

A Checklist for Visiting Well

This comprehensive guide provides an extensive master checklist designed to cover essential tasks and packing items for any type of vacation, from short trips to long-term travel. By consolidating every detail into one place, this resource acts as your personal travel assistant, ensuring nothing slips through the cracks so you can start your vacation feeling organized and relaxed.

How to use this checklist:

Because every trip is different, you do not need to check off every box. This is an extensive menu of tasks designed to cover every possible scenario. Simply scan through the sections and check off the items that are relevant to your specific travel needs.

Want to know more?

If you find an item on the list and are curious about why it is included or simply want to know more about how to do it, head to the "Find Out More" section at the end of the document. That is where you will get your answers on the "why" and "how" for every step of the checklist.

Before You Go

- Book flights, accommodations, rental vehicles, and reservations in advance
- Create an itinerary
- Pin sights and saved locations in Google Maps
- Find local guides and/or tours
- Passport (check expiration date—many countries require 6 months validity)
- Visa requirements
- Driver's license / international permit
- Travel insurance documents
- Printed copies of bookings
- Digital backups of important documents
- Emergency contact list
- Copies of prescriptions and medication lists
- Check ATM fees
- Get a small amount of local currency
- Pay upcoming bills
- Download offline maps
- Set an email "Out of Office"
- Check phone plans
- Download entertainment
- Install travel apps
- Pack a basic first-aid kit
- Refill prescriptions
- Register with your embassy
- Confirm pet/house sitter
- Weigh your bags

Home

- Empty the trash
- Turn off or unplug appliances (prevents fires)
- Set the thermostat (reducing energy waste)
- Lock all doors and windows
- Setting timers for lights
- Turn off the main water valve (prevents leaks)
- Empty the fridge of perishables
- Clean the garbage disposal

Security & Exterior

- Pause mail and deliveries
- Set the home alarm
- Manage blinds and curtains
- Leave a car in the driveway

Finance & Health

- Alert your bank/credit cards to travel plans
- Secure travel insurance
- Pay or schedule upcoming bills
- Check for foreign transaction fees
- Identify secure ATMs at your destination
- Set up a digital wallet
- Check for any needed vaccinations
- Schedule a pre-travel checkup
- Research local emergency services
- Check health insurance coverage abroad
- Pack extra eyeglasses/contacts

Pet Travel

Documents

- Vaccination records (especially rabies certificates)
- Health certificate / veterinary travel certificate
- Microchip information and registration details
- Proof of required treatments (some places require parasite/tick treatments)
- Airline pet paperwork and carrier requirements
- Import permits or country-specific pet entry documents
- Training or service animal documentation, if relevant
- Copies of veterinary records
- Pet insurance information
- Contact information for a veterinarian at your destination
- Research pet-friendly lodging in advance
- Pack enough medication, food, and familiar items for the trip
- Identification tags updated with current phone number
- Recent photo of your pet on your phone (smart if separated)
- Portable water bowl
- Familiar blanket or toy for travel stress
- Research emergency vets near where you're staying
- Carrier acclimation
- Grooming before travel
- Identify "relief areas"
- Exercise before departure
- Cleaning kit
- Pet First Aid Kit
- GPS Tracker
- Feeding schedule
- Water source
- Update Microchip
- Current Weight
- Crate Hardware

Find Out More!

Before You Go

Booking/Reserving in Advance -

Secure your flights, lodging, and transport early to lock in lower prices and ensure availability, especially during peak seasons.

Create an itinerary -

Outline a flexible daily plan to maximize your time and ensure you don't miss "must-see" attractions while leaving room for spontaneity.

Pinning/saving sights/locations -

Mark key spots like your hotel, restaurants, and sights on Google Maps so you can navigate easily—even if you're offline.

Find local guides and/or tours -

Research and book reputable guides to gain deeper cultural insights and skip long lines at popular landmarks.

Checking your Passport -

Verify that your passport is valid for at least six months beyond your return date, as many countries will deny entry otherwise.

Visa requirements -

Confirm if your destination requires an e-visa, visa-on-arrival, or a formal application to avoid being turned away at boarding.

Driver's license/international

permit - Carry your valid license and obtain an International Driving Permit (IDP) if you plan to rent a car in a country that requires it.

Travel insurance documents -

Keep policy details handy to cover unexpected costs like medical emergencies, trip cancellations, or lost luggage.

Printed copies of bookings -

Maintain physical backups of flight and hotel confirmations in case your phone dies or you encounter internet issues at check-in.

Digital backups of important

documents - Photograph your passport, driver's license, and the front and back of all credit cards you are traveling with. Store these scans in a secure cloud folder or encrypted email so you have quick access to vital information and bank contact numbers if your originals are lost or stolen.

Emergency contact list - Write down phone numbers for your bank, embassy, and family members so you can reach them quickly in an emergency.

Copies of prescriptions and medication lists - Carry official notes from your doctor to clear customs easily and help local pharmacists provide the correct refills if needed.

Check ATM fees - Look for "no foreign transaction fee" cards or see if your bank has international partners.

Get a small amount of local currency - It's helpful for tips, taxis, or small shops that don't take cards immediately upon arrival.

Pay upcoming bills - Ensure any bills due while you're away are paid or set to autopay.

Download offline maps - In case you lose service, have your destination's Google Maps area saved for offline use.

Set an email "Out of Office" - Set clear expectations for when you'll be back.

Check phone plans - Decide between an international roaming plan, a local SIM card, or an eSIM (like Airalo).

Download entertainment - Save movies, podcasts, and music to your device for the flight or long transit days.

Install travel apps - Ensure you have the apps for your airline, hotel, and local ride-sharing (e.g., Uber, Bolt, or Grab).

Pack a basic first-aid kit - Include pain relievers, Band-Aids, antacids, and any specific remedies for motion sickness or allergies.

Refill prescriptions - Ensure you have enough medication for the *entire* trip plus a few extra days in case of delays.

Register with your embassy - (For US citizens, use the STEP program) so the government can contact you in an emergency

Confirm pet/house sitter - Do a final check-in with whoever is watching your home or pets to confirm timing and instructions.

Weight your bags - Check your airline's weight limit and weigh your suitcase at home to avoid hefty airport fees

Home

Empty trash - Dispose of all kitchen and bathroom waste to prevent unpleasant odors from lingering and to avoid attracting pests like ants or rodents.

Turn off or unplug appliances – Disconnect non-essential electronics like toasters, coffee makers, and computers to eliminate the risk of electrical fires and reduce "phantom" energy drain.

Set the thermostat – Adjust your heating or cooling to an energy-saving level (such as 78°F in summer) to lower utility bills while maintaining a safe temperature for your home's structure.

Lock all doors and windows – Double-check every entry point, including secondary doors and garage entrances, to create a physical barrier and deter potential intruders.

Setting timers for lights – Use automated timers to turn indoor lights on and off at natural intervals, creating the illusion that someone is home to discourage burglars.

Turn off the main water valve – Shut off the primary water supply to prevent catastrophic flooding or damage in the event of an unexpected pipe burst or leak while you are away.

Empty the fridge of perishables – Remove milk, meat, and soft produce that will expire before you return to avoid opening your fridge to mold or spoiled food smells.

Clean the garbage disposal – Flush the disposal with a mixture of vinegar and water or citrus peels to kill bacteria and ensure food particles don't rot in the drain.

Security & Exterior

Pause mail and deliveries - Use the USPS Hold Mail service or ask a neighbor to collect packages so they don't pile up.

Set the home alarm - If you have a security system, verify it is armed and notify your provider if necessary.

Manage blinds and curtains - Leave them in a natural position—neither completely closed (which signals you're away) nor completely open.

Leave a car in the driveway - This simple step implies someone is home and can deter potential thieves.

Finance & Health

Alert your bank/credit cards to travel plans – Provide your travel dates and destinations to your bank and all credit card companies you plan to use. This prevents them from flagging your international purchases as suspicious and freezing your accounts, ensuring you have uninterrupted access to your funds.

Secure travel insurance – Purchase a comprehensive policy that covers trip cancellations, lost luggage, and unexpected medical emergencies to protect your financial investment.

Pay or schedule upcoming bills – Set up automatic payments or pay bills in advance so you aren't hit with late fees or service interruptions while you're away.

Check for foreign transaction fees – Review your cards' terms to see if they charge extra for overseas purchases; if they do, consider using a card with "no foreign transaction fees" to save 3% or more on every swipe.

Identify secure ATMs at your destination – Research where to find major bank ATMs to avoid "skimming" devices and high-fee "tourist" machines

Set up a digital wallet – Add your cards to Apple Pay or Google Wallet for secure, contactless payments, which are often safer than carrying physical cards.

Check for any needed vaccinations – Consult the CDC's Traveler's View at least 4–8 weeks before your trip to ensure you're up to date on routine shots and destination-specific immunizations.

Schedule a pre-travel checkup – Meet with your doctor to discuss your itinerary, especially if you have chronic conditions or are traveling to high-altitude or remote areas.

Research local emergency services – Locate the nearest reputable hospital or 24-hour clinic to your accommodation so you aren't searching for one in a crisis.

Check health insurance coverage abroad – Verify if your current provider covers international medical care or emergency evacuations, as many standard plans (and Medicare) do not.

Pack extra eyeglasses/contacts – Carry a spare pair and a copy of your vision prescription in case your primary pair is lost or damaged.

Pet Travel

Vaccination records (especially rabies certificates) – Carry proof of up-to-date vaccinations to meet legal entry requirements and ensure your pet is protected against local diseases.

Health certificate / veterinary travel certificate – Obtain an official document from your vet (usually within 10 days of travel) confirming your pet is healthy and fit for transport.

Copies of veterinary records – Maintain a history of past illnesses or surgeries so a new vet can provide accurate care in case of a medical issue during your trip.

Microchip information and registration details – Keep your pet's unique ID number and registry contact info handy to ensure a quick reunion if they happen to wander off.

Proof of required treatments – Document specific treatments, like tapeworm or tick prevention, which are mandatory for entry into certain countries or states.

Airline pet paperwork and carrier requirements – Verify your carrier meets specific airline dimensions and keep all pre-approved flight documents ready for check-in.

Import permits or country-specific pet entry documents – Secure any required government authorizations in advance to prevent your pet from being quarantined or refused entry.

Training or service animal documentation – Keep official letters or certifications accessible to ensure your service animal is granted legal access to cabins, hotels, and public spaces.

Pet insurance information – Have your policy number and claim instructions ready to manage unexpected veterinary costs while traveling.

Contact information for a veterinarian at your destination – Identify a local vet ahead of time so you know exactly who to call for routine check-ups or minor health concerns.

Research pet-friendly lodging in advance – Confirm specific pet policies and fees at your hotels to avoid surprises or being turned away upon arrival.

Pack enough medication, food, and familiar items – Bring a surplus of your pet's specific diet and meds to avoid digestive upset from sudden brand changes or pharmacy delays.

Carrier acclimation - Spend weeks letting your pet sleep or eat in their carrier/crate so it feels like a "safe space" rather than a "vet space."

Grooming before travel - Trim nails to prevent snagging in carriers and brush them out to reduce shedding in hotels or rentals.

Identification tags updated with current phone number – Ensure collar tags list a reachable mobile number (including country code) rather than a home landline.

Recent photo of your pet on your phone – Keep a clear, current photo to show locals or authorities immediately if your pet becomes lost.

Portable water bowl – Carry a collapsible or spill-proof bowl to keep your pet hydrated during long transit periods or hikes.

Familiar blanket or toy for travel stress – Bring items that smell like home to provide comfort and reduce anxiety in unfamiliar environments like planes or hotels.

Research emergency vets near where you're staying – Locate the nearest 24-hour animal hospital to your accommodation and save their address and phone number in your phone so you can act immediately during a late-night or weekend crisis.

Identify "relief areas" - For air travel, map out the pet relief stations at your connecting airports.

Exercise before departure - A long walk or a play session right before leaving helps them sleep through the transit.

Cleaning kit - Travel-sized enzymatic cleaner, paper towels, and extra waste bags for "accidents" in new environments.

Pet First Aid Kit - Include styptic powder (for torn nails), antiseptic wipes, and self-clinging bandages.

GPS Tracker - Consider a device like an AirTag or Whistle attached to the collar for real-time tracking in unfamiliar territory.

Feeding schedule - Plan to feed a smaller meal several hours before departure to prevent motion sickness.

Water source - Pack a bottle of "home" water or use bottled water; sudden changes in local tap water can cause stomach upset in pets.

Update Microchip - Ensure the contact info on the chip registry is your cell phone number, not your home landline.

Current Weight - Know your pet's exact weight in kg and lbs; many airlines and medications require this for accuracy.

Crate Hardware - If flying cargo, ensure the crate is secured with metal bolts (not plastic clips) and bring zip ties for extra door security.