

# Packing Guide for Women Traveling for Work

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## Introduction

This guide, as part of an initiative under the Women for One Health, has been designed especially for women to make packing for work-related trips easier and stress-free. It includes checklists for essentials, tips on respecting local customs, and practical advice for staying comfortable and professional but also safe while traveling. Special thanks to all the women that contributed to developing this guide.



## 1. General Preparation

### Essentials

- **Hand luggage:** You might consider a carry-on (especially on a short mission) to avoid delays and baggage issues (see Textbox).
- **Label luggage:** Attach a specific coloured ribbon, baggage strap, or mark for easy identification. Ensure any labeling hides your contact details from strangers.
- **Medications & essentials:** Carry all important medications and personal care items in your hand luggage. Be aware of liquid limits (100mls, must fit in a standard small plastic baggie)
- **Laptop, phone, chargers:** Always in hand luggage with their respective chargers. and adapters
- **Big shawl/pashmina:** Useful for covering yourself when cold or for use as a headscarf.
- **Important contacts & documents:** Leave a copy of your documents and important information (e.g., passwords) with someone you trust. Keep paper copies of everything with you.

Make sure you know where you will be going after you arrive at your destination. Familiarize yourself beforehand with the location of the hotel and offices or meeting places you will go to, the distances and what is the best way to travel there. It is helpful to know the distance between the airport and your hotel and to check more or less how long it will take. This can be helpful when booking your return to the airport considering the distance and time of the day (traffic) when booking your ride back to the airport.

## 2. Travel Documents & Essentials

Keep the following important documents and items handy during your travels (maybe you could consider carrying a small bag where you can place these items in easy reach). Keeping paper copies or written notes is critical in case you lose your phone, its battery is exhausted, or you have connectivity problems.

- **Passport & copies:** Keep originals and copies separate.

### Hand-luggage or checked in luggage?

This will depend on how much you plan to take with you. Especially, at present, it can be challenging when many airports still restrict bottles with liquid beyond 100 ml. Nevertheless, if you decide to travel with hand-luggage (a trolley on wheels) only, this can help you prevent delays in getting your baggage at airports after arrival, lost luggage and being stuck without your clothes for the meeting next day. Just travelling with hand-luggage will also help you, take quick decisions on last minute transfer changes in case of cancellations of flights. Make sure that your hand-luggage fits the size and weight requirements of the airline (normally size is more important than weight). In some cases you might need to hand in your luggage at the gate if you are travelling on a small plane with not enough space in the overhead luggage bin. But clearly if you want to make sure you have all you need and do not want to be concerned with space and weight, take your favourite suitcase and just check it in.

- **Itinerary & tickets:** Printed or downloaded to your phone. Keep a photo of your boarding pass. If possible, keep paper copies of everything, or write down reservation and ticket numbers. Some organizations will require your boarding passes as proof that you have travelled.
- **Meeting documents:** Print invitations, agenda, and any required visas (and transfer visas) or supporting documents (e.g., bank statements).
- **Hotel & transport details:** Confirmation, airport pick-up, and emergency contact numbers.
- **Insurance card:** Carry a copy of your travel and medical insurance, including emergency evacuation procedures.
- **Vaccination certificates:** Keep required certificates (e.g., yellow fever) handy. Know the specific vaccination requirements in advance!
- **Prescription medication & health documents:** Bring all necessary medications and prescriptions, including against motion sickness.
- **Sanitary products:** Pack tampons, pads, or menstrual cups, even if you think you won't be having your period
- **Wallet:** Carry multiple credit/debit cards and ensure they're activated for your destination(s). Have some cash in USD, Euros, and local currency. Keep different cards in different places if possible and keep notes of where they are
- **Laptop, phone & chargers:** check the plugs that will fit the country of destination (take multiplug adaptor) and network coverage and eventually consider buying a local SIM (disconnect **roaming** before leaving!)
- **Headphones:** Don't forget your headphones (preferably noise-canceling).
- **Extra passport photos:** Useful for visa purposes at certain destinations.
- **Driver's license:** International license, if applicable (discouraged to drive).
- **Business cards:** Carry a few for networking.

### 3. Hand Luggage Checklist (also when having checked in luggage)

- **Laptop/phone chargers:** Pack these were easily accessible.
- **Basic toiletries:** Toothbrush, toothpaste, face cream, etc. Be careful of the 100 ml liquid limit for hand luggage
- **Change of clothes:** Underwear, socks, a warm sweater, easy shoes, umbrella, extra clothes/coat depending on the weather on arrival
- **Headphones, earplugs, sleep mask:** Comfort for travel.
- **Essential documents (see above):** Itinerary, boarding passes, insurance, hotel confirmation.
- **Powerbank & charging cables, adapters for sockets in the country:** Remember, power banks must go in hand luggage (always handy to keep it in range in case your device runs out of battery).
- **Reusable water bottle:** Stay hydrated on the go.

## 4. Mobile data and phone numbers

- **Contact information:** taxi driver, hotel and your colleagues with whom you are traveling
- **Essential phone numbers and confirmations of bookings:** write down or print out on paper in case your phone battery runs out
- **Within-city transportation:** Arrange your airport transfer before departure. Check alternative local taxi companies. Download the country-specific taxi application on your phone such as Uber and Grab.
- **Roaming status of the destination country:** inquire with your local provider about the need to purchase a specific data package, an embedded SIM (eSIM), or a traditional SIM card. An eSIM is a form of SIM card that is embedded directly into a device. Instead of an integrated circuit located on a removable SIM card, an eSIM consists of software installed onto an eUICC chip permanently attached to a device. Phones may support physical SIMs only, eSIM only, or both. Most modern smartphones accommodate more than one eSIM or SIM card in the same phone. If not, a second mobile phone is also an option. The advantage of purchasing data from your existing provider rather than a SIM or eSIM is that your colleagues with whom you may be traveling and your emergency contacts at home already have your contact information and you already have their contact information in your phone. It would be easier to connect with these contacts using your existing number rather than with a new number (make sure you keep your WhatsApp number)

**IMPORTANT:** Turn off data roaming for your home country before you land as roaming can be very expensive!

## 5. Checked Luggage Checklist

Do not pack anything in your checked-in luggage that you can't bear to lose or be without for 48 hours.

### Work Essentials

- Notebook & pen: For notes and meetings.
- Multi-plug adapter: Check voltage requirements (220V, 110V).
- Institutional badge: If required for access to work premises.
- A tracking device such as Apple AirTag to help track any lost or stolen luggage

### Toiletries & Personal Care

- Basic toiletries: Include travel-sized items such as shampoo, conditioner, soap, deodorant, and feminine hygiene products
- Needle and syringe (this can be handy if traveling in resource-limited settings where such items may be reused)
- Contraceptives: Condoms, contraceptive pills, or morning-after pills.
- Small sewing kit: Useful for emergencies.
- Sunscreen & after-sun lotion: Protect against the sun.
- Mosquito repellent: Especially if heading to tropical regions.
- Cosmetics: Travel-sized only, to comply with airline regulations.

- Hairdryer: Ensure compatibility with local power outlets
- Essential oils: For calming during travel.
- Refillable water bottle: Always handy to stay hydrated.
- Snacks: Pack healthy nibbles like almonds for sudden hunger. Pack non-perishable snacks for travel days or remote locations and ensure that food is available and suitable for everyone in the travel group or during the meeting.

### Health & Safety

- Necessary vaccinations: Ensure you have the necessary vaccinations in time before travel and also keep at hand your vaccination certificate.
- Prescription glasses or contact lenses: Carry extras if needed.
- Hand sanitizer and wipes: Maintain hygiene, especially when clean water may not be available.
- PPE: Pack appropriate face masks (note: surgical masks do not prevent viral spread; P2 or N95 masks are recommended), gloves, and other protective gear.
- First Aid Kit: Pack essentials like antiseptic wipes, pain relievers, anti-diarrheal medication/oral hydration salts, and any personal medications, vitamins

## 6. Clothing Checklist

For clothing think in layers and compatible colors - easy to mix and match

- Weather-appropriate clothing: Check the weather at your destination.
- Culturally appropriate attire: Ensure your clothing suits the local customs.
- Formal attire: Business-appropriate outfits for meetings.
- Informal attire: For field visits or casual settings.
- Comfortable shoes: Both for work and leisure.
- Outerwear: Jackets, rain gear, umbrella, hat, and boots depending on the possible weather. - talk to a local first for an idea

## 7. Electronics & Entertainment

- Headphones (noise canceling are best)
- Tablet/e-reader: For reading or entertainment.
- Pre-downloaded entertainment: Films, podcasts, or books for flights.
- Language translation app: Download an offline translator (e.g., Google Translate).
- Mobile Phone and Charger: Consider a portable charger and a universal travel adapter.
- Safety Apps: Download apps for transport, maps, translation, and emergency services.
- Camera: For professional or personal use.
- Extra batteries: Especially for devices like wireless mouse or headphones.

## 8. Local Customs, Safety Considerations and Cultural Dress Tips

In many cultures, relationships develop gradually. Being too casual or familiar too quickly can be perceived as disrespectful. Take the time to build rapport and understand the social dynamics before engaging in more personal conversations.

To effectively prepare for work-related travel to developing or potentially dangerous locations, women should consider both practical and cultural packing essentials.

Understand the local dress norms. In many cultures, modest clothing is not just respectful but can also enhance safety. **Social Etiquette:** Familiarize yourself with local customs regarding greetings, dining, and gender interactions. This can prevent misunderstandings and foster goodwill. **Stay Aware:** Be conscious of your surroundings. Avoid displaying valuables and keep your belongings secure. **Travel in Groups:** When possible, travel with colleagues or trusted contacts, especially at night. **Local Laws and Regulations:** Be aware of laws that may differ significantly from your home country, including those related to alcohol consumption, photography, and public behavior. **Learn Basic Phrases:** Knowing a few key phrases in the local language can be helpful and is often appreciated by locals.

**Emergency Plan:** Have a plan for what to do in case of emergencies, including knowing the location of the nearest hospital and how to contact local authorities. **Research Local Customs:** Understand the cultural norms, dress codes, and social behaviors of your destination. Be Mindful of **Gender Dynamics:** Understand local gender roles and be respectful in interactions. Avoid Assumptions: be prepared for language barriers. Practice Active Listening: Show genuine interest in conversations and respect Sacred Spaces: Follow local customs when visiting religious sites.

Seek Permission for **Photography:** Always ask before taking photos of people or cultural events. Also, consider that most organizations require consent from the person(s) photographed if you want to use the pictures for presentations or publications!

### Dress codes

When traveling for work, it's important to dress in a way that respects the cultural norms of your destination. In many countries, particularly those with conservative cultures, modest clothing is crucial. This often means wearing long skirts or trousers and tops that cover the shoulders. Avoid revealing clothing to respect local customs and reduce unwanted attention.

**Modest Attire:** Pack conservative clothing that covers shoulders and knees, especially for visits to religious sites. Consider:

- 3-4 pairs of trousers or long skirts
- 2-3 long-sleeve shirts
- 1-2 lightweight dresses (preferably wrinkle-resistant)

**Comfortable Footwear:** Include sturdy walking shoes and sandals. Remember that when traveling your feet may get swollen and you need to walk long distances to get to your gate at airports. Overall avoid flashy or expensive-looking items. In some cultures, sandals or open shoes are not appropriate for formal meetings.

**Layering Options:** Layering your clothing helps adjust to varying cultural and weather expectations. Bring a light jacket for more formal sessions or cardigan for cooler evenings and a scarf that can double as a head cover if needed. Also air conditioned meeting rooms, especially in Asia, can be very cold so ensure to have something to cover yourself but that can easily be taken off when walking out into the heat.

**What to pack?** Pack modest clothing that covers shoulders and knees, especially for visits to religious sites. Always better dress more formally and conservatively if in doubt.

**Pack a Scarf or Shawl:** A versatile item that can be used to cover your head, shoulders, or as a blanket when needed.

**Slip-on Shoes:** Some cultures expect shoes to be removed when entering homes or religious buildings, so pack shoes that are easy to take on and off.

#### **Some tips for different regions:**

1. **Middle East & North Africa:** Women are expected to dress conservatively, especially in public places. Modest clothes covering shoulders, arms, and legs are recommended. **Avoid Tight or Revealing Clothing:** Ensure your clothing is not form-fitting, low-cut, or revealing. Carry a headscarf, even if not legally required. In many countries across the Middle East and North Africa, modesty is a cultural priority. Wear loose-fitting clothing that covers your arms, legs, and shoulders. Pants or skirts should be below the knee. **Headscarves:** In some countries like Saudi Arabia or Iran, wearing a headscarf is mandatory in public. In other places, carry a shawl or scarf to cover your head if necessary.
2. **South Asia** (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh): Modest clothing (long skirts, dresses, or pants). South Asia tends to blend colorful, vibrant clothing with modest dress codes, particularly for women. Bright colors are appreciated, but be respectful of conservative norms. Women are encouraged to wear long skirts, dresses, or pants with sleeved tops. **Headscarves:** While not mandatory, having a light scarf to cover your head in more conservative areas or religious sites is respectful. **Loose Clothing:** Avoid tight or revealing clothing, and opt for comfortable, breathable fabrics.
3. **Southeast Asia** (Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand). Southeast Asia is known for its cultural diversity, and dress codes can vary. Modest dress is recommended, especially in rural areas or religious sites. Always carry a shawl or scarf to cover your shoulders when visiting temples or mosques. Wearing long skirts or pants is required. **Modesty in Public:** Wear long pants or skirts, and avoid sleeveless tops in public. Covering shoulders and legs is particularly important in religious or rural settings.



4. **East Asia** (China, Japan, South Korea). In East Asia, conservative business dress with muted colors. Attire tends to be more conservative and formal. Can be conservative but Modern: Wear formal business attire like suits or dresses with blazers. Skirts should reach at least the knee. Subtle Jewelry: Keep accessories minimal and professional. Flashy jewelry or overly bold styles are typically discouraged.
5. **Europe.** Europe presents a mix of formal and fashionable attire, especially in business environments. Formal business attire: in countries like Germany, the UK, and France, formal business attire such as tailored suits or dresses is recommended. Religious Sites: When visiting churches or other religious places in Southern Europe (e.g., Italy or Greece) and the Balkans, cover your shoulders and legs out of respect.
6. **Sub-Saharan Africa.** Modesty & Vibrant Colors: Vibrant colors are common, and modest clothing that covers arms and legs is important, particularly in rural or traditional settings. Bright colors and patterns are often culturally appreciated. In Sub-Saharan Africa, dress codes can vary widely depending on the region and context.
7. **Latin America.** In Latin America, business attire tends to be formal, i.e., formal business dress. Bright colors are common in some regions. Formal in Business Settings: wear professional business attire, such as tailored suits or business dresses. Bright colors can be integrated into formal wear. Conservative in Rural Areas: Be mindful that rural areas may be more conservative, requiring more modest dress.
8. **Pacific Islands.** The Pacific Islands are known for their warm, tropical climates, and dressing appropriately for the weather is essential. Loose, light clothing: Lightweight fabrics like cotton or linen are ideal. Opt for loose-fitting clothing that covers the shoulders and knees and maintains modesty.

**Learn About Local Etiquette:** Understand the cultural practices and taboos of the country. For example, in some cultures, it is considered rude to point or to show the soles of your feet. Being aware of these nuances can help you avoid offending locals. Pay attention to how local women dress and behave. Mimicking their actions can help you blend in and show respect for their culture. Ask a local (female) colleague who is familiar with the culture for advice (preferably before you travel). Failing to research and understand local customs can result in unintentional disrespect. For instance, in some cultures, it is customary to remove shoes before entering a home, or certain gestures may be considered offensive. Familiarize yourself with these practices to enhance your interactions. Every culture has its own values and beliefs. Assuming that your cultural norms are universal can lead to offense. Approach interactions with an open mind, and be respectful of local customs and practices, even if they differ from your own.



Important to be mindful of **Gender Dynamics**. In many developing countries, gender roles can be quite traditional. Be aware that interactions with men may be viewed differently than in your home country. It's advisable to be cautious and respectful in these situations but to be clear about your limits. Whenever possible, travel with somebody, a small group or a trusted national, especially in unfamiliar areas. This can enhance safety and provide cultural insights.

**Prioritize Safety** and stay aware of your surroundings: Always be conscious of your environment. Avoid walking alone at night and stay in well-lit areas. Use common sense and trust your instincts regarding safety. Minimize the display of valuables and keep important items like passports and money in secure locations. A crossbody bag can help keep your belongings safe while allowing you to stay aware of your surroundings.

**Non-verbal communication**, such as gestures and eye contact, can differ greatly across cultures. For example, while eye contact may signify honesty in some cultures, it can be seen as disrespectful in others. Pay attention to local customs regarding body language to avoid misunderstandings.

**Learn Cultural Taboos:** Familiarize yourself with local taboos and social customs to avoid unintentional disrespect. For example, certain gestures or topics of conversation may be inappropriate in specific cultures.

**Dining customs** can vary widely. For example, some cultures may have specific rules about how to eat or what utensils to use. Being unaware of these customs can lead to uncomfortable situations. Research dining etiquette before meals to show respect for local traditions.

Engage with the **Local Language** and learn some basic phrases: Always be prepared for language barriers and learn a few basic phrases in the local language to facilitate communication and show respect. Engaging in conversations and asking questions can also provide valuable insights

#### Basic Greetings

- Hello
- Goodbye
- Please
- Thank you:
- Excuse me: Useful for getting someone's attention or navigating through a crowd.

#### Introductions

- My name is...:
- What's your name?
- How are you?



### Directions and Locations

- Where is the restroom?
- How much is this?
- I'm at...: Helpful for providing your location in case of emergencies.

### Asking for Help

- Do you speak English?
  - I don't understand
  - Help!: Essential in emergencies.

### Emergency Phrases

- Emergency!: To alert others in urgent situations.
- Please, call a doctor.
- Please, call the police.
- I'm allergic to...

### Numbers

Numbers 1-10: Knowing basic numbers can help with transactions, directions, and counting.

By learning these phrases, you can navigate daily interactions more smoothly and show respect for the local culture, which often leads to more positive experiences during your travels.



WE HOPE YOU FIND THE GUIDE USEFUL AND WISHING YOU SAFE AND INSPIRING TRAVELS!

## Resources and further readings

### PACKING INFO

<https://ppl-ai-file-upload.s3.amazonaws.com/web/direct-files/32067402/27a01679-79d2-4a08-95e5-bcf42280d095/Travel Packing Guide for Women.docx>

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<https://angaroundtheglobe.com/womens-packing-list-for-backpacking-southeast-asia/>

<https://www.nomadnumbers.com/womens-packing-list-for-nomadic-long-term-travel/>

<https://wanderlustbound.com/how-to-pack-for-developing-countries/>

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### TRAVEL SAFETY

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### CULTURE

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<https://www.worldpackers.com/articles/tips-on-how-to-immerse-yourself-in-local-culture>  
<https://wanderlustbound.com/how-to-pack-for-developing-countries/>  
<https://viavii.com/blog/cultural-sensitivity-a-travelers-guide-to-learning-and-respecting-local-customs-and-cultures>  
<https://www.thetalkingsuitcase.com/5-ways-respectfully-interact-local-cultures/>  
<https://oxfordhousebcn.com/en/9-tips-for-communicating-with-locals-in-english-speaking-countries/>  
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<https://www.worldpackers.com/articles/tips-on-how-to-immerse-yourself-in-local-culture>  
<https://bea-adventurous.com/staying-safe-while-travelling/>  
<https://numinoscoaching.com/top-6-mistakes-in-intercultural-communication>  
<https://deakinco.com/resource/seven-practices-you-can-implement-to-increase-cultural-awareness-in-the-workplace/>

## LANGUAGE

<https://www.gooverseas.com/blog/language-phrases-before-travel>  
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<https://cosmopolitanepicure.blog/blog/tip-13-learn-some-local-phrases/>  
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<https://www.fluentu.com/blog/learn/first-phrases-to-learn-in-a-new-language/>  
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<https://blog.oncallinternational.com/10-key-phrases-to-learn-in-the-local-language/>