

Packing for Success

Description

"If you wish to travel far and fast, travel light. Take off all your envies, jealousies, unforgiveness, selfishness, and fears." default

ceseare pavese





We have all been there. Last-minute packing. Staying up all night before an early morning flight. Getting ready to leave for our dream trip, exhausted. Realizing you don't have the right clothes or they don't fit results in panic buying with rushed runs to the store. That item we know we have but can't find anywhere. Purchase new shoes, then forget to break them in. The suitcase you were planning to use you discover is damaged. Then when you get to your destination, you realize you have forgotten an essential item.

The list of last-minute craziness we all can identify with some or all of these situations. We can guarantee we have done all of them and even more.

After all our time traveling, we have seen everything. Those last-minute purchases and rushed shipping financially can bring quite a hit on your budget. That credit card statement arriving after your trip can be jaw-dropping. Shopping at your destination for items takes away from your fun and can be expensive too. It can be almost impossible if you are over 6 feet like Joelle. One time in Spain, Joelle spent 4 hours out of her first full day finding a missing part of her camera. It goes on and on.

Part of this is inevitable and adds to travel's craziness and funny stories. That said, much can be avoided. It is all about early preparation and having detailed packing lists. We will share what has

worked for us, how to reduce your packing stress before a trip, and how to bring all those essential items and keep them organized.

The first step to packing for traveling abroad is to have a list. This not only keeps you organized but keeps you from overpacking and forgetting something important. We have put together two lists to assist you in getting ready for your next adventure. The first is your comprehensive packing list of all the items you will bring on your trip. The second one details which items need to be in your carry-on luggage.

We will take you through each list, sharing tips and hard-earned lessons to take the stress out of packing for you.



A Tribute First

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Before packing, we want to pay tribute to the people who have inspired us to see the world.

Joelle is a first-generation American born to French Immigrants. Her parents came here with a dream, leaving everything they knew behind to start a new life. This was the very luggage on that ship with them that Spring day in 1959 as it pulled into New York Harbor. It serves as a poignant reminder of the magnificent world for all of us to wander if we reach for the stars.

Their spirit for adventure lives on in their daughter, and we are forever grateful.

Take the stress out of packing

1. Use a list. We suggest one overall master list and a carry-on list. Review all items and cross off all you won't need during your travels. Traveling abroad is very different from traveling back east in the United States. A successful and healthy trip needs to be organized and thoughtful in your packing.



2. Start early. Joelle starts laying out her packing 3-4 weeks before. Do you have a guest room bed or a room in the house that is rarely used? Take advantage of that space!! This gives you time to determine what you need and don't need. Approaching it this way will help you decide early on what you must shop for without expensive last-minute panic buying.

The main packing list below is all the items you may need to bring on your trip. It is a list of all trips abroad, whether for one week or two months. This is not a list for backpackers, as their needs are unique, especially if they stay at hostels or are camping. This is for your average traveler, who will

likely have one checked bag, a carry-on, and a purse or backpack.

There is a second list that is for carry-on luggage. All items are in the master list, but detail what you need in your carry-on. Checked baggage can get lost, or you can be held up at a connecting airport for a long time due to weather or mechanical problems. Or when the person sitting next to Joelle in the first hour of the flight accidentally spilled their whole glass of red wine on her.

For Joelle, this has helped her reduce her over-packing issue. Those last-minute packing events often brought many unneeded clothes along that didn't match anything or didn't fit right. It helps with mixing and matching outfits. Sort out what weighs too much or is bulky. It is incredible how quickly that original pile shrinks in those weeks.



- 3. This is also an ideal time to sort out the nonclothing items. Look for travel-size items. Or buy small containers to avoid bringing bulky products such as facial care jars, big tubes of face scrub, or bottles of astringent.
- 4. Make the effort to assess your daily routine and truly only bring what you need and leave what you don't need behind.
- 5. Packing abroad also means preparing for the what-ifs. Ensuring you are not bringing more than you

need leaves room for medical supplies.

- 6. As you lay out your belongings, you can then determine how you may want to sort them. We use packing cubes for smaller items and tend to get lost in a suitcase, i.e., undergarments, socks, nightwear, swimsuits, and summer wear. We have found packing cubes useless for oversized items such as pants, sweaters, etc. They seem to take up too much room and are bulky.
- 7. All miscellaneous items should be ideally packaged in some container. Whether you use Ziploc baggies, mesh bags, or cosmetic containers, it doesn't matter. Follow the rule; everything goes into some kind of pouch. This will make it easier to find things during your travels. You know, the "it has to be somewhere" moments.
- 8. Keep your packing list with your pre-trip layout. Once an item is there and can stay, check it off.

In 2014 while traveling in Cinque Terra with her sister-in-law Joelle had her wallet stolen on

the Milk train. For some ridiculous reason she had all her credit cards in there. Not wanting

to take away from the precious time they had in Cinque Terra she called her husband to help.

He accessed the copies she left and went about notifying all the credit cards companies and arranging for

a replacement to meet them two days later at their next stop in Monaco (advantage of

having a great travel card like Chase Sapphire). He even ordered her a new drivers license which was there where she arrived home.

9. As your list is complete, you can assess the suitcase you need if you have not already chosen. Documents are something to organize and prepare early. Find a water-resistant folder, binder, or sleeve.

Put together a detailed itinerary. Have both paper and electronic copies. Copy all your important documents such as passports, credit cards, medical insurance, travel insurance, etc. Make two sets of copies to hide in separate suitcases. Leave one with a family or friend back home. It is important to have paper copies. People often say I have it saved on my phone, but that will do you no good if your phone is lost or stolen. See the story in the sidebar about how important leaving copies at home is.

10. Don't bring valuables if you can avoid them. No one will remember or care if your pearls are fake or worth thousands. Or if your designer purse is an authentic Louis Vuitton? Do you need that massive diamond ring or earrings? No one cares if your husband got you a big diamond; the thief might. It only draws attention to you and makes you a target for theft. It can also be seen as ostentatious. You are there to experience their culture, not to show off to people you will never see again. As a whole, in Europe, they live a much simpler, less materialistic life.



- 11. We can not encourage you to get a digital hand scale for all your travels. It weighs your luggage before going to the airport. They are dead-on accurate, small, and lightweight. It is now permanently in our carry-ons; we never travel without one. Especially handy coming home if you bought lots of souvenirs and gifts. You will find it on our <u>Travel Gear and Accessories page</u>. They are inexpensive, around \$12, and invaluable.
- 12. Remember that you will need space if you plan to bring items home from your travels. Ensure you leave the room and are not at the weight limit before leaving. Plan for this ahead of time, or take a small duffle to check an extra bag coming home. You can often pay for this in advance to save costs.

Check out Ryan's Travel Tips on how to make travel smoother

Our Master Packing List

Click on the image to view our printable PDF of our Packing list

Let's start packing for our trip. It is the beginning of what will be a fantastic adventure abroad. This list is for a trip of any size. A week to months. That involves washing clothes for longer trips.

We will go over the packing list categories in order as they appear on the list. Our list is a PDF and can easily be printed in color or black and white. Many items you may not need. Simply cross off unneeded items. Click on the image to the left to open the packing list.

Keep in mind what the weather will be like at your destination. There is no reason to pack shorts if you are in Switzerland in November. Take the time to learn what people tend to wear, so you blend in better.

Clothes

Think light and layers. Darker colors and mix and match. Easy to wash and fast to dry. Pick comfortable clothes to wander in all day and nice enough to go to almost any restaurant if you can't make it back to your room to change. Keep in mind no one, but you and your travel companions will know the dress you wore in Milan is the same dress you wore in Rome. That sundress you wore during the day with a light black-sleeved sweater can become evening wear. Men who are more comfortable in jeans choose darker ones, and with a darker light jacket can quickly become more dressy; most places are casual. If you want that one special place, maybe a Michelin Star, research ahead of time the dress and keep it as simple as possible.



Undergarments are about comfort, easy washing, and fast drying. Socks are important, especially if a lot of walking is planned. Research a bit and try some out before the trip. Joelle has been getting socks from REI for a while due to having problematic feet. One recent pairing was a success. Using silk under good quality exterior Merlino wool socks. There are many choices; research what is best for you.

Washing on the Road

We wash our clothes in the sink in any hotel we are in for two nights or more. The reason to choose fast-drying clothes is that hand washing makes it hard to squeeze the amount of water a washing machine does. You need to plan for a longer drying time. On the packing list, have travel-size liquid laundry packets. Washing your clothes with hotel soaps and shampoos is not a good idea. They are getting very sudsy and may be difficult to rinse out. After carrying a sink stopper and clothesline with us for years, we never once used them. Leave those items behind.

Footwear



With or without having feet issues, what works best is changing out shoes every 1-2 days. It is ideal to

bring two pairs of walking shoes. Joelle brings her OOcloog clogs and a couple of lightweight black Nike sneakers. On days with less walking and evenings for dinner out, she brings her lightweight slipon black Toms and a pair of Teva flip-flops. In colder weather, Ugg boots would be added to the collection when packing light, breathable, and sturdy shoes.

Ryan historically brings one pair of slip-on leather loafers meant for extensive walking. During our trip to Portugal and Spain, we walked like no other. For the first time, Ryan was hurting a lot. Those one pair of shoes wore his feet out as they were a few years old. He got another pair and interchanged his shoes every other day. It made a huge difference. He brought two pairs to Croatia after that.

The lesson is if you plan to walk a lot, bring two pairs of good walking shoes. A good pair of hiking boots is necessary if you plan to hike a lot.

Check out our favorite items on the travel essentials list here.

Accessories

termark This is simple. This is the one area men may need more of. Most items, such as a belt and hat, can be worn during travels. Sunglasses, no matter the season, we suggest packing a pair. We traveled offseason but ended up buying some at our destination as it may be cooler, but it was still very sunny.

Toiletries and Hygiene



Review your routine and the volumes you use during the time frame of your trip. Seek travel size or transfer your products to smaller containers. If you stay in hotels, you can avoid packing soap and shampoo but always bring conditioner, which is often not provided. We use mesh bags, clear toiletry bags, or Ziplocs to hold our toiletries. Most everyone has had some product leak out over all their

clothes. The key is always to put it in some kind of leakproof container. (Check some out here on our Travel Essentials list) Clear containers make it easier to see, and you don't waste digging looking for your lip balm.

Electronics



Electronic supplies should be minimal. Avoid a laptop if you can. Today's modern smartphones are just smaller versions. A tablet works as well. If you are like us, we need to bring at least one. Streamline these items as best you can. Keep them packaged and organized. For a laptop, put it in a thinly padded sleeve.

We tend to bring many international adapters as we lose a lot along the way. It is important to keep all these smaller, easily lost items well packaged. This great electronic case holds everything we need and keeps everything well organized. You can find it on our Travel Essentials list. We haul a bigger SLR camera around, but that is the price for being a photographer.

Additional Supplies

This is a mish-mash of items that we feel are essential. We bring all of these. It seems like a long list, but most of these items are small. We only carry one of most items for the whole travel group. It is about being prepared. Look for miniature versions of these items; small, durable flashlights, lightweight tote bags, mini sewing kits, travel first aid kits, etc.

We never leave for an international trip without travel insurance. Check out why – <u>Travel</u> <u>Insurance – Learn how to be a Savvy Consumer</u>

Medical Supplies



Medical supplies. We have a nurse on this team who is always about being ready. Not only for our travel group but for people who may need help along our travels. Covid made some of these items even more critical. This was not new for us to bring but became a must-have moving forward. They don't take up that much space, and all can go into a Ziploc bag. Joelle also brings a stethoscope. See our more detailed post on Medical Travel Supplies.

Documents



The bottom line, you need all of these documents and copies of what you bring. Make three sets of copies. Take two with you and leave one with your family at home. You can also make an electronic copy. We always advise going with some local currency on hand. We get some at our local Chase before we leave. Airport exchanges are pricey, and you will get a better rate at your local bank, so plan.

Part of the list speaks to putting together a Travel Emergency Contact Info. It is of paramount importance to carry with you a card that holds all this important info. If you become ill or get injured away from your belongings and documents, you must have on your person all the information that may be needed in an emergency. This includes your nationality, passport number, medications, medical conditions, emergency contact, health, travel insurance numbers, contact info, embassy info, local 911 numbers, calling code, and how to call in or out of your country. Time is of the essence in emergencies. We will deal with this in more detail in our travel health posts. We will also be making available to our subscribers our Wanderers Compass Emergency Contact Card with all the above info in a wallet-size card.

Over the Counter Meds



Finally, we have a list of over-the-counter meds that we suggest everyone has packed. Being prepared helps you stay healthy during a trip. Do not expect to be able to buy these meds there if you get sick overseas. If you get ill on a Saturday evening, you will not find open stores anywhere, and most stores, even pharmacies, may not be available on Sunday.

Joelle learned in Norway on vacation with her husband that some countries require a prescription for Sudafed or Benadryl. They both had terrible colds and were going through their supply. She wanted to restock, but it was not possible in Norway.

Now in some countries, you can get meds that are prescriptions in the U.S. right off the shelf but don't count on it. Be prepared. Check out our post on what over-the-counter meds to bring to be *here*.

What are the must-have meds for a long flight? Check out <u>Essential Medications for a Long</u> Flight: A Nurses Guide

Our Carry-on Packing List

Click on the image to view our printable PDF of our Carry-on Packing List

All the items on the carry-on packing list are on the main list above. It serves to provide a detailed list of which of the above items stay with you versus going into your checked luggage. These essentials are the things you can not take a risk not having when arriving at your destination or are of high value. Let's be honest; luggage can be lost or delayed.

In all of our combined decades of travel, it has occurred about two dozen times, usually on the trip home. It is not too bad, considering we have flown over 1.6 million miles. You never forget, though, that feeling of dread that sets in as you stare at the baggage carousel, praying your suitcase will suddenly pop out, but it never does. Your heart sinks. The biggest hassle is the often long wait to complete the forms to get the luggage to you, most often the next day.

The good news is all luggage that was recovered lost during trips has been returned to us. Ryan, though, when he returned home from his 15-month Afghanistan deployment, sent a chest home, via the Army, of all his belongings. He had a lot in there. That was the year I "adopted" Ryan through Soldiers Angels. I sent him many care packages full of goodies: books, DVDs, magazines, tools, video games, clothes, photos, art projects, gifts, etc. The chest arrived empty. He was heartbroken. Luckily those stories are rare. But anything that would break your heart to lose, keep with you.

So what do you put in your carry-on? Most are obvious, such as all your documents, prescription meds, electronics, medical supplies, valuables, and a change of clothes. We also have some significant heads up to be aware of when it comes to carry-on. Avoid learning the hard way, as we have at times.

Want to learn about Wanderers Compass?

Click Here

Carry-on Heads Up

Flying Air France from Charles de Gaulle to Italy Joelle had two checked bags. She had barely ten kilos in one bag. The gate agent was so friendly when she checked in. They took her bags. No one said one word about weighing her carryon items. Joelle went to security and as she approached the head of the long line an Air France person was there weighing economy passengers carryon.

She knew her suitcase was fine but what Joelle didn't know was the weight included everything on her person including purse and camera. She was over by only 2 kilos. They told her she had to leave the line, go back to check in and check the carry-on. She landed up getting the same person who checked bags but this time wasn't so nice and had a smirk on his face. She asked why didn't you say something as one checked bag had a ton of room, his reply, it is on the sign over there didn't you read it?

No one directed her too and there a lots of various signs around as it was. They did not budge despite arguing and those 2 kilos extra cost her over \$100 charge. She hauled her camera equipment, documents and other essentials like medications on her shoulders for hours. It was awful. She purposefully not flown Air France since.

We recall once on Icelandic Air they weighed our carry-on at check-in. That is the proper way to treat your customers.

- 1. Why do we prefer to have carry-on rollers? Hauling things on your back and shoulders is not healthy or wise. If you have long layovers, it could seriously hinder your movements. Joelle has had multiple shoulder surgeries, so trust us, this comes from personal knowledge. A roller can take all items, even your backpack, off your body. You can drape your jacket and neck pillow off of it. It also makes a nice leg rest for long layovers. And if you do some after-security shopping, it comes in quite handy to avoid carrying shopping bags with you.
- 2. If you are flying economy, many international airlines have a weight limit for carry-on. This will not be easy for you if you have laptops and heavy camera equipment. All of a sudden, all those essential items you should not separate from you will be forced to. If there is more than one in your group, spread the weight before heading to the airport. Don't have one person carry the laptop, camera, and all the paperwork. The airlines can make quite a bit of extra income this way too. Joelle's Air France story still leaves a bad taste in her mouth. Check out the sidebar story.
- 3. If you are coming from Europe and have a layover in the U.S. on the way home, be very conscious of what you buy after security. We love buying liquor or gifts duty-free. We save room in our carry-on just for that reason. But if you fly through Newark Airport to make your connection, you must leave security and go through TSA. If you buy liquor or olive oil, they could confiscate it. Once we had enough time to check the bag in at the counter and make it through TSA in time. This is not a problem in most places. Some airport TSA, as long as it is well sealed in the duty-free bag, they will allow but not always. Know your airports.



To Those Who Pack Lite

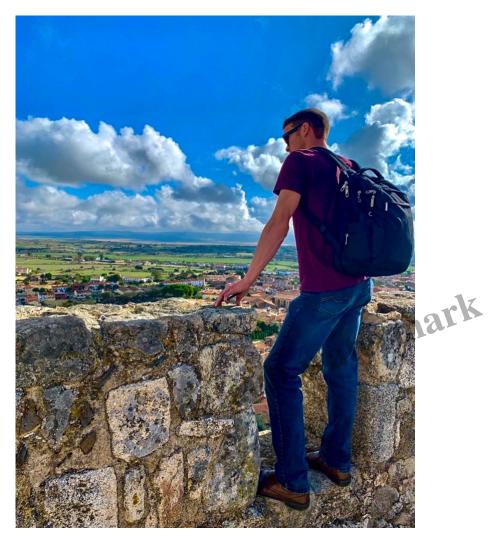
We commend those who can pack for a whole trip in a roller board. Congratulations, you have our awe and respect.

That will likely never be us; well, it is mostly Joelle when as a nurse, she must be prepared for anything. That has served her well over the years. There are stories to tell........

We hope these packing tips and lists still serve you well in the little you bring.

Interested in the Best Travel Cards in the industry? It is how we get most of our hotels for FREE! Check out our post on <u>Travel credit cards</u>.

Final Thoughts



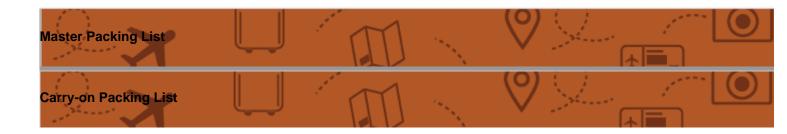
Packing doesn't have to be chaotic. Using a list and staying organized is all it takes. Use our packing tips above, and you may even find it fun. What we have found is our greatest tool is starting early. That has dramatically reduced packing stress.

Have that suitcase zipped up at the front door days before your trip. Your heart will smile each time you see it. You will also leave more rested and ready to hit the road the second you arrive.

The printable PDFs of both packing lists are in the promo boxes below. They can be printed in black and white color or downloaded to your computer.

You are packed and ready to go. We wish you safe and exciting adventures. May all your travel dreams become a beautiful reality.

Bon Voyage



Share your stories and tips.

atermark As always, we would love to hear your packing stories. Any packing tips that worked for you? Or any painful or funny stories from your travel that have to do with packing. We learn from each other as we share our tales.

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Do you have a question for us or have a comment?

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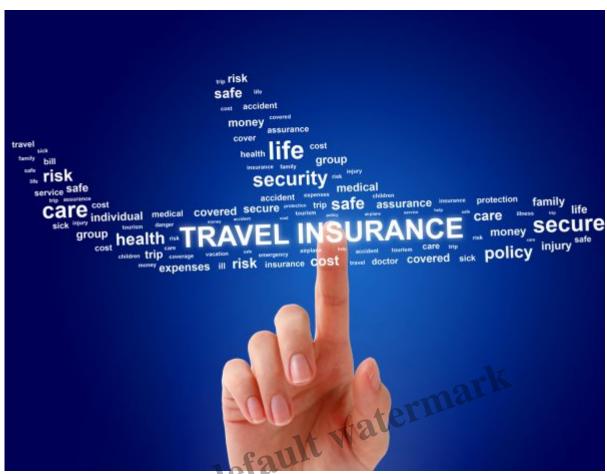




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Our Top Recommended <u>Travel Products and Resources</u>

Squaremouth.com

Our favorite travel insurance site!

If you book a trip, don't forget to get travel insurance within 14 days of your first booking. We could not be stronger advocates of being well-insured. Not just for the little stuff but the big things like medical emergencies. We never leave home without it. Over the years, we have used many sites but have now found our go-to place. **Squaremouth.com** does a fantastic job; it has a user-friendly interface, usestop-rated and reputable insurance carriers, and most policies cover COVID-19 medical issues and cancellations. They also mediate on your behalf if you have problems with your policy.

To empower you as a consumer, we suggest you read our **blog post** on the importance of travel insurance and how to get the best coverage from top-rated companies for an affordable price.

MedjetAssist

Medical transport back home from anywhere in the world

They are the premier global air medical transport. One caveat to travel insurance is that medical evacuation usually gets you to the closest facility to care for you. Medjet gets you back to the U.S. to the hospital of your choice once you are stable enough to fly. They cover COVID-related transport as well.

<u>Medjet</u> carries its own policies. These policies are only for transport and do not cover other aspects of travel insurance. They have individual trip policies starting at \$99 and annual policies for around \$300. Most of their policies limit the age to 74 and younger. Prices are not based on age below that.

To learn more about how Medical Evacuation membership with Medjet Assist works, check out our **blog post** for a more detailed review.

Expedia.com

Hotels, home rentals, BNBs, flights, and other transportation & tours

<u>Expedia</u> is a US-based company whose mission is to power global travel for everyone and everywhere. Whether planning a family vacation, booking for business, or organizing the trip of a lifetime, they are a fantastic resource. Wanderers Compass focuses on independent travel, and using sites like <u>Expedia</u> makes that possible. Every aspect of travel you need, from airfare, accommodations, rental car, and cruises to activities to do at your destination, can be booked on <u>Expedia</u>.

Booking.com

Hotels, Home rentals, BNBs, Flights, and other Transportation & Tours

<u>Booking.com</u> connects millions of travelers to memorable experiences, various transportation options, and incredible places to stay – from homes to hotels and much more. It is one of the world's largest travel marketplaces for established brands and entrepreneurs of all sizes.

We always check Expedia and Booking.com to verify prices. At times, one is sold out of rooms while another at the same place has rooms. We also often find some European hotels, especially smaller

ones, on Booking.com but not on Expedia. It could be they are a Europe-based company. Try both before booking accommodations.

Vacation Rental By Owner (VRBO)

Are you traveling with a family or having an extended stay at your destination?

With over 2 million bookable vacation rentals, <u>VRBO</u> connects homeowners with families and vacationers looking for something more than a hotel for their trip. The <u>VRBO</u> community offers families or groups various rental property types such as condos, cabins, lake rentals, beach houses, etc.

<u>VRBO</u> is now under the Expedia group's ownership, which many were worried about, but it hasn't panned out to be a concern. It is a massive network with access to all lodging forms should issues arise. Joelle has used VRBO for many years with her family and has had no problems with it.

Viator

As the leading marketplace for travel experiences, <u>Viator</u> believes that making memories is what travel is all about. And with 300,000+ experiences to explore—everything from simple tours to extreme adventures (and all the niche, interesting stuff in between)—making memories that will last a lifetime has never been easier.

With industry-leading flexibility and last-minute availability, it's never too late to make any day extraordinary. This one site has it all and has experiences throughout the world. We use them often during our travels, especially for food tours. We especially take the time to read the reviews provided.

Amazon.com

An excellent source for travel essentials and guides

We now have our own Amazon Storefront with all our favorite travel accessories and gear in one place. Check out our travel store at the link below.

Wanderers Compass Amazon Storefront

Amazon is one of the most comprehensive online shopping sources in the world. Teams worldwide provide lower prices, better selection, and rapid delivery on behalf of customers. They offer a vast inventory, and their 1.7 million small and medium businesses worldwide selling on Amazon.com offer extensive options to customers.

We buy most of our travel books, accessories, and luggage from Amazon. We have ordered up to two days before travel and get what we need.

HYDAWAY

This is not your ordinary drinkware company. The **HYDAWAY** difference is what their products do when you're not using them. Practical and portable, HYDAWAY doesn't take up unnecessary space in your already-packed life or pile up in landfills. We all know that trying to pack light while being environmentally conscious can be difficult. Having the right items can make a world of difference. **HYDAWAY** provides that.

We have used their collapsible water bottle, carrying case for the water bottle, and collapsible insulated drink tumbler. They are all lightweight and durable. A conservation-focused product you can be proud to buy.

Use our Promo Code. WANCOM15, at checkout for 15% off your Hydaway order

Welcome Pick-ups

(Airport and sightseeing service)

A global leader in ground transportation for travelers. They help hundreds of companies worldwide enhance their services and boost their revenue with our 5-star ride experiences and hassle-free automation.

Founded in 2015 in Athens, Greece, <u>Welcome Pick-ups</u> goes above and beyond the standard transfer service as the first company to deliver a holistic, in-destination travel experience. From the moment a traveler arrives at a new destination until they return home, Welcome accommodates all their travel needs (transfers, travel products, things to do, information) as the easiest, friendliest, and most personalized solution.

PhotoAiD

Do you feel like you are wasting time visiting an on-site photographer only to be embarrassed by the photo? Would you like control of the final product? Get the perfect VISA or passport photo online with PhotoAID.

When traveling, you often need to apply for official documents such as a passport, ID, and different kinds of licenses or cards. Those applications require a picture that must meet specific conditions to be accepted, depending on the country. Now, it is possible to take this picture at home without the help of a professional photographer. PhotoAiD allows you to take the perfect biometric photo you approve without leaving home.

This article contains affiliate links. If you use these links to buy something, we may earn a small commission at no additional cost to you. Thank you!

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contactwandererscompass-com