

# ORGANIZING

## Have an organized and stress-free vacation

We're finally in the midst of the summer break from school, and all across the country, families are rejoicing. It's a wonderful time for making family memories. Of course some of the best summer memories are made on vacation. For my family, that usually meant a trip to Myrtle Beach.

As a child, I was lucky to not have to worry much about the planning, because my mother pretty much took care of everything. As an adult, it didn't take long to realize all of the work involved. Great vacations don't just magically happen. Being organized is always important, but it may be even more important with regards to travel. One careless mistake like forgetting to put your suitcase in the car (me) or forgetting a passport for an international trip (a friend) can ruin a vacation. Here are some of my top tips for traveling.

### MAKE A LIST (AND CHECK IT TWICE)

Santa's obsessive habit is a good one because it all starts with a good packing list. A good general packing list is tremendously helpful, but depending on the setting of the trip, the requirements can vary tremendously. I would pack very differently for a beach vacation than I would for a business conference. Thinking through your daily itinerary or likely activities is helpful.

A last-minute "To Do" list is a great idea. Include tasks such as taking out trash, emptying refrigerator of foods that will spoil, packing last-minute items such as charging cords, daily medications or toiletries, turning off water to the washing machine, and setting up mail pickup or holding. Your local post office can hold your mail and deliver it on the day you return. They can also send you a scan of all of the items that are in your held mail each day, all at no cost to you. Speaking of medications, be sure to check several days before you go to see if you need any medication refills before you leave.

### SCOUT OUT YOUR LOCATION

Take some time to not only plan your activities, but locations of frequently needed services or stores like a grocery store or pharmacy. You can do this online ahead of time or as soon as you arrive. We



AUDRA STEADMAN

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often look ahead at Google Street View, especially if directions are confusing. Google Maps is the easiest way to get around. Simply type in your desired location, choose whether you will be driving, using public transit or walking, and Google Maps gives you very detailed directions.

### PACK LIGHTLY

I may have used this Rick Steves quote before, but it bears repeating: "There are two kinds of travelers: those who pack light and those who wish they had." The more bulky your bag(s), the more difficult it will be to move around. If you're flying, a heavy bag will cost you extra.

How do you pack lightly? When choosing your clothing, pick items that can mix and match with each other. If you're staying somewhere with a washer and dryer, pack less clothing and plan to do laundry. Packing lightweight, fast-drying, wrinkle-resistant fabrics is helpful. Reduce the number of shoes by picking only a few comfortable pairs that can be used with multiple outfits. Wearing

your bulkiest clothes and shoes on travel days can also free up space.

I love this idea on Huffington Post of packing tennis shoes that will work at the gym as well as for daily wear. Keep in mind that most destinations have stores where many things can be purchased. For a long trip, it's really more advantageous to travel lightly than to pack absolutely everything you could possibly need.

### PACK WISELY

Use every possible inch of space. Rolling clothes instead of folding them uses space more efficiently. Use the space inside of your shoes to pack small items like socks. If you're taking an empty water bottle, use the space inside it. Throw in some Ziploc bags; they can be very useful for grouping items (a daily outfit, toiletries, snacks) or for wet clothes. Small zippered bags called packing cubes are wonderful, but a Ziplock bag can work just as well.

Pack fragile or valuable items inside of clothing. Think through your morning and evening routines to make sure you bring everything you need. Keeping a toi-

letries bag already loaded up with everything you use on a daily basis saves a lot of time and hassle.

### GET THERE EARLY

If you are flying, get to the airport early. My husband, Eric, is not a worrier at all, but over 20 years ago, he missed a flight in Europe because he didn't arrive early enough. Now we always get to the airport early. Really early. If you arrive early, you can absorb unexpected events like traffic or forgotten items. You will also be much less stressed out. You can always find things to do with that extra airport time.

By the way, if you fly frequently, it is totally worth the time, effort and money to sign up for the Global Entry program. You will always be TSA precheck, meaning getting through security is much faster (hooray for not having to remove your shoes), and re-entering the country from international travel is a breeze.

### ANTICIPATE COMPLICATIONS

Give everyone on the trip a detailed itinerary list (physical and/or digital) with details of flights, road directions, lodging, restaurants, etc., in case your group gets split up. Share this list with someone staying home in case you need to be reached for an emergency. Ask a neighbor to keep an eye on your house. This person can also check your door for any items you expect to arrive (thank you, Amazon Prime!).

Bring a phone charger and portable battery in case your phone battery gets low. You can download a map in advance in case you don't have a good signal to get GPS directions. Pack medications and a change of clothing into a carry-on bag in case luggage is lost on a flight.

### UNPACK IMMEDIATELY

I can't stress this enough. I have helped many clients who have multiple unpacked bags from trips. If you have a Monday through Friday work week, I suggest getting back home on Saturday if possible. The best way to assure that this happens is to build some time into your schedule when you return for unpacking, doing laundry, and getting back into your regular routines.

Happy travels!

Angie Hyche is a professional organizer and owner of Shipshape Solutions in Kingsport. Email her at beshipshape@gmail.com.

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