



Germany Travel Planning Podcast

Ep 16 - How to Pack Like a Pro for Germany

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If you're heading to Germany soon, you might be wondering, what do I actually need to pack? How do I stay comfortable in unpredictable weather? And is it really possible to travel light and still feel prepared?

These are questions we get from clients all the time. So today I'm going to walk you through what Aaron and I pack when we go to Germany and elsewhere in Europe. So you'll feel confident and prepared. You're packing the right things.

This is the Germany travel planning podcast, the show that helps you plan a meaningful and super fun trip to Germany.

My name is Cate and I'm your Germany destination specialist. I'm here to help you plan the trip of a lifetime.

Let's kick things off with luggage. Personally, I'm a big fan of traveling light. So I like to take a hard-sided carry-on sized spinner suitcase because it fits easily into the overhead bins on planes. It's easy to take on trains and public transit.

And it's so easy to zip through the airport, train stations over cobblestone streets and go up and down stairs. I used to be a diehard travel backpack person, but these days I really like rolling a small spinner suitcase instead. The suitcase I have has a clamshell design and each side has a zipper compartment to keep everything organized and in place. I love this design because I typically use half of the suitcase



for my clothes and the other half for extras we bring, like if Aaron wants to bring an extra pair of shoes or if we want to pack coats or, you know, just like if we want to have extra room for souvenirs to bring home. My personal item is a 28 liter backpack and I've used several different kinds over the years. I actually just upgraded to a new Cotopaxi pack and I'm really excited to use it on our next trip. I especially love that it also has a clamshell design with three zipper compartments and a separate pocket for my laptop, which I do bring when we're in Germany because we're always doing travel research and we're working. And I love that it also has a luggage pass through so I can secure my pack to the handle of my suitcase and not have to carry anything on my back if I don't want to, which, you know, in the summer when it's hot and humid and there's not a lot of air conditioning in Germany, it's so much more comfortable to carry my pack on my suitcase and not on my back.

Even in the winter, you know, I'm wearing a big coat and stuff. So sometimes I prefer putting it on my suitcase and not having to try to carry it over my big coat. When I'm outside seeing day to day, I switched to a lightweight crossbody purse. The one that I use has a lot of organizational features and it packs flat in my suitcase. So it's super convenient. I've used it across multiple seasons and multiple trips and it works great. And it's still in really, really good condition.

Is it the cutest bag ever? Unfortunately, no, it's not. But it is so comfortable and convenient. And honestly, I love it more than I thought I would when I bought it. And here's a quick tip. If you're worried about losing your wallet, bring one that has an O-ring attached to it and use a day bag that has a key leash. That way you can clip the key leash to your wallet. When I do this, it's so much easier to find my wallet in my bag. And I have peace of mind that it'll be much harder for someone to pickpocket.

Plus, I won't absentmindedly set my wallet down and walk off without it or drop it accidentally. Oh, and by the way, I will link to all of the items that I mentioned in this episode in the show notes in case you want to check them out.



Aaron's packing system is a little different. He uses a travel backpack and a small day pack that doubles as his personal item and a sightseeing bag. He just got a new travel pack and he's going to try it out on our next trip. It's a 35 liter pack and it's very simple and lightweight, and so far he loves it. We both use packing cubes because they make it super easy to keep our clothes organized. I highly recommend packing cubes. Years ago, though, before packing cubes were a thing, I actually just used Ziploc bags. So if you don't have packing cubes and you don't want to go buy a set for a short trip, just use Ziplocs.

One thing I've started doing recently is using a shoe bag to pack my second pair of shoes. I used to just use a plastic bag from Target or whatever, but I actually now really like having a real shoe bag that zips. The plastic bags worked fine, but they would rip and you can't keep them closed. And I just got really tired of the crinkling sound every time I would get my shoes out. But again, on a short trip, a plastic bag works fine.

Another thing we each have is a TSA approved bag for liquids that we bring on the plane. I'll link up the ones we have in the show notes so you can check them out because Aaron and I each like having a different type of bag for our carry-on liquids. We also use reusable flat pack pouches for things like shampoo and soap and conditioner. And I really like them because they're easy to pack, they're easy to fill as well, and then they just get smaller as you use the contents inside.

We also bring two lightweight foldable shopping bags and these come in so handy for groceries, laundry, or carrying souvenirs. I usually toss one in my cross-body purse and then Aaron keeps the other in his day pack.

Before we talk about what clothes to bring, I want to mention here that if you have our DIY Germany Travel Planner, there's a packing list in the Trip Organizer Google



Sheet. And you can customize this for your own trip. So you can edit the list that we created and you can also add your own items. And then you can check off the items as you gather everything and then pack them. And that way you won't forget anything. If you aren't yet using our DIY Germany Travel Planner, I'll link to it in the show notes so you can see how it makes trip planning so much faster and easier and way less stressful.

Okay, let's move on to clothing. Here are 10 tips for deciding what clothes to pack. Tip number one is pack layers. That way you can easily adjust to changing weather. I like to bring a variety of tank tops, t-shirts, long sleeve shirts, leggings, skirts, dresses, pants, and warmer layers like pullovers or a hoodie. Aaron does something very similar, and that way we can mix and match and layer as needed.

Tip number two, make sure you can mix and match your clothes so you can easily create lots of outfits. I like to choose a neutral color. For me, that's always black. And then I bring clothes that will pair well with that color. I find it really helps to get all of my clothes out at once and try everything on. And that way I can confirm that I really can mix and match and layer things the way that I'd like to. I recommend doing this several months before your trip if you can. And that way you have plenty of time to find any new items that you need.

Tip number three. In most cases, you really don't need to bring as much as you think. I almost never wear everything I pack and I always end up wearing a couple of things over and over and over because, you know, they just end up feeling the most comfortable or they just best suit the weather.

Tip number four, consider merino wool clothing. I know some people don't like merino wool, but I have to say, Aaron and I are huge fans of it. It's breathable, it's soft, it's comfortable, it doesn't hold odors and it dries quickly. So you can wear things several times between washes and that really, really helps if you do want to pack light. I have



a variety of merino wool dresses, tank tops, leggings, t-shirts, pullovers and a hoodie. And I have built up this wardrobe over several years now. And Aaron has merino wool t-shirts, pullovers, socks and things like that. We wear our merino wool items year round. I mean, seriously, winter, summer, fall, spring, we will wear them anytime. because they are warm in the winter and they are cooling in the summer. They're fantastic. So if you don't have anything merino wool, I would highly recommend looking into it. And I'll link up where we get our merino wool clothing in the show notes.

Tip number five, add time into your itinerary to do laundry. Sometimes we book an apartment or a hotel with laundry facilities, and other times we just find a laundromat using Google Maps. And then we'll schedule a couple of hours into our itinerary so that we can do all of our laundry at one time and enjoy a little downtime. We like to bring laundry sheets or powdered detergent from home. And then sometimes when we're in Germany, we'll go and buy a bottle of REI. It's R-E-I. It's a laundry wash. And you find it at drugstores like DM or Rossmann. And it's in a bright yellow tube and we find it works really well for hand washing items in the sink.

Tip number six, if you're staying somewhere without air conditioning in the summer, which is pretty common in Germany, I recommend packing lightweight pajamas or even a very thin travel blanket. At many German hotels, you'll find a duvet on your bed, even in the middle of summer. And many people, myself included, find that it's just a little too warm to sleep under a duvet in the summer. So I've actually started bringing a very lightweight blanket with me to use instead, and I can sleep so much better now.

Tip number nine, don't forget things like sunglasses, sunscreen, packable hat for the summer, and in the winter, things like a hat, scarf, and gloves. You can buy these things in Germany if you forget them, but it is easier just to bring them and use what you have and then also use items that you know you really like.



And tip number ten, remember, Germany does have a lot of stores, so you can always buy something if you need it. Whether you forget something or you encounter weather, that's just not what you expected. And then if you buy something, it turns into a fun souvenir. We do that all the time.

We're going to talk about shoes next, but first, I want to stress that for a vacation in Germany, there is no need to go out and buy a whole new wardrobe. Take a look at what you currently have and you'll be able to identify what you need. And then you can figure out the items that you want to add to your wardrobe so you're comfortable on your trip. Now let's talk about shoes. My biggest recommendation is to go for comfort first, fashion second. And yeah, that kind of pains me to say that, but you're going to likely walk 10,000, 20,000 steps a day, maybe even more. Some days we've gotten close to 30,000 steps and you're going to be walking on cement, cobblestones, stairs, trails, uneven surfaces.

Plus, you'll be standing a lot when you're visiting sites or museums, or when you're taking a tour, or you're on public transit, maybe even a train. So it's crucial to have comfortable shoes. I typically bring two pairs of shoes, one pair of comfortable walking shoes, and then one pair of sandals in the summer or boots in the winter. Lately, I've been wearing a pair of Gore-Tex Nikes, and they're actually the same as Aaron has.

Before our most recent research trip, Aaron said, Cate, you really should try these Nikes. They are so incredibly comfortable. You will love them. And I balked at them for a long, long time because the women's version, I just thought they were a little on the ugly side. But I decided I would try them because the other shoes I had were pretty good, but my feet would hurt after wearing them for a while. So I did get the Nikes and my God, I'm so glad I did.



I wore those for over three months straight every single day and they are the most comfortable shoes I have ever worn and they have Gore-Tex on them so they are waterproof. I can walk all day long without my feet getting sore. So for me, it's worth having shoes that aren't as cute as I would like because I'm just so much more comfortable and I enjoy walking around and sightseeing and traveling so much more.

Aaron just brings one pair of shoes, usually just a pair of Nikes or Asics or whatever he's got. And he's good with that. He's totally fine with just one pair of shoes. So I mentioned Gore-Tex. We have started buying shoes that are waterproof and they really can come in handy in the summer, but are really excellent in the winter when it's rainier or it might possibly snow. I have traveled in Germany without waterproof shoes. So I feel like they're definitely a nice to have, like very nice to have, but not an absolutely you must have waterproof shoes type of thing. I mentioned that along with my comfortable walking shoes, I do bring a second pair of shoes. I bring sandals in the summer and ankle boots in the winter. These shoes are not as comfortable as my walking shoes, but I do bring them so that I have something that is a little cuter to wear and just so I have something else to wear if I get tired of my walking shoes. Sometimes that helps my feet if I can wear a different pair of shoes for even a couple of hours.

Rain gear is also important in Germany even in the summer. So I pack a compact umbrella to use and Aaron prefers having a lightweight rain jacket with a hood. We've definitely needed them on past trips to stay dry in everything from winter drizzle to summer thunderstorms.

One quick word of advice is try to avoid setting things down like jackets, umbrellas, or phones. Just avoid setting them down on random surfaces when you're out and about. I once left my umbrella in a tiny public restroom at the Frankfurt Christmas Market just because I didn't realize that I had everything else with me. I was like kind



of hurry back to the train station and I didn't realize that I had left it until we were halfway to Hamburg and it was such a bummer because it was a really, really great umbrella. Fortunately, it was just an umbrella and it wasn't something more important like my phone. And I actually have a rule. I do not set my phone down anywhere except in my purse.

And that way I know I will automatically put it in there and I will not set it down anywhere else. And I also have a wrist strap for my phone. Aaron and I each have a wrist strap for our phones. And my phone is always attached to me. When it is out of my purse, when I'm outside of my hotel or apartment, my phone is attached to my wrist. And that way I know that I am much less likely to accidentally set it down somewhere. And it's also going to be a lot harder for somebody to just grab it and walk off with it.

Speaking of phones and tech in general, we also bring a European plug adapter that we can use to charge several things at once, like our laptops and our phones. And we love the one that we have because it's small and we can use it in multiple countries. I'll link to it in the show notes so you can check it out. We've used it for the last three years. We've used it on multiple trips, and it's really excellent. We also bring a power bank for long sightseeing days because we use our phones a lot and they always run out of battery by like 2 p.m. So we share a power bank and we can each charge our phones while we're out and about. And I'll link to that in the show notes too, because the one we have is really lightweight, it's easy to carry, but we can charge our phones at least once when we're out. Since we're always doing travel research and we're working with our clients while we travel, we bring our laptops and our phones. But, you know, there's no need to overdo it on tech gadgets. So...

Your phone can handle photos, maps, booking confirmations, keeping in touch with home, and entertainment. So that might be all you really need to bring. And of course, I should also mention, don't forget the essentials like passport, travel



insurance documentation, tickets and confirmations. If you want to have hard copies of any of those things. Sometimes I do bring hard copies and sometimes I just have everything on my phone.

And you might even want to bring a small notebook or a travel journal if you like jotting down memories and notes the old fashioned way. I used to always do that. And now I find I actually take notes on my phone using a notes app. And then I transfer those notes into a spreadsheet or into AirTable. And so sometimes now I just actually keep my travel journal that way. It's just a little bit easier when I'm out and about. So there we have it, our top tips for packing for Germany.

You'll find links to everything I mentioned today in the show notes. And I'll also link up a couple of guides we have about packing on our website so you can see some other things that we sometimes bring to Germany or other places when we're traveling around Europe. I hope you found this helpful. Thanks so much for tuning in today and happy travel planning.

Two quick things before you go. First, if you found any of our podcast episodes helpful, please leave a five star rating and a review if you haven't done that yet. The more ratings and reviews we have, the more our podcasts will be shown to other travelers. So your rating and review really helps us out.

Second, if you're in the early stages of planning your trip and you want to feel confident, organized and avoid a lot of rookie mistakes that can derail your dream trip and cost you a lot of extra money, you need our DIY Germany travel planner. Think of it as your travel savvy best friend who's handing you time-saving shortcuts, step-by-step directions, and insider insights. So you can go from asking yourself, where do I even begin with planning this trip, to confidently saying this is going to be the best trip ever. It's basically a masterclass in how to plan your perfect trip to Germany.



Or if you want a trip that's fully tailored to you, but without spending weeks or months figuring it all out yourself, let us create a fully custom itinerary just for you designed around your interests, priorities, and budget. We'll do all the heavy lifting, including recommending specific hotels, driving routes, train tickets, and activities and tours for each day of your trip. So you can skip the overwhelm, you can confidently book each piece of your trip using the platform that you most prefer, and you'll get right to the fun part, preparing for departure. You'll find links to our DIY Germany Travel Planner and our custom itinerary service in the show notes and on our website, mygermanyvacation.com.

Thanks so much for listening to the Germany Travel Planning Podcast and until next week, happy travel planning.