sides would surely give him away! I WILL be packing for him for ALL future cruises!" -- cindiedee
- ▶ "DH forgot his pants. They were still hanging in the closet. Fortunately, his suit pants were packed and they matched most of his shirts. He also had the jeans he wore to travel and wore them the first and last days that are more casual." --CruisingAgain
- ▶ "DH forgot a tie once. We had to pick the least ugly of the ones onboard and bought it for way too much." --cigal
- ▶ "DH forgot his tux shirt. We rented on the ship (never again -- it wasn't a very good shirt)." --straughn
- ▶ "Hubby tends to forget the obvious: sunglasses, socks, cufflinks, toothbrush. Thank goodness about anything we would forget we can always buy onboard. Then I tell him I'm deducting that amount from his gambling budget!" -- wolfganghowell
- ▶ "We've never forgotten anything essential. My DH left his PJ's in the hotel in Hawaii, but he had a backup!" -- gabelle
- ▶ "My husband wears contacts. We flew in to Italy and he realized he forgot to pack his contact solution. We went to a farmacia and tried to explain what we needed (we do not speak Italian). We purchased through sign language and much laughter what they suggested -- wrong product." -- greenacres

What the Wife Forgot ("I Was Forced to Go Shopping...")

- ▶ "The wife forgot to pack her makeup and was forced to buy a makeup kit onboard." --anonymous
- ▶ "My wife forgot her tennis shoes once, and we were forced to go tennis shoe shopping in Cozumel." --ekdskier
- ▶ "Not myself, mind you, but my wife forgot the self tanner, which is a bad thing to forget on a February cruise." --budaman
- ▶ "The wife forgot to pack dress shoes. We had to pick them up in the first port." --fr926
- ▶ "Forgot a tie for DH and stopped at mall before boarding." --rayandjoan
- ▶ "I'm too organized to leave anything behind unless you count my husband. Just joking." --SnoBirdCruiser

Oops ... Forgot My ID!

- ▶ "I have forgotten my [driver's license] twice ... I had someone bring it to me at the airport. Luckily I made it just before they closed the doors." -- KansasScrapper
- ▶ "PASSPORT! My in-laws next-day aired it to us in Miami. Always get there the day before a cruise and leave a day after the cruise." -- MRVEGAS711
- ▶ "Passports! Discovered just before Alligator Alley on way to Port of Miami. Called pet-sitter and had her meet us on Pinellas side of Skyway Bridge with passports. Broke many [speeding] laws on [our] way back to Miami. Made it with just 15 minutes to spare! Once onboard, had drink to calm nerves!" -- Tigereyz
- ▶ "Picture ID. Left driver's license at home when thinning down billfold." -- gonefishin555
- ▶ "My passport -- had to ask the airline counter agent to rebook me to a later flight so I could drive home an hour and a half (one way) and get my passport." --Leon_Guy
- ▶ "Brought old passport by mistake. Had to wait a day for trans-Atlantic flight while new passport was Fed-Ex'd." --caribcruiser55
- ▶ "My driver's license (I was traveling with a passport). I just couldn't drive the rental car when we got to Hawaii. Wait ... maybe it was INTENTIONALLY left behind!" --PescadoAmarillo

▶ "We forgot to bring my husband's birth certificate once. Luckily, his father was able to obtain a copy and express mail it to us to our hotel in Florida." --Taters

▶ "Back before the stricter security I forgot my wife's birth certificate. Fortunately she was allowed to board without it. Don't think it would happen today!" --Imreiff

Inspector (Cruise) Gadgets

In the words of Cruise Critic member mjarens, "duct tape can work wonders." We received an overwhelming response from everyone giving us a slew of new reasons why a traveler should never leave home without it. Fixing ripped luggage and skirts, securing liquor boxes, marking your luggage with the hot pink variety (thanks mcfreda!), taping the seam of an adjoining cabin ... duct tape has got you covered (literally!). But aside from that, all of you "inspector gadgets" have wowed us with your creativity on everyday household items put to good cruise use!

▶ "We bring the laptop so that we can empty our memory stick from our digital camera out once per day. This allows us to take as many pictures as we want without ever running out of room!" --Newlyweds28

▶ "Always bring a power strip. There are never enough electrical outlets in the cabin for all the chargers (radios, cell phone, digital camera, etc.)." --1FatPER

▶ "Zip-Loc bags. It is great to store and organize small items, and afterward we can throw it away." --sideymeow

▶ "GPS: To track our trip and see the names of islands we pass by." --AlainBob

▶ "Suction cup toothbrush holder, night light, extension cord, small clock radio." --Susie22

▶ "Hand-crank blender for margaritas on the balcony; iPod and speaker docking station for music." --The Hag

▶ "Collapsible shelves for underwear, etc. Extension cord for extra outlets, and of course the fan. --CruzinNoony

▶ "Bungee cord to keep the door open." --cruiserone

▶ "Battery powered mixer for my medication." --NJL324

▶ "Baggies for the leaking bathroom stuff like hair spray and wetting

solution, large plastic glasses for less refills, plastic garbage bags for dirty and/or wet laundry going home, cell phone charger." --notentirelynormal

- ▶ "Bubble wrap and tape for the breakables and extension cord for the chargers." --KansasScrapper
- ▶ "Clothing steamer (irons are too big and not allowed) Clorox disinfecting wipes (to wipe down the door knobs, phone, table tops, etc.)." --nanfromatlanta
- ▶ "Hanging shoe caddy for the bathroom door to put toiletries in." --ChefStomp91
- ▶ "Hangers, seems as if there is never enough in the cabins. We also leave them for the next passengers, but I am sure they are removed before the next cruise." --Stan

It Wasn't My Fault ... the Airline Lost My Luggage!

- ▶ "Airline lost my luggage. Did power shopping in New Orleans two hours before [sailing away]. Went on a seven-day cruise with a small suitcase and my carry-on." --nasha1229
- ▶ "Have never forgotten anything, but on our first cruise in the early 80's the airline lost one piece of luggage which had some of my twin sons' clothing in it. They were only 5 at the time. Fortunately, because I overpacked, they still had plenty of things to wear. Maybe this is why I still overpack today." --Isscancun
- ▶ "It wasn't what I forgot to pack, more than the airline not getting the luggage on time. The luggage was waiting for me at the next port, but wasn't getting there for two days. Luckily I had my bare minimums in my carry-on, and for the first formal night my black T-shirt, black slacks and black dress shoes worked fine." --Thebambam

So, what about those of you who over-pack? In a home page daily poll that asked "Do you wear everything you pack?" only about 11 percent of nearly 3,500 voters claimed they actually wear everything that goes into their suitcases, while another 35 percent said they always take far more than they need. Slightly more promising is the 50 percent who said they don't quite wear everything, but they come awfully close. For anyone who falls into the 35 percent category, we suggest taking a peek at these [packing tips](#) and this [interactive packing list](#) from our sister site, IndependentTraveler.com.

Source: CruiseCritic.com