

Ten Surprising Things You Should Never Leave Home Without: A Planning Guide

by Jessica Kimble, PassPorter Featured Columnist

I know you. You're the prepared one, ready for everything on this vacation. You planned, you packed, and you've checked and rechecked all the details. I also know that once you're there, there's always that one thing that makes you smack yourself on the forehead and exclaim "Why didn't I pack that?" I've had those moments on more than one vacation. I didn't forget my bathing suit, I didn't leave my driver's license at home, but I did always think of some little thing that would have made the trip just that little bit easier. Here's a list of ten things I never thought I'd need until I got there!

1. I'd packed the medications for my son for all his "just in case" scenarios. Who knew I would be the one to slip on a freshly washed sidewalk at Port Orleans French Quarter and sprain my ankle? I cringed handing out \$15 for 50 name brand acetaminophen at the gift shop. Mental note to self: Next time, pack drugs for Mommy.

2. One of the best investments I've made is in a small six compartment screw/nail organizer I purchased from the hardware section at Target. In each little slot we pack a different kid-friendly, non-melting, snack. I chose dried fruits and cereals. It's really handy in the parks, especially when your little one bellows an "I'm hungry," and you're just about to the front of the line for Haunted Mansion. You can keep refilling this throughout your trip, saving you time from standing in food lines and saving you money.

3. One word ... Ziploc. Those fabulous little baggies have so many uses when you travel. First use them to pack any liquids in; shampoo, body wash, toothpaste, contact lens solutions, perfumes, etc. I once had a shampoo leak into my luggage. While I was holding my suitcase under the shower head wondering how many times I would have to rinse this thing, I had my Ziploc bag moment. I also use Ziplocs to hold a wet wash cloth in my fanny pack. I use it to wipe sticky hands and faces and it comes in handy when you need a nice cool down. Store your souvenirs, the golf balls you've collected at the parks, or the pins you've purchased that day to keep them from rolling or falling out of your bags. Use a sandwich sized bag for, well, a sandwich. Take your restaurant leftovers to snack on later. We've also used Ziplocs for wet pants caused by those "oops" moments when my son was too excited to get to the bathroom quick enough. And of course you'll need a gallon sized bag to keep your

PassPorter dry on rides like Kali River Rapids at Animal Kingdom!

4. I always pack a small package of laundry soap and a stain stick. The stain stick is stored in a small snack sized Ziploc and carried with us everywhere. Treat the stain, then hand wash the item in the sink. I purchase single-load size powdered laundry soap from my local Laundromat. It saves me from having to worry about running to the laundry during our trip or worrying about ruining that favorite shirt. I also like to wash out our bathing suits after a few swims.

5. Anyone with children knows that accidents happen. Kids get overtired or overexcited and can accidentally wet the bed or get sick in bed. My son chose Christmas Eve to throw up in bed. I waited five hours for someone to be available in housekeeping to bring us clean bedding. To prevent this from happening again, we've purchased a waterproof mattress pad. The pad folds-up small and can be easily packed and placed under hotel sheets. We also request upon check in an extra set of bedding. That way, for the middle of night accidents, we are already prepared. No waiting up for housekeeping, no wet mattress, just a quick change of the sheets and we're back to bed!

6. I think most people bring along anti-bacterial foam or gel to clean dirty hands when you can't get to the bathroom to wash them. It's also a good idea to use a little after you've been riding rides to eliminate cold germs. I also bring along antibacterial wipes. Call me obsessive, but I have used them to wipe down our rented strollers, the port-a-crib the resorts provide, the TV remote and the clothing bars in our room. The only thing I want to bring back from vacation is a tan and some awesome souvenirs!

7. This may sound silly, but I will never go to Walt Disney World without bringing along an empty suitcase. Of course I don't plan to go overboard and buy a t-shirt from every park, and that cute Tigger plush, and the new mouse ear wine topper, and the Buzz Lightyear Laser Gun ... but I do. I learned the last trip that if your suitcase is over the airlines weight limit you have to pay extra, \$50 extra, in order to check your luggage. Avoid paying, pack an empty suitcase, then you won't be like me, dumping your suitcase out on the airport floor trying to make things weigh less.

8. Bring along a list of your current medications and copies of your prescriptions. If something is lost or misplaced, you won't have to worry about a 24-hour turn-around time at your doctor's office. Also do a bit of research on what your insurance will cover locally. It doesn't hurt to know what physicians or dentists are covered by your insurance policy so you don't have to go to the trouble of submitting claims later or

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paying the cash up front.

9. Coupon organizers are great for things other than coupons. I've purchased one from the local dollar store that I use and reuse for our trips. The plastic organizer has six different slots with tabs, one I use for traveler's checks and cash, one for our Disney tickets and room key (including Fast Passes), one to hold receipts of purchases and meals, one for the papers that show my items being sent back to the resort, one pocket for important information (driver's license, what my son was wearing that day, in case he got lost) and the last pocket for priority seating information. It helps me keep organized, with all the essentials in the right place, and my receipts handy so I don't go over budget on our trip.

10. Last but not least bring along your PassPorter book(s). Just because you've done your research, made your advanced dining reservations, and packed all you think you'll need, doesn't mean that plans won't change. You'll need it if you decide that you'd rather eat some sushi tomorrow instead of lasagna, or to make sure you didn't miss out on a show or attraction you forgot about last visit. Or maybe you didn't like taking the taxi from the airport and would like to find another option; it's all there in your PassPorter!

So these are ten of my forehead smacking moments. The important thing is that I learn from these mishaps, having snacks on hand, protecting my PassPorter from the sudden downpours with a Ziploc, and packing the easiest of all suitcases, an empty one, to tote my treasures home. Saving money, saving time, preventing or at least being able to handle those minor mishaps, makes it that much easier to relax and enjoy!

About The Author: Jessica Kimble (a.k.a. disneyjessi on the PassPorter Boards) resides on the shores of Gun Lake, Michigan with her son Gavin and ferocious cat Tigger. Together they can never get enough Disney and are eagerly anticipating the chance to visit Walt Disney World again soon!

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