



The Ultimate Packing List for Your Trip to Africa

- ☐ I hope you’ve found the perfect bag for your trip. Depending on what sort of adventures you have planned, it could end up dusty.

Or tossed around, strapped to the top of vehicles. or squashed under other luggage. Don’t use a bag you’ll worry about getting dirty or damaged.
- ☐ Packing cubes, if feel like they'd work for you.
- ☐ Reusable zip-top bags. A handful of small bags can come in handy for so many things. From left-over cookies to the 6 pairs of earrings I bought at a market. Any time I haven’t packed some, I’ve ended up buying more.
- ☐ A sack or pillowcase for laundry. FYI, plastic grocery bags are banned in many parts of Africa. You’ll be fined if you’re seen with one.
- ☐ A pack-away tote, duffel, or daypack. I like to take one that I can use for things I’d like to keep close on the plane.

I'll also use it for carrying snacks, maps, raincoat, etc. Things that I need when I’m out for the day exploring.

It does triple duty as a reusable shopping bag for groceries and souvenirs. A daypack is especially useful if you’ll be exploring on a bicycle.
- ☐ A pair of flip-flops to slip on during your downtime, such as around camp on safari. They should be easy to pack and not take up much space.
- ☐ A pair of running shoes/trainers/hiking boots. Ideally just one of these. This will depend on what sorts of activities you'll be enjoying. You might be doing a walking safari, or otherwise walking through the bush. You'll want to have closed-toed shoes on for that.
- ☐ A wide-brimmed hat preferably, or cap. A hat will offer better protection for neck and ears. Non-negotiable for keeping the sun off. It’s good too, for keeping crazy hair contained while camping.
- ☐ A hat clip to attach your hat to your shirt, so you don’t lose it when it blows off.
- ☐ Sunglasses and cord
- ☐ Fork, spoon, knife (not sharp), and bottle/can opener. Again, any time I haven’t brought these, I wished I had. I wrap them in a cloth napkin or old dishcloth and keep them in a reusable zip-top bag.
- ☐ The 1L airline-approved plastic/quart bag for your liquids. There’s a 3-1-1 rule in place here. Each passenger is allowed as many 3oz bottles of liquid as will fit in a 1L plastic bag. Each person is allowed 1 bag. Actually, it’s 3.4 oz, or 100mL bottles.
- ☐ Shampoo, conditioner, face wash, skincare, and body wash bars. There are some really great bars of all kinds on the market. I’ve started using them at home, as well as when I travel. That’s how much I like them. And when space for liquids is at a premium, they’re certainly worth a try.
- ☐ A case for your bars. Or 2. I like the ones in this link because they close up for travel. They also have a tray on the bottom so the water can drain from the bar.
- ☐ Toilet paper. If you’ll be doing any camping out, especially, you’ll need to take your own toilet paper. Even if you aren’t, it’s a good idea to pack some. Eventually you'll need it. Wiggle the cardboard center out so you can squish it flat. If you’re in Africa for a while you’ll be able to buy single rolls there.
- ☐ Toothbrush, floss, lip balm. Consider toothpaste tablets. One less liquid for your bag.
- ☐ Nail clippers, tweezers.
- ☐ Hair clips, ties – you know what you need here.
- ☐ Shaving supplies
- ☐ A toiletry bag for your other necessities. These could be the bars, hairbrush, toothbrush, etc.
- ☐ Earplugs, in case you have a noisy neighbour or need them for the plane.
- ☐ Sunscreen and mosquito repellent, with DEET. You can’t find these DEET in African pharmacies. Sunscreen can be bought there. But if there’s a particular type you need, best bring it with you.
- ☐ Deodorant – a stick or bar, to avoid liquids.
- ☐ Laundry strips. These work great and are uber-portable and convenient. An elastic clothesline, too.
- ☐ Any medications. This includes your malaria prevention. These often need to be started a couple of weeks before you leave. Advil, allergy medication, anti-itch cream, etc.
- ☐ Contact lenses. Consider using glasses for the trip – one less thing to worry about.
- ☐ Spare pair of glasses/contacts, if you have them.
- ☐ Period supplies. You will be able to find them at pharmacies, though tampons may take a longer search. Consider reusable products, like a menstrual cup or washable pads.
- ☐ Medium-sized or small microfiber towel, or a sarong/Turkish towel.
- ☐ Layers. Depending on the weather, you may need a fleece or heavier jacket in the early morning or late evening. A thin down jacket is light and packable.
- ☐ If you’ll be doing any wildlife spotting, take earth toned clothing. Nothing that will catch an animal’s attention. Avoid dark colours, as these attract mosquitos and tsetse flies.
- ☐ A raincoat. Perfect for a cooler evening, for layering, and for rain. You don’t want to have to sit out a rainy day inside.
- ☐ One or 2 long-sleeve button-down shirts. They’re good to keep the sun off if you burn easily, they work as a layer. They can look a bit dressier if necessary. Try a “washed linen” sort of finish, so you don’t have to worry about wrinkles.
- ☐ 2 pairs of shorts, or skirts if you'll be in a place where more modest dress is required.
- ☐ 2 pairs of long pants if shorts won’t be appropriate. Jeans are fine, but they’re hard to hand-wash and slow to dry. Try some loose cotton pants, or khakis if it’s cooler.
- ☐ 2 comfortable T-shirts.
- ☐ 5 pairs of underwear, 3 pairs of socks, if you’re a sock wearer. Women, 2 bras should be enough. Remember, you have laundry strips to wash things out.
- ☐ Your preferred sleepwear. It usually cools off at night – leave the satin nighty at home. Yoga pants can do double and triple duty.
- ☐ A universal sink plug. It’s surprising how many sinks in the world have no plug. You’ll need one if you want to wash your underwear.
- ☐ The best camera you can afford. A lot of the things you see will be once-in-a-lifetime sorts of things. You’ll want good photos as keepsakes. Take at least one extra battery. And more memory cards than you think you’ll need.
- ☐ A flashlight and headlamp. Rechargeables are great.
- ☐ Binoculars, especially if you’ll be going on safari. I recommend a 10 x 42 x 60 pair, though any is better than none. Well worth the space they take up in your bag. Many sightings will be from a distance.
- ☐ Swimsuit.
- ☐ A universal adapter. You’ll have to charge your phone, camera battery, etc. Your destination country might have a different standard voltage than your devices were made for.
- ☐ Be sure you get a voltage converter/adaptor if you need one. And,even though it’s called “universal”, it’s not going to be useful for every country, eg. South Africa’s plugs are too bulky to be included in some. Read the fine print on the box.
- ☐ A small power bar can be really useful if you have a few things to charge. It’s much easier to bring a power bar than several adapters, or having to take turns with your devices.
- ☐ A good portable power bank. If you can, bring a solar-powered one. You may not always have access to electricity.
- ☐ If I’ll be renting a car, I always take a car power inverter. This lets you plug a regular electric cord into your car. It may sometimes be your only option for charging your camera battery.
- ☐ Your phone, with the data you arranged with the tips on the site.
- ☐ Earbuds. Wireless ones are great but can be easy to lose. Your choice.
- ☐ A refillable water bottle. Collapsible ones are terrific. But if you tend to always have yours out, you don’t have to worry about packing it away.
- ☐ A Lifestraw water filter for turning non-potable water into drinking water. They’re a great alternative to all those plastic water bottles, and don’t use chemicals.

Happy Travels!

